

# STRUGGLING

WITH

# GOD & ORIGINS

A PERSONAL STORY



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Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Romans 12:1–2

For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:12–13

# 1

## A Story About My Story

“**Y**ou want me to do what?!?”

“I want you to share your personal story.”

“Are you kidding me? Have you lost your mind? I didn’t go to university for twenty years so that I could tell silly little bedtime stories. I’ve got a PhD in theology that explored the interpretation of the creation accounts in the Bible, and I can translate Greek and Hebrew words in the Word of God standing on my head! I’ve also got a PhD in biology and I can explain how the teeth and jaws of animals have evolved over hundreds of millions of years with my eyes closed! And you want me to tell stories about my life?”

“That’s right. You can certainly talk about your views on how to interpret the first chapters of Scripture and how you think that God created living creatures, but you need to share your personal story. *It’s important for you to understand that sharing our stories is one of the most effective ways to communicate our cherished beliefs and spiritual experiences.* I am certain that my students will benefit from hearing about how you struggled with God and origins for many years.”

“That’s pathetic. I think you’re crazy. There is no darn way I will tell stories about my personal life in a university lecture. Never. Sorry. End of story!”

This was a conversation that happened in early 1997 only a month after I had finally finished university. And yes, I was a student for twenty years and I graduated at 43 years of age! I was invited to speak at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Regent was one of

the best graduate schools of evangelical theology at the time, and I was blessed to have completed two masters' degrees there, with one degree that focussed on Genesis 1–11. The person who was encouraging me to share my story was my former professor, Dr. Loren Wilkinson. He was a literary scholar who had had a huge impact on me. Like most Christians, I assumed that the correct and faithful way to read the biblical creation accounts was to read them literally. This is what I was taught in Sunday school at my church. But Wilkinson in the most gentle and respectful way encouraged me to re-think how the Holy Spirit had inspired the writers of the Bible.

So, what did I do at Regent? Even though I had said that I would never tell my story in a university lecture, I trusted Loren. The presentation was entitled, "Beyond the 'Evolution' vs. 'Creation' Debate." It outlined the various views of origins, including three positions held by evangelical Christians (see Appendix). I then explained a non-literal interpretation of the creation accounts in Genesis. The lecture also presented some of the scientific evidence for biological evolution. I ended the talk with my story of the many struggles I had experienced in trying to make sense of how God created the world and how he had inspired the first chapters of the Bible.

What was the response of the students? After the lecture, about fifty of the sixty students in the class came to the front and surrounded the lecture podium. The *only* questions they asked were about my personal story! They wanted to know more about my spiritual voyage. For example, how did I feel when I moved away from a strict literal understanding of the biblical creation accounts? Was there any sense of guilt? What did my church and Christian friends say about my new way to read Scripture? How did they react when I told them that I accepted evolution?

And who was in the last row of the classroom? Yes, it was Loren Wilkinson with a look on his face, as if to say, "I straightened you out on how to read the Bible, and now I'll straighten you out on how to teach at university!" To be sure, this experience back in 1997 has significantly shaped my academic career in that I often include personal stories in my teaching and writing. Thank you, Professor Wilkinson. This was another valuable lesson from you in my education.

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\* This lecture can be found at: <https://sites.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/wl.html>. There is also a high school version of the lecture at: <https://sites.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/wlws.html>. Both lectures include an episode with my personal story.

## Another Personal Story

I became a Christian in the spring of 1980 after being an immoral atheist for many years. By that summer I began to attend a wonderful evangelical church. It was such a breath of fresh air to be around Christians my age who wanted to follow Jesus and live a holy life. The senior pastor of this church had a mastery of the Bible. His sermons were filled with scriptural passages and he always showed us how these could be applied to our walk with the Lord. Thanks to this pastor and church, my faith grew quickly and the many lessons that I learned there continue to shape my spiritual voyage today.

On Wednesday evenings, I often attended church. There was a fifteen-minute period in the service called “The Witness Box.” Different people would share the story of how they became a Christian. However, many who spoke had lived shamefully sinful lives, and they often shared too many details from their past. As a new Christian, I was learning to discern when the Holy Spirit was talking to me, and I got the distinct message that people were bragging about their sins. I sensed a spiritual pride in their stories. As well, there were several Christians in my church who had followed Jesus from a very young age and had lived righteously, but they felt bad because they did not have a personal story of a dramatic conversion from a filthy sinner to a godly saint. Again, I sensed the Lord saying to me this was wrong. To have lived a life in rebellion against God is nothing to be proud of. And a story not filled with countless acts of debauchery is a great thing!

Now, I believe it is important that when we share our faith, we should admit our sins. For non-Christians who hear our story, it tells them that there is no sin too great that God will not forgive. It also says that the Lord can heal them from their sense of guilt and the harmful consequences of their sins. However, offering our spiritual journey should not degenerate into a gossipy, grocery store tabloid. We should never glorify the sins of our past, but instead honor the God who died on the Cross for our sins, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

My story is one of those dramatic conversions from a filthy and selfish lifestyle to a life of peace and joy in a personal relationship with Jesus. But let me make it very clear: I am not a perfect Christian. I am a sinner. It is by God’s grace that I experience the joy of trying to live by his holy laws and commands. In this book, I will share a few stories about where my sinfulness led me. I pray that these are not interpreted as boasts about sin or spiritual pride. There is nothing to be proud of with some of the

pathetic and shameful things I have done. But through these stories I want to show that there was a close connection between my behavior and my view of origins. How we understand the appearance of humans on earth shapes our worldview and ultimately the way we act in life. For example, if blind chance drives evolution, then the universe has no true purpose. For some people, like myself many years ago, this atheistic view of evolution leads to the belief that there is no ultimate right or wrong. They then assume that they can live selfishly without any moral standards. Indeed, the topic of origins is an important issue.

### **The Story of Jacob**

I want to share one last story. It is the well-known account in the Bible of when Jacob wrestled with God throughout the night, and then God gave Jacob the name “Israel.” Genesis 32:22–30 records,

That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So, Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.”

Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there. So, Jacob called the place Peniel saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.”

I believe that the story of Jacob is also the story of every one of us. I am convinced that to struggle with God is an essential part of our spiritual voyage. In fact, the word “Israel” is made up of two Hebrew words. The verb *sārāh* means “to struggle, wrestle, and persist.” The noun *ēl* refers to “God.” Christians often view the church as the “New Israel.” Therefore, we should expect that our journey of faith will include some difficult periods

of wrestling with God. I am convinced that the Lord allows these struggles so we can know him better and experience his unfathomable love for us.

This book is an expanded account of my personal story that I first offered in the lecture I delivered at Regent College in 1997. Over the years I have written short chapters on my spiritual voyage in various books.<sup>1</sup> Encouraged by the many positive comments of Christians who have read these, it became clear to me that most evangelical Christians struggle with God and origins, as I have. In sharing my story, I hope and pray that it encourages you and strengthens you in your love for the Lord and your love for his creation.

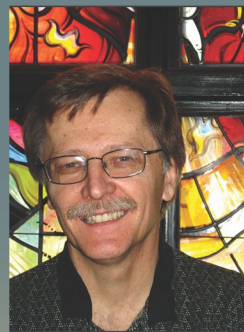


This is a story about struggling with God. As a freshman college student, Denis Lamoureux lost his boyhood Christian faith because of one course on evolution. With no spiritual foundation, he made medical school his idol and eventually became an immoral atheist. By God's grace, and in an answer to his mother's prayers, Denis read the Gospel of John and fell in love with Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace while serving in the military as a United Nations peacekeeper on the island of Cyprus.

This is also a story about struggling with origins. Like most evangelical Christians, Lamoureux was a staunch young earth creationist. But the Lord had a plan for his life and led him to complete a PhD in theology followed by a PhD in biology. Unexpectedly, Lamoureux discovered the Creator had evolved intelligently designed living creatures that declare his glory. Through miraculous signs and wonders, the Lord Jesus called Dr. Lamoureux to be a college professor and to proclaim a peaceful and complementary relationship between his evangelical Christian faith and the modern evolutionary sciences.



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Cover artwork: Jonah and the whale  
courtesy of Robert T. Barrett



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