Does a Fish Know it is Wet?

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An Introduction to Worldviews

For a fish in the ocean, all it knows is water. Born in water, it lives, breeds and dies in the water. Imagine you could have a conversation with that fish. You might ask him about his life, his early childhood, the perils of raising a family at sea, and the benefits of good schooling. But if you asked that unusually eloquent fish, 'Do you know you are wet?', he would probably not even understand the question. His whole world is water. He knows nothing else. Perhaps he has heard of fresh air, a place unlucky fish go to die, but he's not superstitious and doesn't feel there's any reason to get carried away with fairy tales. Water is the only reality he knows.

In the same way, each of us is born into a certain reality. Perhaps we are born in the West, with a fast decaying Judeo-Christian moral heritage, the law of Rome and the philosophy of Athens shaping our world. Perhaps we were born in the east, with the law of the Vedas, in a world shaped by the caste system and the legacy of colonialism. Perhaps we are a child of Africa, that warm and colourful continent, where tribal culture, veneration of ancestors and Ubuntu shape the landscape. Wherever you were born, there was a group of people who showed you how life could be lived. Who taught you what was important to know. Who disciplined you over what they called 'wrong'.

> Just as the fish has no frame of reference for a reality outside of water, so most of us have a worldview that is arrived at unconsciously.

We are shaped without knowing, conditioned without choosing. Just as the fish has no frame of reference for a reality outside of water, so most of us have a worldview that is arrived at unconsciously. A lens of unquestioned beliefs through which we view everything. This lens will shape our understanding of who we are and where we came from, how we decide what is good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, and our concept of perfection and imperfection.

Don't be a Fossil

A fossil, simply put, is the preserved remains of a dead thing. When an animal or plant gets rapidly buried under sediment, it's form is preserved. However, because it is totally surrounded and under great pressure, it begins to change. Over time, the organic material is replaced by inorganic minerals from the surrounding rock – what it was is replaced by what it is in. The fossil that we dig up contains nothing of the original creature, only a stone impression of what it once was.

People are the same. The Bible tells us to be in the world but not of it, but it is easy, when surrounded and under great pressure, to let go of who you should be and become the very thing that surrounds you. The Bible tells us, 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Romans 12:2).

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We have a choice. No longer are we shaped without knowing or conditioned without choosing. When we come to Christ, the Bible says, we are translated from the kingdom we have been in, to the Kingdom of God. In Christ, there are no longer cultural or national distinctions – we take on a new identity. The Bible calls this 'putting on Christ' or putting on the new self (Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24). With that new identity comes a new way of thinking; a whole new philosophy of life. A new understanding of who we are and where we came from. A new way of discerning what is good, acceptable and perfect. God wants to give us a new lens. He wants our world view to be arrived at intentionally, by the study of His Word, His Character and His Ways.

Get to Know God

Practically what that means for us is:

- **Reading the Bible** – The Bible, though written by men, was breathed out by God. Every part of it is useful, teaching us how God thinks and how He acts. When we know how God thinks, we can discipline ourselves to think like Him.
- **Participating in the Body** – The Bible calls the church the body of Christ. Like a human body, it needs every part in place so it can function properly. When we surround ourselves with followers of Jesus, we can challenge one another and encourage each other, as one body, to think right and do right.
- **Talking to God** – The Bible gives us the big picture of how to think, for specifics we should also talk to God. Prayer is not just asking for stuff, it can be an ongoing conversation, where you speak and God speaks back. None of us hears God perfectly, so test what you hear using the previous two steps. Does what you hear agree with what you know of the Bible? Do others in your local church, particularly your leaders, agree with what you think God is saying?

These practical steps, will set us on a course of having our minds renewed. As we begin to see things as God does, we will begin to think as He does. When we think like God does, we will act in a way that pleases Him.

Also in this Series: To God or Not to God