

# The One for Whom Nothing is Unknown

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The importance of the phrase, “In the beginning God”, is often too little appreciated in today’s world. Our children are often encouraged in education and the media to imagine a world which does not begin with God.<sup>1</sup> It is part of our task to teach our children to start with God. Seeing the world from that vantage point affects how we explain things.

**God.** When we speak of God we are speaking of a being who is all powerful, all knowing, and all present. The importance of this for dealing with many philosophies in the world is critical. This means for instance that when we speak of God doing, we ask what he did rather than can he do. This means that while man may imagine many possible worlds that make sense to him, the real issue is what God says He did. Nothing is a mystery to a God who is all knowing. This means that he can communicate from the standpoint of knowledge so that he is not in exact or grasping for “words”, regarding how best to communicate to us. This does not deny that there are things, due to our limitations, we can’t comprehend, but it does affirm that He is capable of best communicating to us what we can comprehend. There is also no place where God is lost or unfamiliar. Such a being is beyond our ability to fully comprehend, but we can be aware of His existence.

**Acquaintance.** As we consider the world around us we see that there is much that points to God (Psalms 19:1 -4). The intricacy of created things and their interaction point to wisdom beyond any that man possesses. As dads it is important that we point out this wisdom to our children. We need to point out dependencies that show the world needed to be created in order for things to as they exist. We need to point to patterns in how things grow, and how they are put together. Looking at stars, plants, and animals with your children, whether with just your eyes or through microscopes and telescopes is a good way to do this.

Our older children need to understand that there are those who attempt to explain the world without God. Why would someone seek to imagine a world without God? Your children should understand the reality of a statement found in Romans 1:28 – there are those who do not choose to look to God. People get to this point by at some point dishonoring God. That is not accepting Him as He has revealed Himself. This may result in idol worship, agnosticism, or

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<sup>1</sup> The following article from a college student provides insight into what many Christian young people face. Behind Closed Doors, Abbey Nye September 25, 2008 <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/foow/behind-closed-doors>

atheism. This may grow out of a sense of anger or disappointment regarding how God is acting in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Learning to accept the Word of God regarding Himself is important to walking with God. It is tempting for many young people to try to fit God into their wisdom. Ideas like, “God should be like this” can lead to disillusionment. Our children should learn to accept the truth of Isaiah 55:9. It is we who must learn from God, rather than us telling God how to be.

## Two Illustrations

**A Couple of Observations.** As your children grow up in a western culture they are likely to encounter two concepts that are used to undermine faith in God. One is evolution. Another is deconstructionism. One deals with how things came to be, while the other deals with the nature of communication. By looking at these two concepts I hope to show the importance of our understanding of God, as we and our children confront popular world wisdom.

Before doing this I want to make a important observation regarding explanations. Explanations are not necessarily reality. Often our children are made to feel that because someone seems to explain the world different than God’s Word explains it , there must be some truth to it. All that has been demonstrated, however, is that given a set of assumptions a strong explanation can be constructed. This is different than saying something really happened. Your children need to understand this. Even a lie can sound persuasive.

The second thing to teach your children, and related to the previous observation, is the truth that things don’t explain themselves. People can observe the same thing (a fact), but come up with different explanations. For instance one person sees the Grand Canyon in Arizona, USA and thinks of millions of year of erosion. Another person sees the Grand Canyon in Arizona, USA and thinks of Noah and the flood. They are both looking at the Grand Canyon.<sup>3</sup>

**Evolution.** Evolution, as used here, is the belief in gradual change in biological, geologic, and astronomical change over millions of years. The biological change is to the extreme of asserting that life began from non-life, and that life forms have change from one kind to another. This is commonly called macro-evolution. It is different from the degree of changes that take place in say breeding animal, in which horses remain horses.

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<sup>2</sup> An example of this is Charles Darwin, who did not think God would not create a world that was wasteful as he saw it. He was went from believing in God to being an agnostic, according to his own observations. See [Darwin’s God](#), Cornelius G. Hunter; copyright 2001; Brazos Press , Grand Rapids, MI ; and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Darwin's\\_religious\\_views](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Darwin's_religious_views) September 23, 2011

<sup>3</sup> Please note that I don’t believe that both these explanations equally explain the Grand Canyon. I believe that the Flood in Noah’s day is the better explanation.

This system of belief is based upon the assumption that you do not need to assume God to explain how the world began. Natural processes operating by themselves can produce the world. This challenges the need for God's power and knowledge. God's power because the world can happen without God. His knowledge because order can come without God. Entertaining this view of the world can lead to believing that God really doesn't matter or exist.

Often the children are introduced to the concept of Ockham's Razor (Occam). There are several variations of this principle, but basically they say that the simpler natural explanation of something is to be preferred. Your children should note three things about this. One is that simpler is subjective<sup>4</sup>. Often what is simple depends on what assumptions you make. Second, a preferred explanation is not the same as the truth. Often times beauty and value are not accomplished by doing things in the most efficient, economical manner. Yet beauty and value are realities.

People use this principle to suggest that if the world can be explained without God (and it can't) then God is unnecessary and doesn't exist. This is really a misapplication of a philosophy called positivism, which asserts that what can't be observed is as if it doesn't exist. Note it doesn't say God doesn't exist.

In any event our children need to be taught that God is not silent and that He has acted in the world. He speaks of His presence through the things He has made (Psalms 19 and Romans 1). Any explanation of the world without God will be challenged by His voice (Psalms 19), if you and your children listen closely enough. Further than that God is active in the world he has made. The Bible reveals this as it explains history.

Regarding the concept of evolution, the Answers in Genesis website contains excellent resources that show the shortcoming of evolutionary explanations of how the world and universe came to be. <http://www.answersingenesis.org/>. From explanations of fossils, geologic layers, to solar systems you will see that creation and Noah's Flood explains what we see in our world today. The Bible is true. God is powerful. God does know.

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<sup>4</sup> "In physics we use the razor to shave away metaphysical concepts." What is Occam's Razor? Updated 1997 by Sugihara Hiroshi., Original by Phil Gibbs 1996. <http://math.ucr.edu/home/baez/physics/General/occam.html> September 22, 2011

**Deconstruction.** Deconstruction for many is a new concept, although it has been around since the 1960s. It is affecting many areas of their life by suggesting reinterpretations of traditional meanings or implications of what the Bible says.

Deconstruction is an approach to analyzing language by looking at how we categorize information and observations. It raises the question of the ability to adequately communicate reality by noting that we bring to newly observed reality our previous perceptions of reality. In other words we explain what is new by what is old. This “bringing” attempts to fit new things into pre-discovery categories and in so doing distorts them to some degree. As we examine the distortions produced by doing this we discover new meanings and implications of what is said, that even the author may not have comprehended or intended.

For instance, if someone has not seen a platypus, what would he call it upon seeing it. Would that “calling” really communicate what he is seeing? Does that calling (in the deconstruction language a “signifier”) limit our understanding of the new thing. Jacques Derrida, the person who put forth the concept, suggests that we look beyond the idea of something fitting into an either/or category that we have known and recognize that they may have aspects of both/and or outside with relationship to the category.<sup>5</sup> For instance if you have only the category of contrast consisting of duck and not duck, to explain the platypus you in significant ways to explain it. It is not enough to look at it from the category “duck”. You need to consider how other categories such as beaver, gopher, etc might be used to explain it. You may even need to invent a new category, platypus to explain it. Even then the signifiers such as, “like a beaver and a duck put together”, may lead to misunderstandings about how it lives, for instance a flying swimmer. The point being that the signifier is not the same as the thing signified and to some extent misrepresents it. Discovering the misrepresentation deconstructs the previous system of description we had previously used and allows us to see “new realities”. This new perception affects how we live. Deconstruction is not saying the thing did not exist before our discovery, but that our interaction is affected by our discovery. Further our interaction moves in certain directions based on what we see when we “discover’.

The conclusion that some may choose to draw from this is that no direction is really, “right”, it is just a response to perception. It even questions the systems of right and wrong, true and false. Perceptions shift with time and experience.

Although deconstruction was meant to be a communication aide, other uses or misuses can be made of its concepts. It can be used to shift the content of traditional of words and concepts, rather than inventing new words for new concepts. It can be used to reinterpret the meaning of historical events within a context foreign to the time the event really occurred (what was

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<sup>5</sup> A good explanation of this approach to knowing is found in the essay at [http://www.philoagora.com/index2.php?option=com\\_content&do\\_pdf=1&id=86](http://www.philoagora.com/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=86)

really happening). Strictly speaking deconstruction does not say there is not real meaning or valid limited meaning for words when we communicate. After all when we admit opposites (the concept that something can be distinguished from something else) such as dog and not dog we are saying that signifiers have limitations. Although not the same as they thing signified they do more or less point to a reality. That is why we can say that one thing is not another. There is real meaning and communication.<sup>6</sup>

As a dad we need to make sure that our children understand what it means to say God is all knowing and all present. When God communicates he is aware of the content and distinctions between all things. When he communicates he is pointing to these contents and distinctions, but not from a basis of the comparisons we use when things don't really fit into our experience.<sup>7</sup> There is nothing new to Him. Just as Adam named animals in Genesis 2, so that a sound (symbol) pointed to a real animal in front of him, so God communicates what is by what He says. In fact he invented communication (John 1: 1 -3). He communicates by word and life. Our children need to understand that God communication is God's invention. He is able point accurately to realities by what He says and does. He associates our experiences with language so that people are able to understand so similarly (there may be differences in experience that affect feelings and associations) that real communication. Indeed clarifications (translations) are possible because of this similarity. We should be careful not to say real misunderstandings don't exist, but we should also point to the overwhelmingly large realm of real communication. This exists when people are pointing to the same reality when they speak. This is the gift of God when He gave us language.<sup>8</sup> It is important that we and they understand the idea of historical context and its impact on accurate understanding. We should avoid denying the idea that people say and do things with unintended meaning and consequences (We can even deceive ourselves. Jeremiah 17:9). God however is not man so that all that may be said about communication originating with man, does not apply to God's communication. Our children

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<sup>6</sup> An example of good use of deconstruction is Jesus' clarification of the thought that, "Messiah will deliver us from our oppressors." The opposites in this phrase could be captured by the categories of Messiah/non-Messiah, deliverance/captivity, and oppressor/ freedom. Jesus challenged the system which held that Messiah would deliver Israel from oppression by the nations, by proclaiming the Messiah as one who would free from sin. (read the gospel of John and consider the theme of light and darkness). The introduction of sin as our greatest oppression, exposed the shallow hope of the world based system (Luke 19:41 -44) that the Jews of that day were looking to. This was consistent with passages such as Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 53 and John 18: 36. Jesus' observation regarding deliverance from sin as the Messiah's role deconstructed the system built upon worldly deliverance as God's priority. This demonstrates proper use of deconstruction techniques. There use is to be governed by 2 Timothy 3:16, with God's Word being the corrector of man's ideas.

<sup>7</sup> The point being made is that God does not use comparisons for His understanding. He makes comparisons for our benefit due to our finite ability to comprehend accurately. God knows (understands all) and has been in all places.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that the Bible does not present language as an evolutionary process. Mankind and God communicate complex thought from the beginning (Genesis 2). It as if God places certain correspondences (sound to reality) or the ability to make certain correspondences (become educated) within mankind.

need to be trained to start with this assumption so that they will not be misled in their understanding of the world. (Romans 10:17)

### **Conclusion**

Our children need to be constantly instructed in the concept that God is not a man. Man is created in His image (Genesis 1:27), not the reverse. God is not subject to man's limitations and His interactions with mankind and the world must be considered in that context. God is all knowing. God is all powerful. God is all present. He is distinct from His creation, even though He interacts with it. The implications of who God is needs to be brought out for our children, so that they will understand why they don't reach the same conclusions as those who do not to retain God in their knowledge.