

Lesson Two – “Philosophy & Ethics: Says Who?”

Introduction

According to contemporary culture, what you see is what you get. Nothing exists beyond the material universe. So, the world (and the universe) is a closed box—a cosmic cube that embraces all of reality.

But when God is excluded, philosophy loses its universal reference point and cannot discover true reality. And without God, it makes no sense to talk about right and wrong,

Quote Unquote

What did they say? Fill in the blanks as you watch this presentation.

1. See to it that no one takes you _____ through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends upon human tradition. – Colossians 2:8
2. The _____ is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be. – Carl Sagan
3. We are bombarded by _____ _____ from everywhere. – Del Tackett
4. Philosophy is a scientific quest to discover _____ _____. – R.C. Sproul
5. God has given us the _____ so that we might understand the _____. – Del Tackett
6. When I die, I am absolutely certain that I’m going to be completely _____. – William Provine
7. Morality looks at the verb “is”... Ethics looks at the word “_____.” – R.C. Sproul
8. Only ____ percent of born-again believers in America have a biblical worldview. – Del Tackett
9. The church’s singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a _____ _____...that governs every area of existence. – Charles Colson
10. We are called as Christian people not to be conformed to this world but to be _____. – Del Tackett

Notes or Questions

While watching the video, use this space to record your thoughts, any facts you want to remember, questions that arise, etc.

TRUTH 1 – Trapped in the Box

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.” - Colossians 2:8

The world has been taken captive by the idea that the cosmos is all that is, ever was, or ever will be.

1. What does Dr. Tackett mean by “assumptive language”? Aside from its use in Carl Sagan’s old TV series, what are some more current examples in the popular culture?
2. Do you sense that most people are satisfied to be part of a purely materialistic universe (the “cosmic cube”)? Why or why not? What impressions do you get from your non-Christian friends or family members? How do they attempt to cope with life “inside the box”?

TRUTH 2 – Outside the Box

The Bible says that God actually exists outside the universe. He is not part of it, but He created it and is active within it.

1. Why does it matter that God is not part of “the box” but is independent of it?
2. How important is it to you that God chose to reveal Himself in a special way as well, not just through His creation? What if He had chosen not to intervene in history? Or what if He came to us in Christ but never left a written record of it? Is it possible to take the Bible for granted?

“The objects of philosophy are to ascertain facts or truth, and the causes of things or their phenomena; to enlarge our views of God and his works.” Noah Webster, 1828

American Dictionary of the English Language

TRUTH 3 – It’s Dark Inside the Box

When philosophy leaves out God and looks for answers to life only within the natural world, it cannot discover reality.

1. What sort of empty spiritualism do you notice in your community that is being offered as a substitute for belief in a transcendent God? What is its attraction?
2. Was there ever a time in your life when you tried to discover “universal” truths without looking to the Bible for answers? If so, describe your search. How successful were you?
3. Define postmodernism. How should we speak to loved ones who doubt the very existence of objective truth?

TRUTH 4 – Anarchy in the Box

Without God, there is no basis for ethics. Right and wrong make no sense in a naturalistic universe.

1. Have you ever known a person who genuinely did not believe in any ethical standard? Why is it impossible to live by that belief?
2. How do you differentiate right from wrong? Is the Bible your only guide? What about your conscience (Romans 1:32, 2:14-15)? And what about the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25)?
3. What does it mean to say that morality is rooted in God’s very nature? Why does He want us to reflect His character by our attitudes and behavior (Genesis 1:26-27; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:16; 1 John 3:2)?

TRUTH 5 – Escaping the Box

We are called not just to adopt intellectually a biblical worldview, but also to have our minds renewed so we really believe the realities of which the Bible speaks.

1. Explain what Dr. Tackett meant by your “personal worldview.” What are some ways in which your personal worldview is less than biblical?
2. How do we go about having our minds renewed? List some practical steps toward that goal?
3. What sort of people do you think God would like us to be transformed into? Be specific.

Wrap-Up

Even the most outspoken advocates of “cosmic cube” thinking and relativistic ethics cannot live by their own reductionist and materialistic principles. On the other hand, many contemporary Christians have unwittingly become “conformed to this world” - taken captive by the assumptions of our age. So, it is imperative that we think more aggressively about what it means to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

What is What?

Here’s an exercise to try on your own. Draw a line from each term in the first column to its definition in the second column. Terms are found in the lecture or at mytruthproject.org.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Cosmic cube | a. Scientist and host of “Cosmos” TV series |
| 2. Assumptive language | b. The material world is all that is, was, or ever will be |
| 3. Ethics | c. Set of truth claims that purport to describe reality |
| 4. Postmodernism | d. How a person or group of people <i>should</i> act |
| 5. Formal worldview | e. Present in, but separate from, the created universe |
| 6. Carl Sagan | f. Truth claims that actually drive how we act and feel |
| 7. Transcendent | g. Truth derived from nature and natural causes |
| 8. Immanent | h. Outside and independent of the material universe |
| 9. Personal worldview | i. Statements that hide the key ideas they’re based on |
| 10. Spiritual naturalism | j. No single worldview can claim to be the truth |

Check It Out

For your reference and further review, here are some of the key Scripture passages that were mentioned in the video you just watched.

Mark 9:2
Romans 12:2
2 Corinthians 3:18
Colossians 2:8
2 Timothy 2:24-26