

Signific'ants

April 13, 2008

EXPELLED



Class, we get to have a movie today! Actually it's a seven-minute preview of a movie. Take a look at your handout.

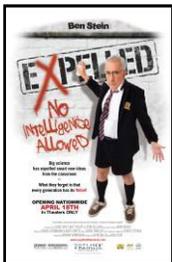
Q: How many of you know who Ben Stein is?

A: He's a lawyer, writer, law professor, economist (his work was cited by recent Nobel Prize winner George Akerlof), political pundit, and a presidential speech writer (for Ford and Nixon).

Mostly he was the monotone teacher in "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" and "The Wonder Years"! "Bueller? Bueller? ... Anyone? Anyone?"

He's hosted an Emmy-winning quiz show, "Win Ben Stein's Money", where contestants competed *against* Ben to win his paycheck.

And lately, he's become an outspoken advocate for Intelligent Design (the theory that physical and biological systems are the result of purposeful design rather than undirected chance).



Q: How many of you know about his new film: "Expelled"?

Some of the staff and I were able to attend a private screening in Seattle a couple of weeks ago.

We found this film to be powerful, and entertaining (actually *quite* funny), and eye-opening.

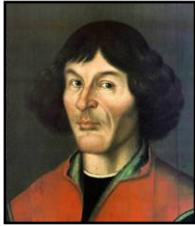
- It's *not* intended to persuade atheists to accept the claims of Intelligent Design; in fact they're "taken to task".
- It's intended to inform and incite those who believe in God, that scientific discussion and debate is being suppressed.

I think this is a timely film that every believer should see.

Showtimes for AMC (at the Cascade mall) are listed on your card.

PALE BLUE DOT

Q: The question is simple, yet profound: Do we have significance?



In 1543 AD, Nicolaus Copernicus began a scientific revolution by demonstrating that the Earth was not the center of the universe.

400 years later, this evolved into what is now known as the *Copernican Principle*, the idea that the Earth is un-designed, unexceptional, and insignificant.



Astronomer, astrochemist, and author Carl Sagan popularized this doctrine, in the 70's and 80's.

In 1977, two VoyagerS were launched to explore the outer planets, which they did for thirteen years.



Then, in 1990, Voyager 1 turned back to capture this photo from the edge of the solar system.

This is our planet, from four billion miles away!

Carl Sagan used this photo in his book: *Pale Blue Dot*.

Because of the reflection of sunlight off the spacecraft, the Earth seems to be sitting in a beam of light, as if there were some special significance to this small world. But, it's just an accident of geometry and optics. - *Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot, 1994, page 5*

Our posturing, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely *speck* in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. - *Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot, 1994, page 7*

It seems to make sense. Why would God bother to occupy His infinitely valuable agenda with our trivial and petty concerns?

David wrestled with this issue, and expressed it in Psalm 8:3-4:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? - Psalm 8:3-4 NIV

Q: Is that all we are Mister Sagan, cosmic mud randomly animated by a strike of lightning on an insignificant speck?



Where have I heard that ... “The planet is a lonely speck ... there’s no hint that help will come”?

Oh yeah, have you seen, “Horton Hears a Who”! The Whos live on a speck; and HUGE Horton, sacrifices himself because he deems them significant!

Q: If I thoughtlessly stepped on an ant, would you think of me as immoral, unethical, or indecent?

A: Of course not. Ants are too small and too insignificant to warrant that level of compassion or consideration.

Q: But what’s greater, the separation (difference), between ants and man, or the division between man and an infinite God?

A: Obviously, the difference between man and God is much greater.

Q: So, wouldn’t we mean *less* to Him than the ants do to us?

Q: How do we rectify this with a scripture like Matthew 10:29?

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. [He even concerned about sparrows?!] And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. - *Matthew 10:29-31 NIV*



Q: What is the *logic* behind this incredible, undeserved love?!

- [Well, first] Size does not equal significance.

We deem a little baby to be infinitely more precious than a filled oil tanker ... even at *today’s* pump price!

This is because:

- A. Babies are created in our image, and bear our likeness.
- B. Babies love us, depend on us, and are enamored with us.
- C. There’s no greater intimacy than with mother and child.
- D. They possess the potential and capacity to become caring, creative, contributing individuals ... unlike, say, a turnip!

When Jesus spoke about young children, He said:

If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. - *Mark 9:42 NIV*

Q: Does it bother you if someone neglects their pets? Why?
Q: Why do we have laws to protect animals against cruelty?
Q: Why do we feel it's wrong to shoot robins with BB guns?
Q: Why do you swerve if a bunny runs in front of your car?
Q: Why do you feel so bad when you hear the, "RUMF-RUMP"?!

A: Healthy humans intuitively act to protect lower life-forms; but, only to a point ... it usually doesn't carry down to ants.



It isn't the ants' insignificance, but man's incapacity to empathize.



And when we project *our* emotional limitations onto the nature of an infinite Creator-Father, we end up with warped concepts about lonely specks enveloped in uncaring cosmic darkness!

There's a scene, when Horton's flower (*the Who's "galaxy"*) is cast into an endless field of pink flowers. But, he searches until he finds the flower with the significant speck.

The Lord's vastly superior greatness doesn't mean He's *less* likely to love lower life forms, but *more* likely!

You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. - *Psalm 139:13-14 NIV*

Q: How would your compassion and concern toward ants change if *you* had created them? (A new life-form, conceived in your imagination, and carried out through your bio-craftsmanship.)

- You know their function, their purpose, and their design.

Then, someone walks into your lab ... their patent leather shoes softly stepping across the linoleum, and then a tiny *crunch!*

We didn't create the process of making babies; we just get to participate in it. And yet, just that simple involvement brings about profound, inexplicable, life-long emotional attachments.

Just try to imagine how God must adore His creation!

As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. - *Psalm 103:13-14 NIV*

Significance comes not from what we offer, but what we receive.