

**Beginnings – ORIGIN** *(Where did we come from?)*

- Only Two Choices
- Realize the Significance
- Is it Faith or Science?
  - LAB - Lookable, Accessible, Breakable
- Guess at the Evidence
- Inspect the Evidence
  - Universe = "Decay"
  - Age of the Earth = "Can't Say"
  - Origin of Life by Chance = "No Way"
  - Evolution of Species and Man = "Lacks Genes and Tweens"
- No Compromise
  - DON'T - Death, Orders of Creation, Names in genealogies, Ten Commandments refer to seven-day week

**Intent of Life – LIFE** *(Why are we here?)*

- Love - GOD and MAN
- Increase - GROW
- Faithfulness - Time, Talent, Treasure
- Eternity – Past, Present, Future

**Authority – POWER** *(Who's in charge?)* A God Who is:

- Personal and Loving
- Omnipotent
- Wise and All-Knowing
- Everywhere and Eternal
- Righteous and Reliable

**Standards – RULES** *(What are the rules?)* God's rules are:

- Revealed supernaturally, not derived by reason
- Universal and apply to everyone, everywhere, all the time
- Loving
- Enforced
- Steadfast

# U - Universal

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*Those who devise wicked schemes are near, but they are far from your law. Yet you are near, O LORD, and all your commands are true. Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever. Psalms 119:150-152*

*By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. Isaiah 45:23*

## God's rules apply to all people in all places at all times.

The term "Universal" here means that the rules of right and wrong are absolute, not relative. God's rules apply to the cannibal in the jungles, the Buddhist of India, the Muslim of Saudi Arabia, the atheist of Russia, and the Eskimo in Alaska just like they apply to me. They apply now and they applied 4000 years ago and they will apply in the future. God's rules are not local or limited in their scope.

Throughout the Bible we see that God has always judged nations and people as being "wicked" ***even though those nations weren't His chosen people***. Israel's enemies were punished for wickedness, yet they had not "chosen" to recognize or accept God's rules. This demonstrates that all nations and people are judged by God's standards whether they profess to believe in God or not. There is no option to choose another standard – God's rules always apply.

In recent years our culture in the United States has gradually adopted a value system that says everyone's beliefs are equally valid *unless those beliefs are considered intolerant*. This has resulted in a reluctance to criticize anyone's beliefs, no matter how crazy, unless those beliefs make an exclusive claim to being true (like the Bible does). At the root of this value system is the concept that rules are not universal, and that what's right for one person is independent of what's right for another.

In answering the question "what are the rules" it is not acceptable for a Christian to imply something like "I believe in the Bible, but it's okay for you to use a different standard." While it's true that God allows people to deny Him, His truth is still the only truth. As we've discussed, truth only makes sense if it is an absolute because:

- Logically two contradictory ideas can't both be true at the same time
- The laws of logic themselves are dependent on an unchangeable God who can give us a rational mind

The Bible is the standard for truth and the standard for right and wrong. Other worldviews may contain truth in the areas in which they agree with the Bible. ***But where other worldviews differ from the Bible they are wrong, and they are wrong for everyone, everywhere, every time.***

## God's rules and the Church

One application of this principle is that God's instructions to His people are not limited by culture, time period, or current trends. The temptation is to judge God's rules based on "current wisdom", an evolutionary bias that assumes we know more today than people did in the past. During the Reformation period in church history the Church made good progress in returning to "Scripture Alone" as the standard. But the Reformation left much undone, and the church today has adopted many practices and concepts that are not found in Scripture. Examples include:

- Large church buildings funded by debt
- Youth groups and other age-segregated ministries that supplant parents as the spiritual authority and teachers for children
- Top-down leadership structures modeled after corporate organizations
- Program-centric ministries that try to meet all needs of all people via methods not supported by Scripture
- Women in the role of teaching and leading men
- Some "seeker-sensitive" churches that try to look like the world to attract worldly people in order to make them non-worldly(!?)
- Churches that are fixated on quantity of attendees rather than on depth of discipleship

Once again we see the temptation to make our reason our highest authority. If we are using models of ministry that aren't based on Scripture, we need to repent and revise. I like what Paul Washer said when one pastor told him that his church would kill him if he tried to reform some of these cherished areas. He told the man, "then die."