

1 A Search for Beginnings

“Your dad has forgotten more about hogs than most farmers ever know.”

I was unloading sacks of hog feed from the pickup truck and stacking them in the storage trailer. At first, my teenage mind was surprised by his statement and wondered why this college student would say that. He wasn't much older than me, and had only been with my father for a couple of hours that morning. Then I realized he had been visiting a lot of farmers in the state for his research. He really did have an idea what other farmers knew, and he had just spent the morning following my father around the various pens and buildings that housed hundreds of pigs on the farm, asking questions and getting lectures. Maybe Dad did have more knowledge about his area of expertise than most men.

Dad was a hog farmer, and used biochemistry and genetics and worked with the local state university to develop his swine herd to the point that a lot of other farmers would buy their breeding stock from him to make their own herd stronger. He developed most of his methods while I was young, so I did not understand the value of his expertise until later, but I learned the value of science while on that farm in northwestern Indiana.

Another thing I learned from my father was that strong families make strong churches, which make strong communities, which contribute to a strong nation. I'm not

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sure where he first heard that concept, but I often heard him make that statement, and I know his parents instilled a strong family ethic in him and his siblings. He had been a prisoner of the Nazis in World War II and knew the consequences of that worldview, and had also seen America's strength. The value of strong families and strong churches was part of his worldview, and he expressed it by requiring his children to attend either Sunday school or church every Sunday .

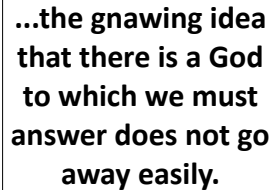
My early worldview was a mixture of lessons from my family, the schools, and my own misguided thinking. The church told me stories from the Bible as if they were important stories to know, but not like they had any purpose beyond getting us to behave. My school teachers taught us the world was millions of years old and the universe billions of years old. So I lived for years with a worldview based on contrary presuppositions, which I hoped would sort themselves out eventually, because my parents held the same beliefs, and they seemed normal. Growing up in rural America, some of my Sunday school teachers were also public school teachers, so there had to be some solution to the contrasts which very few people discussed. When the ideas of geologic ages and evolution were first explained in school, there was some murmuring amongst the students who had heard the Bible stories. But evolution was presented as such scientific fact that we accepted it and wondered what that meant for the existence of God.

Now, given the option to accept and live by an idea that requires responsibility to God for good behavior, or to accept and live by opinions which change with circumstances and don't follow rules, I personally preferred the idea that there was no God and we just evolved. I had been taught the complete evolution hoax; I loved dinosaurs, and I was pretty sure that they really had existed, as the fossil evidence seemed pretty real. I had my own collection of fossils. However, the gnawing idea that there is a God to which we

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must answer does not go away easily. My parents' firm belief in God, although not reconciled with the "scientific facts," meant that each week I still heard the Bible stories and each week I had a desire to believe they were true historical events and not just myths.

I remember learning Noah's tale, and then hearing of a theory that the ark was still up in some mountains somewhere. I remember especially wishing that somehow, someone would find the ark still intact enough to prove that story was a real event. I thought that if the ark was found it would prove that the rest of the Bible after Genesis chapter 6 was true, and maybe give us hope that the previous chapters were also true.



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This desire for proof of the truth of the Scriptures was so strong that I can still remember where I was when I was thinking about these possibilities.

I was looking for "scientifically valid" reasons to believe the Bible, because if there was a heaven, I really wanted to go there, and evolution's opinion that there is no afterlife did not make sense to me. Humans displayed too much creativity, emotion and forethought to not be eternal. I was not familiar with the Scripture that says: "*He has put eternity in their hearts*" (Ecclesiastes 3:11), but that gnawing idea that there must be a God had not been replaced by any better possibility. Because of the school's emphasis on materialism, I was hoping that science would somehow prove the Bible, instead of trusting the Bible first and expecting man's scientific theories and discoveries to confirm the Bible's truths.

The Quest for Family

My wife Lynn and I were both raised by parents who

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celebrated over fifty years of marriage. We both grew up with the benefits of stay-at-home mothers. However, we both attended public schools and a college where that lifestyle was derided as old-fashioned and impractical. We really did not understand the reasons for it other than we saw and heard that it was important to our parents and that it worked. Both of our parents spoke of the importance of Mom being at home for their growing children in such terms and with such conviction that we knew it was the way we wanted to live our adult lives, although we really could not express any reason other than it was “good for the children.”

As our relationship grew toward marriage, we attended a “family seminar” at a church near the college I was attending. The speaker, Philip Zampino, taught us more biblical truth about families than we had ever heard.

I had recently learned a lot of different truths about the Christian life, and had been digging into the Word of God to reinforce some doctrines I had learned. But almost all the doctrines I knew were about “church life”: the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, our position and standing in Christ, worshiping and praying in the Spirit, and trusting Christ's blood to cleanse from sin and overcome the enemy. These were important “elementary principles” and became a foundation which has not had to be re-laid,¹ but this seminar was the first time I heard someone apply scriptural principles to family life. Rev. Zampino applied the Word of God directly to normal life, which encouraged us that we could base every part of our lives on the Word of God. Among other principles, we learned that a man is responsible before God for the spiritual growth of the members of his family, which we included in our marriage vows a few months later.

God confirmed that weekend's lessons many ways, one of which was by making it clear to us that we were supposed to marry. He re-confirmed it later that night through a dear sister whose husband had been involved in laying the

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foundation mentioned earlier. When we went to visit Mike and Dede Smith and shared what we believed we had learned from God, she just smiled and said, “It’s about time. God showed me that two weeks ago. I was wondering when He would tell you.” The Lord also healed both Lynn and I of back injuries at the Sunday service that weekend. I still remember looking up after receiving my healing and seeing Lynn also receiving ministry from the Holy Spirit. I later discovered that I had also been healed of a chronic respiratory condition. Lynn had been desiring that God would send someone to encourage her in her Christian walk, as she was getting very little spiritual encouragement where she was. She went back home to continue her cosmetology training, and met a new student who was a more mature believer and with whom encouragement and growth became a part of each day.

After we married, God began to teach us biblical principles of family life, even before we needed them. He showed us the mandate to discipline our children before our firstborn was a year old, well before she needed it. He showed us the biblical pattern for seeking a marriage partner and the compound dangers of dating before our children were interested, so we could raise them without the false expectation that they had to find their mates themselves. And He taught us the need for multi-generational faithfulness before we became grandparents.

At the same time, God taught us more about creation through several creation ministries. My desire to see “scientific proof” of the Bible’s accuracy began to be fulfilled, and our zeal for sharing the truth of creation grew as we saw how lives inside and outside the church were being destroyed by evolution’s poison.

Pastor Bill Inman taught us that God expected believers to “*search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so*” (Acts 17:11), and he encouraged us to take notes and re-examine his teachings in the Word. I learned

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about the principle of the first occurrence, and began to include Genesis in most of my Bible studies.

We met a ministry that assisted families of incorrigible children, and heard many teens' testimonies in which they said "I was raised in a Christian home." But they had rebelled, and caused hurt to themselves and their families, which often seemed irreparable except by God's grace. At that time, we were youth workers and parents of young children, and we cried to God, "Why? What was missing in these Christian homes that the children would turn away from their family's faith?"

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Over time, the passions for biblical family life and creation ministry began to grow into a concept that based practical family life skills on the beginning of the Bible, where families were created and where so many principles were established. We did not see any ministries combining these two biblical aspects for the church. As God increased this desire He showed us more practical principles and gave us grace to learn how to apply them to real life. We learned some things the hard way, but we are so thankful to God for all the just-in-time teachings that occurred to keep or deliver us from the world's ways for our family. We made mistakes, mostly by not applying the lessons God taught us. As our children grew and others commented about how "perfect" our family seemed, (of course, they never really knew us very well) my best response was "God is good, and His Word is true."

The idea of "Families from the Beginning" germinated for a long time, until the Lord opened a door for us to teach it as a Sunday school class in the church to which He had recently moved us. We began to do some advertising among the young married couples in our church, whom we believed

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were our target group, and prayed and prepared. Only one couple came; they weren't from the young married couples group, but had some children of their own and were helping raise some of her siblings. At first we were discouraged, but we knew God desired faithfulness to Him, not an emphasis on us, so we prepared each lesson carefully. This family had a mix of dysfunctions, but the couple wanted to learn from God how this seemingly impossible task could be done. The teenage siblings often came along to the class, which we welcomed, because we saw in the Scriptures that Jesus taught entire crowds, without separating them by age.² This family challenged everything we taught, making us defend each principle and give practical suggestions for real life. As they applied the lessons, we saw that family teachings from Genesis could be powerful.

Next, I had the opportunity to present these ideas in a rescue house which the church operated for some homeless men. The leader of the ministry asked me to do a weekly teaching for this group. I mentioned the "Families from the Beginning" class, and he said "Anything will do; these men just need regular teaching." So with that encouragement I presented these concepts to a group of "hopeless" men, and again we saw that the principles of family life in Genesis could change men forever.

We began the classes with this question: If God made us in His image and after His likeness, and we are to be conformed to the image of His Son, shouldn't our relationships be in the image of God's relationships, and our families in the likeness of His family?

Henry M. Morris, in his classic book "The Genesis Record" stated, "The blessings and joys of a true Christian home are worth all the study and prayers and effort that can be expended to attain such a home."³ We pray that our study and effort will challenge you to your own study and prayer and effort to achieve a home that reflects God's Word and provides a foretaste of heaven to all who enter it.

Families from the Beginning

Chapter 1: The Search for Beginnings

Applications

1. The author's father believed that strong families make strong churches, which make strong communities, which contribute to a strong nation. Have you observed this pattern in your community or nation, either positively or negatively?
2. How did the “gnawing idea that there is a God to which we must answer” effect your life? When did you first feel eternity in your heart?
3. The authors learned “that a man is responsible before God for the spiritual growth of the members of his family.” What do you think is the basis for this idea? Do you agree or disagree?
4. “The blessings and joys of a true Christian home are worth all the study and prayers and effort that can be expended to attain such a home.” Do you think this is a true statement? Why or why not? What will you do about it?