



September 14, 2008

Game Plan

I use computers every day and support a computer network on my day job so I am not against computer technology or its use. Computers are tools much like telephones and electric light bulbs; they have their place, but do not, or should not, define what life is about. To those who see computers as a social or entertainment portal, it is apparent that the influence of the world is entwined in the technology. Subtle influences are everywhere and this past week I became aware of a game that is being highly promoted called Spore. Several months ago I saw the game's pre-release artwork and thought that the designs were interesting. Players begin by choosing a distant planet in a galaxy that will serve as the basis for a life form that the player will engineer and grow. This is where the influence of the world around us begins. The player, or creator, is presented with a one cell organism and then given choices concerning food, environment and other factors that will influence growth. With care, the player will be able to "evolve" the organism through the evolutionary chain from single cell to land dwelling amphibian, biped etc. until it reaches maturity. The social aspects of the game are also interesting. As the creatures are grown, players can opt to share their creations online with other players from other planets. All of this is in fun and for those of us who know the difference between fantasy and reality, and believe in God and the story of creation, there is no real threat. For those who do not have a solid understanding of the scriptures, or an awareness of God, this represents another facet of a theoretical idea that is reinforced in every aspect of our lives. I do not believe that anyone should avoid playing the game and that is not the intent of this writing, but this does represent the extent of evolutionary theories and the way that they have influenced even casual thought. Spore, like public school science classes, can be a vehicle to reinforce the difference between scientific proposals of evolution and the Biblical story of creation. While it may be a portal to unconsciously influence the unthinking, it may very well present opportunities for us to discuss the Bible and to interject the idea of God for those who have absent mindedly swallowed evolution as fact. Given the

amount of tech and advertising press the game is getting it looks as though the popularity is high and sales figures are expected to reach similar levels. No doubt the game will be available not only for the PC but also for popular mobile game devices used by a large percentage of children of all ages. This is not the first game that has proposed such an idea. Several years ago a game entitled "Black & White" was released in which a player could assume the role of "god" and could reward or punish their subjects as they pleased. Obviously this is misguided perception of God and simply extends that ignorance to the entertainment arena. Some might campaign to avoid exposure to games and other things that propose such ideas but if we did that we would have to stop watching anything on television, turn off radios, stop reading books magazines and anything in print, and homestead in Montana to seclude ourselves. A few might perceive the shift in social behavior and technology to be a threat but I think that these things present more avenues to start discussions about God, the Bible, life and everything in between. Paul addressed paganism during his time and if he could succeed, we should be able to handle Sony, Nintendo and the game studios. Shifts in technology, and the world around us, become threatening as we get older but we need to stay in touch with those around us in order to teach. The unfortunate reality is that there are a large number of individuals of all ages, from kindergarten to middle age and beyond, who have no spiritual values to speak of and would rather worship at the altar of the X-Box than their creator. If we fail to reach those around us we will wind up like some who years ago refused to wire their homes, use light bulbs or a telephone and who silently faded into obscurity as the world marched on. Paul the apostle was a preacher and teacher in the midst of pagan hedonism that does not exist today and he still managed to be faithful, teach the Gospel without appealing to gimmicks and deception, or compromising the truth by creating a "Christian" entertainment industry and souls were converted. I think we can fight a few electrons and gigabytes of information. The world is entertaining but Christians are the ones with the real game plan.

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