

Foundations for Faith

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[0 : 0 0] People who think if you start on time and people come in late, they'll be like, oh no, I'm late. And maybe next week they'll come on time. I don't really care and it doesn't bother me if people walk in, but it's just a thing.

I like to start on time or pretty close to it. So let me begin with a word of prayer. Father, thank you.

Thank you for creating us, for making us, for giving us so many good things. Lord, we praise you and honor you. Give us hearts that adore you.

Give us hearts that love your word. Give us hearts that love the world you've made. Give us hearts that love one another. And our neighbors, those inside the kingdom and those outside the kingdom.

Lord, that we might be your salt and your light in this world. Give us eyes to see the culture around us. But even more to see who you are.

[1 : 1 2] The world you have put us in. And what you have, what you're doing and what you've designed and what you've begun that you will bring to completion. Lord, let us be part of that.

Lord, give me the right words. And let the wrong words float off into the ductwork. And give us all ears to hear from you.

In Jesus' name, amen. So I want to start with a little introduction of this class because it's, I forget what the title was.

Something about foundations in the Pentateuch. So what I hope to do, we're going to look at some things out of each book in the Pentateuch.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. We're going to look at some things that are events that happened in history.

[2 : 1 8] But we're going to look at them from a theological point of view to see, we're going to ask about these things. So what? So what?

Today, we're going to look exclusively at the creation. And we're going to say, so what? And what I want us to be able to do is to sort of get a sense of these big ideas that lie at the foundation of all the rest of Scripture and all of what God is doing in the world.

The things, and these are, it's not only like the first five books of the Bible. It's, they're foundational in many, many ways. And the themes that will come up are going to be themes that go all the way through Scripture.

We're not going to look at a lot of that specifically, although I may draw your attention to a few places. But I want to, my experience has been waking up to the ways some of these themes run through Scripture and seeing, wait, why is this referred to here?

You know, why, why is this psalmist calling God creator in this psalm at this moment? I've been a Christian for 50 years.

- [3 : 41] It was a really long time. I haven't gotten very far, but I've been reading the Bible about that long. And there's so much in it that became rote pretty fast and became like, oh yes, God created the world, for instance.
- Got it. Moving on. And then I would see a psalmist refer to God as creator, and I would go, yeah, yeah, yeah, let's move on. But I never looked at, well, why, what's, what's the, what's his point here?
- Is he just throwing that out as something to say about God because it works in the sentence? Probably not. This is God's, this is God's word. And I don't think there's a lot of throwaway stuff, if any.
- So that's been a little bit of my journey. The other piece of it has been a kind of cultural critique. And that's just been for the past several years I've run into and then sought out a bunch of books that look at where our culture is right now in particular ways.
- And how, how that's, how that has deviated from the world that God made. So how has the culture ignoring or rejecting or denying some of these big ideas that are truth, they are reality, they are how the world works.
- [5 : 18] And you'll see as we get into this sort of what I'm, sort of what I mean by that, I hope. So I want to look at both, what is the Bible teaching in this event?
- And how does our culture miss this or deny it or whatever? And what are the consequences? Because I think sometimes we get so embedded in the culture that we don't notice those things as much as we ought to.
- So, so I come from a particular vantage point, as I said, 50 years as a Christian. So my formative years were, I was born in the 60s, the 70s, that's when I was in high school.
- And it's not the same world as it is now. And some of you are much younger than me and are living in a different world at your ages than I was. So I want to be conscious of that.
- And I don't want to pretend that I know what it's like to be 20-something in this culture. I'm an observer. And I'm an observer from a different generation.
- [6 : 27] So sometimes I think that can be helpful. But I also don't want to pretend I'm an expert. Because I'm not. And likewise, all of this cultural critique stuff, I'm learning.
- And I'm growing. And I'm learning from people. I'm reading. I'm not an expert. So many of you are probably more well-versed in some of this than I am. And I'm a little, yeah, I just want to be clear that I'm not pretending to be an expert.
- And I'll quote some philosophers and stuff, but it doesn't mean I've read them thoroughly. Okay? So I don't want to present myself as something I'm not. So just think of the schedule overall.
- We're going to do two weeks in Genesis beginning today. And we're going to hit, we're just going to hit a few things. There's an awful lot in Genesis. And I'm realizing as I prepare that there's like way too much for me to do that I want to do.
- So anyway, so we'll do two weeks in Genesis and we'll do Exodus. Alex Koch is going to step in and teach on numbers.
- [7 : 36] And his approach may be a little different from mine. And that's cool. And then the final week I'll pick up Leviticus and Deuteronomy, looking particularly at the law, which is heavy in those books.
- So it's a theological rather than historical look. Yeah.
- So that's basically my introduction. And I think you'll understand it a little bit better as I get going here. At some point I will produce a bibliography because the books I've read have been super helpful, super helpful.

And I would commend them to anyone who's, I'd commend them to anyone who's living in this culture. So that doesn't leave anyone out. Okay, so today, Genesis part one, all we're going to look at is creation because it's so foundational.

And there's so much, so much to see in here that our culture misses or rejects or whatever.

[8 : 47] So let me just read Genesis chapter one. Genesis chapter one, I trust it's familiar to most of us, but let's read it. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light.

And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day and the darkness he called night.

And there was evening and there was morning the first day. And God said, let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters and let it separate the waters from the waters.

And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse heaven.

[9 : 52] And there was evening and there was morning the second day. And God said, let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear.

And it was so. God called the dry land earth and the waters that were gathered together he called seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth.

And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning the third day. And God said, let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night.

And let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years. And let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth. And it was so. And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night and the stars.

[11 : 11] And God sent them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

And there was evening and there was morning the fourth day. And God said, let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.

So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters and the seas and let birds multiply on the earth.

And there was evening and there was morning the fifth day. And God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds, livestock and creeping things, and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.

[12 : 11] And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them.

And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth and every tree with seed and its fruit. You shall have them for food.

[13 : 11] And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.

And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made. And behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Now, I'm going to stop reading there.

I will let you know that on the seventh day, God rested. That's not insignificant. I'm just, you know, I could read all of Genesis and probably be more profitable.

But when I was a young teen in the 70s, I attended a small, rural, conservative church.

And if Genesis 1 came up, as it did, they were very, very Bible focused and gave me a lot in the way of doctrine and understanding of the scriptures that I treasure to this day.

[14 : 14] But when they got to teaching about Genesis, for instance, the questions were, okay, how long did God take to do creation? When did this happen?

Are these 24-hour literal days? Are these? So most of the emphasis on our time in Genesis 1 or 2 was on, how did this happen?

Oh, it didn't happen like those guys say. It happened like this, which was important, not insignificant. But that's what I thought the creation account was for, was for arguing against evolutionists.

Okay, that's how I, that's what I was taught. That's what I absorbed. And it took me a long time to get past that as the only purpose.

And I don't want to, in any way, you know, disparage efforts to sort this out. We had a great class by Luke Batty on this topic.

[15 : 26] It was fascinating. It doesn't happen to be really my thing. It doesn't, like, jazz me up. But there's great resources for that, and that's not unimportant.

But I want to look at the theological, what does this teach us about God and about the world and about ourselves? So it's, to me, this is what I call a big idea.

That's bigger than, bigger than, how did it happen? How many days? 6,000 years ago? Whatever. All right. So, beginning at the beginning. The first words are, in the beginning.

Why is this, why does this matter? Why does it start that way? Well, the implications of this are, I mean, in the scriptures, and this I have it on someone else's authority, beginning matches to end.

That's how beginning always implies an end. There was a beginning before which God had not created the heavens and the earth.

[16 : 33] There was a time before that. And what he's doing will come to an end with, as we know from the rest of scriptures, with a new heavens and a new earth.

Renewed in glory with Christ reigning over the earth. It'll be different. So even the idea that history has a beginning is, in many ways, countercultural.

We don't, we may think about the Big Bang as a beginning, but for the Big Bang to happen, there had to be something to bang.

Right? So, this is how much I know about all this stuff. That's my physics knowledge. This also, the beginning and end aspect also implies that history is linear.

It began and it's going somewhere. So, God is doing something that isn't just cyclical. Round and round and round we go.

[17 : 40] Things are always the same. And we know that there are whole religions that think of the, they just think differently about time.

Most of us in the West have that kind of linear picture in our minds, I think. Again, this is where, you know, I'm a certain generation. Certainly, to me, history has always looked like a line.

But that's not true everywhere in the world. And we can't really take it for granted that that's how people think. Because not everyone does.

But that appears to be part of the implication of the way creation is recorded here for us. In the beginning, God.

There's the fourth word. It's the most important word. And that's not just, you know, the Sunday school answer. But God is the focus and source of all history.

[18 : 39] Everything. Everything depends on God. That doesn't seem revolutionary to us as believers.

But it certainly is to our culture. And I think we all recognize that. Everything depends on God. God made a choice to create the heavens and the earth.

God is personal. He has a will. He decides to do something. And he decides to do it in a certain way. And as I read the account, you might recognize that it's very orderly and straightforward.

I mean, not straightforward to us as we're thinking as scientists, but straightforward as an account. God did this. Then he did this. It's orderly. It's conflict-free.

Which I just threw out there because most, like, pagan creation stories are full of conflict between gods and demigods and, you know, all these different supernatural sort of beings, right?

[19 : 53] So there's full of conflict. They're arguing over things, and someone comes out on top. We get none of that in the creation account. There are no other gods. And there's just nothing.

It's a very different account that way. And that's worth noting. So God is personal and active. He chooses to act. He's not just a vague force out there.

He's presented as a person who speaks and creates, who assesses the world and says, it's good.

He's a God who makes judgments, who cares about, is it good? Is it worthwhile? Is it whatever? Or, and he makes a judgment about it.

And here, this is all before sin entered the world. It's good. And then, and then after creating Adam and Eve, he says, it's very good.

[20 : 55] It's very good. So God is a God who discerns morally, right? He's looking at the world and makes a, makes a discernment about it.

Another super important thing to see here. And it's, yeah, is God is outside of creation. He is not part of it.

He's not like us. I mean, he's like us in some ways. I hope I can sort this out for you. So he's, we are made in his image. But we're, he's not like a bigger, better version of us.

Okay. And I mean, I, I know in my history, there have been times when that's what I thought of God as. Like not explicitly, you know, because I had good doctrine and all that.

But, but there's this sense of the, it's the, it's the, you know, grandpa up in the sky kind of image that is not uncommon. You know, this sort of docile and pleasant and loving figure.

[22 : 04] That's, that's like us. Only he like loves all the time instead of us, which, you know, we don't. But that's not, that's not how the Bible portrays God at all.

God is other. He is different. So this is usually called the creator creature distinction. There's a line, there's a difference. And, um, Oh, that's effective.

A little better. A theologian, uh, named Cornelius Van Til used to talk a great deal about the creator creature distinction.

Um, and this is a diagram that he used. I'm going to read a little quote from him. So you get a hint of the, the importance that he placed on this concept that God is not us.

He is other. So, so Van Til says, I point out that the Bible does contain a theory of reality. And this theory of reality is that of two levels of being.

[23 : 24] First, of God as infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. And second, of the universe as derivative, finite, temporal, and changeable.

A position best known by its most basic differentiation. The meanings of all words in the Christian theory of being depend upon the differentiation between the self-contained God and the created universe.

Uh, compare that to a voice from, um, more or less our culture. Carl Sagan, uh, said the cosmos is all that there is or ever was or will be.

So, notice the circles are not the same size, right? This is creation. This is God. There's a connection because God creates it, but he doesn't, he's not part of it.

He didn't create himself. He didn't create Jesus. Um, he's different and other. And then the, and the other way, Carl Sagan's worldview is like, it, it's all one thing.

[24 : 39] It's all one thing. And if you, um, as, as you trace some, uh, more modern theology, you'll find lots of conceptions.

And I mean, Christian theology, but not Orthodox. Um, you see lots of conceptions in which God is, very much part of the universe and changing with it and growing.

And these things are, he, he's part of the whole thing. Um, he's stronger than us. He's better than us, but he also is evolving as we evolve.

Um, and that you can see in, um, um, a fair amount of liberal theology. I can't tell you the details. I supposedly learned them in seminary, but, um, but it's out there.

And it's very, very common in our culture to see God in this way as part of the world, if he exists.

[25 : 42] Okay. But part of, part of this world and not wholly other from us, um, not completely omnipotent or omniscient, um, but more evolving along with us or, or what, you know, maybe not involved, you know, the sort of deistic approach he, he creates, but he doesn't, but he's, he's not, he's not like out here with this connection.

So this connection, a deist view is like God created the world and then said, you're on your own and doesn't interfere. Um, but God is active in our world.

And you see that in the creation account. That's an active, all of that is active and you see it throughout the scriptures, as I'm sure you're aware. God is active in the world.

Um, here you want to think about God as transcendent up there, other, um, infinite, eternal, like, really eternal, eternal forever in the past, eternal forever in the future.

And when we come to Christ, we get eternal life, but we had a beginning and God did not. We started somewhere. And we depend on God. We're derivative from God.

[27 : 14] Um, and, and he grants us eternal life, but that's not inherent in who we are. He's not inherent in a creation, in a creation to be eternal, but it is in God.

Um, so he's up there, but he's also down here. And we can't forget that. We can't deny that. Or we're, we become deists.

He's also imminent is the, is the, the fancy word that theologians use. Um, and he's, he's part of this world in that he acts upon it.

He cares about it. He loves us. The Bible teaches us. He loves the world. He looks at the world at creation and said, it's very good. There's a, you know, there's a, I don't know if I want to say emotional connection, but there's definitely, there's a connection there.

He cares about the world. Um, and toward the end of that account, you heard he blessed them. So he blesses the animals, um, and the creeping things and all of that.

[28 : 20] And he blesses humanity and gives, uh, gives a mandate, you know, to, um, to all of creation, to grow and multiply and to humanity, to rule over, um, creation in his, in his name, in his stead, kind of, not that he stops being the ruler, but, um, Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed this, um, as God is the beyond in the midst of our lives.

God is the beyond in the midst of our lives. So another, um, another aspect that this teaches us about creation, is that creation wasn't necessary.

God didn't need us. He didn't need the world. He didn't need to create the heavens and the earth. He, he is complete in himself. He has no needs.

He has no, He, he didn't need to do it. He chose to do it. And, as we see from this language of blessing, and it was good, and there's, he, he creates with a desire to bless, with a desire to do good to his creation.

He wants it to flourish. He wants there to be joy and peace. He wants all this variety of creation that we see.

[29 : 53] You know, every time I read those words about, you know, all the, the, the, the sea creatures swarming in the, in the ocean, like, we've all seen pictures of kind of that.

And, and, you know, now people are raising the alarms that there are not as many swarms in places where there were in the ocean, right? Because of the way we have treated the earth in some, to some extent.

Anyway, this whole variety, you know, God didn't have to do that. He didn't have to. He, he did it out of grace and out of love.

He expresses in creation who he is. The artistry of creation is amazing. Um, and all creation is a gift.

It's all a gift given to bless. Um, David Bentley Hart is a theologian, writes, it is through grace that the Christian is born again, but it is also through grace that the universe is born in the first place.

[31 : 03] Oh, sorry, that wasn't Hart. That was Christopher Watkin. We ought not to pretend that we bought it or made it ourselves. Someone gives you a gift. You don't go around pretending that like, right, that, that you made it or that you bought it.

And isn't this thing great that I created? No, it was a gift, right? Um, and what's the response to a gift? What's the appropriate response?

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Exactly. And that is, that should be our natural response to all these good gifts. And we live in a culture that denies that all of this is a gift for blessing, for us, for our good, and for our joy.

um, and says, it's random, uh, that the material is all there is, that, um, that, that the, the fish's purpose is not to bless me.

It's to be a fish if it has a purpose, right? Um, and, and, and, and, and so we get this, there's a lot of talk.

[32 : 21] I know, and so I notice these things on social media, like in Pinterest and all this. I, um, I do a lot of paper crafts. And so you think of scrapbooking titles or you think of card, card greetings. I make a lot of cards.

And there's one I just cannot use because they're not true. And they're, um, now, because I didn't write this down. I'm going to mess this up, but, but there's this sense of gratitude is really a big thing in all of these, all of these things and gratitude.

It's out there in the culture. There's a lot of talk about gratitude, but there's no sense of who you're grateful to. And now it's appropriate for us to be grateful to one another, but one another, but all of you are a gift to me from God.

And so ultimately it's God who deserves the thanks. And we get from here, this idea that creation is gratuitous.

It's, he didn't have, it didn't have to be, it's not necessary, but it's given to bless. And we ought to give thanks. That's not explicit here in Genesis, but that's the implication.

[33 : 33] And then we get to Romans chapter one. I was talking with my son-in-law yesterday about this class and, and he was, he had just been reading Romans chapter one. And part of that is, it's this, it's this sort of, sort of evolution of fallen humanity.

And one of the things that Paul says is they, they, they did not give thanks to God. And I remember, you know, noticing that and thinking, wow, like in some ways that seems trivial, but it's huge, right?

It's huge. Like, I mean, when I was a kid, if I didn't, if I didn't write that thank you note, uh, yeah. I mean, I come from a generation where you got to write that thank you note and you, here you go.

And here's how you do it. And here you go. Um, and I didn't always feel like writing a thank you note, uh, let alone being badgered into it. Um, and so it just seemed like a formality in some ways sometimes.

All right. I recognize it's not now. I'm a little older than I was at eight. Um, but we don't always think of thankfulness as so vital to our relationship to God, but that's the recognition that all of creation is a gift.

[34 : 49] That my breath is a gift. God, God decided, God decides, you know, in the next 10 minutes to, let's say, hold my breath.

I'm a goner and you're calling the ambulance and, you know, it's, it's in his hands. Every breath we take is in his hands. And that's true within the church. It's true for all of creation.

Everything is in his hands and his control. He made it. And another implication, he can do with it what he desires to do.

Um, one of the books I was reading had a little anecdote of, um, someone teaching a class of like, you know, I don't know, you know, fourth grade campers or something like that.

And he gave them all clay and told them to make something. And they made something. And then said, okay, so now smush that up and make this other thing. So they did.

[35 : 47] And the lesson was, and the lesson was, if God created us, if he created the world, he can do with it whatever he desires to do.

If he decides, whatever, smush us up and remake us, that's his prerogative because he owns us. And we are responsible to him just by, just by the fact that we are his creatures.

We are responsible to him. That, that clay pot that that fourth grader made, it doesn't have, doesn't have personality and all that stuff.

So it's not saying thanks for making me, but it might as well be right. Thanks for making me. Oh, okay. You're going to unmake me. Well, okay. You know, it's like, it's no one questions whether that was the kid's right to do.

Right. It was his creation. He can remake it. He can smush it. He can make it into a, whatever. So it sounds very, it sounds very simple, but we don't live in a world where that's, that idea is even, it doesn't have any currency, like either fate and, you know, some impersonal force in the world affects us, steers us one way or another, causes things to happen, or just things happen on their own because it's all material and everything is physical.

[37 : 20] Or perhaps, and this is probably more salient, I have the ability to shape my life.

And there's another thing that there's all over the culture, right? Like, you're creating your life. You're making yourself something. We even have that, that phrase, you know, make something of yourself.

We can't actually make anything of ourselves. God has made us. And that means there are certain givens about who we are, about our limitations, about our responsibilities.

Some guy, honestly, I don't know who this guy is. I should have looked it up. Terry Eagleton, maybe he's a philosopher. I don't know. He says, he says, God owns the world and is in charge of it.

It is not, this is the beginning of the quotation, our possession to be molded and manipulated how we please. We are called to be stewards over the earth and all of creation.

[38 : 28] As humanity, God called us to that. But we're not, we don't have that power over creation to make of it something that it's not.

And even more. And I think this is where we see it in our culture to make of ourselves. What, what we want to be, what we aspire to, to make decisions about our identity.

And get into that a little bit in a few minutes, but just trying to stay on the outline a little bit. Gratitude, gratitude, this idea that's not necessary, points us to praise and thanks for the gift.

Our culture, in contrast, has a commitment to necessity, mastery, calculation, and certainty. This is David Bentley Hart. Another, another writer who's been hugely influential, and he'll be on the bibliography for sure, is Christopher Watkin, who has a book called Biblical Critical Theory, which does way better than me what I'm doing, okay, and walking through what the Bible teaches.

And what, so I, it's, a lot of this is derivative from him, but also other, other authors. And he could, he talks about how we have evolved from, so we, in the West, you know, probably particularly, maybe particularly, the United States, you know, but, we've evolved from a market economy, to a market society, where everything can be bartered, everything has a price, everything can be, can be quantified.

[40 : 18] I've been struck, and it's just a, I don't even know if this is going to make any sense, but, but in all this reading, one of the things I've been struck with, is the, is the pressure to, measure everything.

In our world, we measure everything. So, you know, I wear a watch, that tells me, how much I moved in the day. We, sometimes, some of us have sleep apps, that measure, our sleep, and the sleep cycles, and all that.

And, maybe that's helpful. I've always thought, well, if I had a good sleep, I usually know it. Like, if I had bad sleep, I usually know it. But, you know, there are uses for these things.

These can be helpful tools, right? But, everything is measured. I'm looking at the clock, as I teach, and, this is measured, in, seconds, and minutes.

Our time is measured in hours. It's all very precise. In the West, we, we set up a meeting for, you know, four o'clock in the afternoon. We expect it to start at four o'clock.

[41 : 26] That's a particularly Western thing. Not true in many other cultures. But, this precision, and certainty, and this, we assign value, based on utility.

What's it worth? What does it give to us? This is what makes something valuable. you know, you can see it in a lot of ways, but you can also see the tensions, that this creates.

Do we look at something like children? What utility, does a toddler, bring to my life? Now, I can think of a few things, but, let's be real.

Like, it's, it's, I'm pouring a lot more into that toddler, than the toddler's pouring into me, right? At this stage, someday, this, you know, hopefully this toddler will be pouring a lot into me, as my own kids are, but, this, so this sense that, everything has a purpose, that can be manipulated, and used, traded for, valued.

I read a book this fall, which I absolutely loved. It's a book by Ed Young, who's a journalist, called An Immense World.

[42 : 43] And the book is about, the senses, the physical senses, of all kinds of creatures, in the world. It was so, amazing.

Full of, you know, how many eyes does this octopus have? How many, you know, things like how, the way a bat, echo locates, how does that work?

And the, you know, what can a dog smell? Like all of this stuff, and it sounds kind of like, well yeah, we knew some of that, but, but if you read the book, you'll be like, your jaw will be on the floor, like frequently.

That was my experience. And I loved it, because I saw this bounty, and this gratuity, in God's creation. The author, on the other hand, always pressed, and he did tons of interviews, with scientists, who were studying, these things, they were always pressing for, what is the evolutionary value, of this trait?

Why did they evolve this? And, I mean, I'm sure there's something interesting there, it's not like a worthless pursuit, to figure out, well what does this do, for this creature?

[44 : 01] And it can enhance, your appreciation, for the creature, and for the creation, and for what God has done. But, maybe sometimes, God just threw something in, because it was beautiful.

Maybe he created it this way, to make my jaw drop, as I'm reading, in October of 2024. You know, maybe, he created it, to bring him glory.

Which is what that book did for me, it caused me to praise, and glorify God. And I, I'm still like, like man, I love that book. I'd start rereading it again, except I loaned it to someone.

Like, it was so amazing to me. But that undercurrent, of always, what's the value? What's the, you know, what's the payoff, for this creature, that they can smell like this, or that they can see in this way?

Or what's the point, of lateral lines on a fish? Or what's the, you know, it was always like, how does this help this creature survive? And of course, all of this stuff, does help the creature survive.

[45 : 09] God is not, you know, he doesn't, doesn't not care about that. And his world, is orderly. And there are reasons, for things. But, I think often, of creatures, at the bottom of the sea, that no one can see.

No one, perhaps, has ever seen, that are, like, strikingly beautiful. Every now and then, someone will discover something, and it'll be like, this thing is amazing.

But, for thousands, and thousands of years, millennia, no one saw it, except God. And, in that way, that creature, brought him glory, right?

And brought him delight, and joy. And now we see it, it brings us delight, and joy, and that's part of what God is doing, in creation. So, alright, I gotta move on from that, because, I could go on and on.

So, another book that I read, that was really influential, on me, is a book by Alan Noble, who's, teaches English, at, Baylor, I think. But, his book is called, We Are Not Our Own.

[46 : 15] He says, I have several books, and I commend them all to you. We are not our own. And, and he writes, so our identity is not for us to create, it is given, this is not him, this is me.

Our young people, are increasingly feeling responsible, to make themselves, what they want to be. However, identity flows, from, what God made us to be.

Right, that's where we should be getting our identity. God created us with certain, gifts, and abilities, and givens. We are, first of all, his creature. That creates an identity.

Anyway, this is, now this is, Alan Noble's words. We've created a society, based on the assumption, that we are our own, and belong to ourselves. But if this anthropology, is fundamentally wrong, then we should expect people, to suffer from their, malformed habitat.

If I am my own, and belong to myself, the first and most, significant implication, is that I am, wholly responsible, for my life. This is both, an exhilarating, and terrifying thought.

[47 : 28] And it's not just, that I'm responsible, for my personal survival, for food, and shelter, and so on. I also need, a reason to live. I need purpose. I need direction. I need some way, to know, when I'm failing at life, and when I'm succeeding, when I'm living ethically, and when I'm not.

I must have some way, of determining, on my deathbed, that I lived, a good full life. Human life, is simply too hard, and too miraculous, to lack a purpose.

And then Noble unfolds, how we were, you know, much of what I've been saying, we were created, for God's glory, to glorify him, and enjoy him forever. Out of that essence, that telos, that end, that goal, flows our identity.

First, it tells us, of our general identity, as creatures, centered and created, in God's image. Second, if we believe in Christ, we are children of God, and in union with Christ. Third, we are male, or female.

Fourth, we have various traits, talents, intelligences, abilities, and giftings from God, physical, mental, and spiritual. Fifth, we have various tastes, and interests, but all of those elements, should point back, to our telos, for the reason that God made us, what we are made for.

[48 : 45] Our gifts are there, to be used to glorify God, by blessing our neighbor, or edifying the church, for example. Our identity, should be grounded, in our orientation, toward God.

But in the modern world, we often work backward, allowing our tastes, and interest, to select our talents, and then even our sex, or gender, and finally, our relationship to God, and our own chosen telos, our own, the goals we have for ourselves.

So that, that last quote came out of, his sub-stack, which I also would commend to you, if you're into that. So this idea, that we're not our own, you know, I, I look at, young people today, and the pressure, to create who you are, and the pressure to, like, you know, I mean, this is, it's kind of commonplace to say, but when I was growing up, I wasn't asked to determine, if I was male or female, or something else.

That wasn't, on the table. Now, and I, I was acutely aware of that, because as a young, as a child, I desperately wanted to be a boy, but, you know, in my family, the only way you could turn into a boy, was by kissing your elbow, and I could never do it.

So that was that. Like, it was a given, and I still can't kiss my elbow, and so it wasn't, it wasn't, it was a concern for me, as a kid, but, it wasn't an ongoing concern, because I, okay, this is what I am, like, I gotta live with this, okay, and, you know, and I came to be, quite reconciled, and grateful, but, but, if I had been, eight years old, desperately wanted to be a boy, today, I may well have been encouraged, to become a boy, and the pressure, on someone, to become, to become whatever you want to become, strikes me as really huge, like, I didn't have to make all these decisions about my identity, I didn't, I, I knew, I was born in this family, I was born female, I was born, you know, with a love for language,

[51 : 06] I was born intelligent, I was born, somewhat athletic, those were the givens, right, and, I didn't have to make choices, about all those things, and I think, young people today, are making a lot of choices, that, I never, they were just not options for me, and I'm so grateful, because I would have made stupid choices, like, I would have tried to be a boy, and that would not have worked, it would not have satisfied me, it would not have fulfilled my life, because that's not what God made me, now, I have, I have tremendous compassion for this generation, that's trying to sort these things out, because, you know, you think it's bad going to the cereal aisle, of a grocery store, and trying to pick out a cereal, imagine if you have to pick out, everything about yourself, and choose, and then make that happen, no thank you, so there's a tremendous amount of pressure, to do that, like, all these things are on the table, and they shouldn't be, they shouldn't be, there are givens, but we don't live in a culture, that believes in those givens, finally, you know,

I have more, naturally, finally, as for some big implications, I've talked about a lot of implications, this morning, but, one of the things that I think, that really struck me, in a conversation, not long ago, with my aunt, who is not a believer, is, we cannot assume, that, other people, hear the word, God, and have in their heads, what I have in my head, right, so I have this sense, of a personal, transcendent, but imminent, involved, God, who has agency, and who has rights over me, all of that, that's not, I was talking to my aunt, and, and I realized, mostly later, like, she was not, she, she wasn't thinking of God, as personal in any way, it was a vague force out there, maybe, you know, that's what God was, and she could decide, what God was, and,

I realized, like, no wonder, we didn't get anywhere, in our conversation, because, because I didn't start, early enough, right, I didn't start with, who is God, like, is that all he is, or is he, the creator, of heavens and earth, and I think, you know, to varying degrees, in our lives, we're going to have people, we're going to have some people, who have a similar image, even non-Christians, who have a similar image, because they were raised, in the church, or they, you know, they were heavily influenced, by that, I was raised in New England, I was not involved, in church, as a child, I was not introduced, to all that stuff, but even in my home, non-Christian family, I had a sense of a God, that I could pray to, right, that, presumably, could hear my prayers, and do something about it, but, that's increasingly rare, I think, for our neighbors, so, there are, about four million, other things, that could be said, about this, and this is why,

I only got to creation, and I'm, and I'm, not closing, much in time, I want to, I'll leave some time, next week, for any questions, or comments, but we have to go now, sorry, let me just close, in prayer, Heavenly Father, you created all things, and you created us, and we give you thanks, give you praise, grant us, by your spirit, that we might live lives, that glorify you, that point to you, as our creator, and as a good, and personal, and powerful, and responsible, God, who rules our lives, to whom we owe, everything, that we are, and everything, that we have, Lord, help us to, to bring that, recognition, of who you are, into our relationships, with people, both within, and without the church, thank you Lord, in Jesus name,

Amen.