

Aim of lesson

To show the young people that the theory of evolution is a long way from an established fact, and to give them confidence in dealing with the subject at school. The aim is not to give them ammunition to argue with their teachers or friends, but to enable them to assert with assurance that they do believe the Bible account.

Bible background

2 Peter 3:3-10

Preparation required

If you haven't done so already it may be helpful to read through the introductory notes which come before the preceding lesson. Read through the students' notes and familiarise yourself with what they say. They may be a bit technical for your young people, depending on their age and scientific ability. If they are likely to struggle, find, if you can, a way of explaining it to them in terms they can understand.

You may have some other useful material, in which case prepare to talk to the young people about it.

Suggested outline of lesson

Look at 2 Peter 3:3-10 with the young people. Peter was not writing about the principle of uniformity - that geological processes operate in the same way now as they have always done. It does however make some important points:

- God has intervened miraculously in the world in the past, and will do so again
- We should not look at the apparent stability of the earth, and assume that it has always been that way, or will be so in the future.

What difference does evolution make?

Get the young people to think about these questions and to fill in the important points. The answers below are not 'correct'; just illustrations of the difference our understanding of our origins makes.

	If there is no God, and we evolved	If God created us
What are we?	We are a chance collection of chemicals; at best, just very clever animals.	We are the handiwork of a great creator, so each of us is of inestimable worth.

	If there is no God, and we evolved	If God created us
Is there right or wrong?	Not in any absolute sense. Maybe we should encourage evolution by ensuring that only the fittest survive - Hitler's idea.	Right and wrong are determined by a greater power than us.
Is there any purpose in life?	Not really. The best any creature can hope for is to survive as comfortably, for as long, as possible.	If God has created the universe he did it for a reason, and he will make sure that his purpose is carried out.

What are the arguments for evolution?

Ask the young people what arguments are normally used for evolution. They are likely to say something like:

- Fossils of simpler creatures are found in older rocks, more advanced creatures in younger rocks.
- Fossils show that creatures have developed over time to become more complex and sophisticated.
- Evolution depends on the survival of the fittest, and we can see that principle all around us.

Now look with the young people at the points in the students' notes.

Origins of Life

This section is about DNA, and makes two main points:

- DNA is of itself extremely complicated, and nobody really knows how the first life could have begun.
- The DNA in the cells of the simplest creatures is not necessarily less complex than that of mammals and humans. So there is a sense in which life has not got more advanced at all.

The difference between vertebrates and invertebrates

We cannot argue with the principles of genetic mutation or of the survival of the fittest, which are the planks used to support the theory of evolution - we see them in action all around us. The issue is whether these principles are able to explain the vast complexity of life, and there are many unanswered questions, like this one.

The evolution of the horse

This section indicates that the example of horse evolution, often quoted, does not prove that much, even assuming that it is accurate. Get the young people to

look at the picture of the two horses - the 'very first' one, and a modern one. The differences are relatively few, and apart from their size they look very similar.

The peppered moth

Again, this is a good example of evolution within a species, but that is all.

From a shrew to a whale?

Finally, the example of the whale. The extract from 'Life on Earth' acknowledges that it is difficult to believe that a small creature a bit like a squirrel could evolve into a whale, and admits that there is no evidence that it did. 'The logic of the deduction is undeniable' only because if we deny the existence of God there is no alternative.

Relevance to our lives

The point of all this is not to enable the young people to score points off their friends or their teachers. It is fundamentally to get them to realise that we are not fools to believe in divine creation.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, it is sad that people do not recognise your hand at work in creation, in the wonders that we see around us. Help us not to doubt you, and give us patience and courage to explain to others what we believe. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Other suggestions for activities

There are many books available which you may find helpful and which you may be able to use in this lesson.

If you have planned this lesson well enough in advance you may like to suggest to the young people that if they have any school books which deal with evolution they could bring them with them, and you could then discuss the contents in the light of the points this lesson makes.