

## Presuppositions

### Definitions:

“A thing assumed beforehand at the beginning of a line of argument or course of action.”

“An initial assumption that serves as the ground or beginning of an argument.”

“To suppose or assume beforehand; take for granted in advance.”

“What you think before you think.” –Carl Brower

“Something you suppose...pre.” –Zach Lee

Example: What are some things you have to presuppose before you can test if water boils at 212 degrees?

### Some examples

*Notes:*

### You cannot get rid of presuppositions

Even if you say, “I don’t have any presuppositions” you have already presupposed several things:

That you are speaking.

That I can hear you.

That we both know English.

That your words have meaning.  
That I am a human.  
That I exist.  
That your position is not a contradiction.  
That not-having-presuppositions is possible.

You cannot get rid of presuppositions, but you can be aware of your presuppositions.

### **Some questions to help you find your presuppositions:**

1. What do I already think is true?
2. Why do I think what I think?
3. What do I want to be true?
4. What am I afraid is true?
5. How has my thinking be affected by the culture, language, time-period, and political climate in which I live?
6. What experiences do I have that might cause me to think a certain way?
7. What have people in different periods of world history thought about this issue?
8. With what groups do I identify that could cause me to skew information?

### **Some questions to help challenge your theological presuppositions:**

1. What do I already think this text means?
2. What do I hope this text means?
3. What worldview differences does the author have that are different from mine?
4. Is there anything in this text that seems strange to me?
5. What are all the things this text could possibly mean, whether I think these interpretations are likely or not?
6. What am I afraid this text means?
7. What do other Christians think this text means?
8. What have Christians living at other times in church history thought this text means?

### **The burden of proof**

Too often, people begin arguing before establishing on whom the burden of proof rests.

Examples:

“Prove to me that unicorns don’t exist.”  
“I’m not convinced by your argument.”  
“Where does the Bible say you can drink whisky?”

### **Presuppositionalism**

“A belief that takes precedence over another and therefore serves as a criterion for another. An ultimate presupposition is a belief over which no other takes precedence. For a Christian, the content of Scripture must serve as his ultimate presupposition... This doctrine is merely the outworking of the lordship of God in the area of human thought. It merely applies the doctrine of scriptural infallibility to the realm of knowing.” –John Frame

-What is evidentialism and what are its problems?

- There is no such thing as “neutral ground” on which to stand to begin an argument.
- You cannot pretend to argue as if Christianity is not true if it is true.
- Sin has affected our minds, so a non-believer cannot reason to God without being regenerated.

"The only proof for the existence of God is that without God you couldn't prove anything." –Cornelius Van Til

### **Is this a circular argument?**

Any claim to an absolute authority cannot appeal to anything beyond that authority.

- Reason
- Science
- Sense perception
- The Bible

“All reasoning is, in the nature of the case, circular reasoning. The starting-point, the method, and the conclusion are always involved in one another.” –Cornelius Van Til

### **Defense and Offense**

-The value of pointing out inconsistencies in someone else’s worldview (all worldviews have “holes” in them).

-For example, if someone holds an evolutionary/atheistic worldview:

-Can they say sexually assaulting a child is objectively and universally wrong or just that society frowns upon it?

-Can they say that homosexuality should be pursued considering that the goal of human evolution is to reproduce? Even if it is allowed shouldn’t they say it is *better* to pursue heterosexuality?

-Should you help the poor, the weak, and the sick, or should you try to get their genes out of the gene-pool?

-Should women be sexually taken advantage of if they are not strong enough to defend themselves and you are trying to reproduce?

-Can they trust their mind to find truth if it just evolved to stay alive and not to find truth?

-Can they say that one's sex can be anything other than their biological birth-sex without moving away from pure science?

-Can they tell people to obey the law if someone can break the law for their advantage without being caught?