



Group Session

Small Group Study

Overview

Our God is the Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth. He created the sun, moon, and stars. He created plants, animals and people. You and I were created in His image and likeness. He lovingly designed us with a unique plan and a purpose for our lives. He is the ultimate Creator, and we are His crowning creation.

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Engage

QUESTION

When you were growing up, what were you taught at school about how the world began? How about at home?

As you open the first page of the Bible, you'll find these words: "In the beginning." Genesis tells us there was a "beginning" that includes:

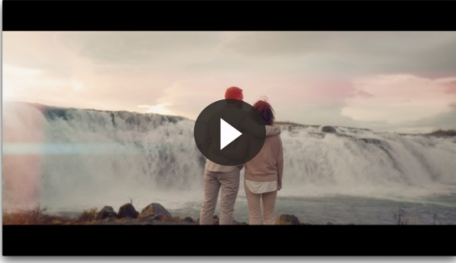
- the beginning of the universe
- the beginning of God's self-revelation as Creator and, ultimately, Redeemer
- the beginning of your story and mine

Watch

As we watch this video, consider this question:

QUESTION

Do you agree that everyone has been created with purpose? Why or why not?



Consider

Did you know that as recently as one hundred years ago, most secular scientists believed that the universe had neither a beginning nor an end? Instead, they believed it was in a “steady state” condition as if the universe had always existed. To them, there was no “beginning.”

About the same time, Albert Einstein was developing his General Theory of Relativity. To his surprise, his findings required a starting point to the universe. Einstein was troubled by the “God” implications of a starting point.¹ So he modified his relativity equations to take away that starting point. Obviously, this was not very scientific. Later removing his change, Einstein called it the greatest mistake of his scientific career. Today, the vast majority of scientists believe that the universe had a beginning.

Most likely, you have been exposed to different kinds of creation beliefs. The same was likely true for Moses, the author of Genesis. He might have heard creation stories from other people groups of his day too. Those creation myths often involved self-centered, lazy deities who created human beings to be little more than slave labor or playthings.

But that is not the story of Genesis 1 and 2. In fact, nowhere in religious literature is there a higher view of God or a higher view of humans than here in the first two chapters of the Bible. Although these chapters may raise questions as to how and when God created, they more importantly reveal who God is and why we were created. Of these truths we can be certain.

We are not cosmic accidents or the random products of the blind forces of the universe. We were created by a powerful, intelligent, loving God who imprinted us with His image and breathed His own life into us. This gives us value that no secular philosophy or popular worldview could ever take away from us.

QUESTION

If you could ask God any question about how or why He created the world, what would it be?

What the Bible Says

Let's explore what God says about the beginning of the world in the Bible.

In the Beginning

Read Genesis 1:1–10.

God creates the universe in the first verse of Genesis. The earth was described as a dark, lifeless, water-covered planet in the second verse. Note the hovering presence of God's Spirit over the surface of the earth's waters. What follows in the next verses is a thoroughly remarkable description of the creative genius of God. Only He could cause the earth's surface to take shape and thrive with life.

QUESTION

As you watch these days of creation unfold, what is most fascinating to you?

Bursting with Life

Read Genesis 1:11–25. (*Consider reading in shorter passages: 1:11–13, 14–19, and 20–25.*)

These six creative days provide a chronological order to all that happened. First in the sea and air, and then on the land, God populates the earth with animal life, supported by abundant plant life. Notice how the poetic structure of these verses wrap up each day.

QUESTION

What is your favorite part of God's creation?

QUESTION

What are some of the benefits that we gain from the variety of plants and animals around us?

QUESTION

What does it tell you about God the Creator to know that He provided all these things for us from the beginning?

Created in His Image

Read Genesis 1:26–31.

At the pinnacle of His creative work, God created humans. According to Genesis 1:27, they were created in God's own image, followed by a parallel phrase, "male and female he created them." Our being created in God's image means that we were designed to know and relate personally

to Him. We were created with spiritual natures which permit us to reason, make choices, and to know and love God.

QUESTION

What do these verses show us about how God values us?

Then God went on to assign humans the task of filling and subduing the earth, as joint administrators of creation with Him. Then, one more time God looked at all He had created, including Adam and Eve, and declared it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). That concludes the final day of creation.

QUESTION

How might Genesis 1:28–30 affect how we look at our responsibility towards God’s creation?

Man’s First Breath

Read Genesis 2:7–9; 15–20.

Although the creation of human beings is referenced in Genesis 1, chapter 2 now zooms in on the creation of Adam and Eve. This chapter revisits this event in much more detail. Look at how God both formed Adam and breathed the breath of life into him (Genesis 2:7). Adam is portrayed here as distinct from the animal world. He uniquely bears God’s image and partners with God in His mission on earth. In addition to human responsibility, moral accountability came in the form of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Look at Genesis 2:9 again. This is the first reference to evil in the Bible.

QUESTION

How do you see others struggling with good and evil?

Woman, a Suitable Help

Read Genesis 2:21–25.

To address Adam’s aloneness as the only man on the earth, God creates a woman. Eve was created *from* his side to be *at* his side. Most of the Old Testament was first written in Hebrew. The Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:18, 20 describes Eve as being Adam’s “help.” This is the same Hebrew word, *ezer*, that is used elsewhere in the Bible to describe God as our help (Psalm 33:20).

It’s important to note that Eve was not called a “helper” in the original Hebrew. Therefore, there is no inequality inferred here between man and woman. Furthermore, it is Genesis 2:24 that both Jesus (Matthew 19:5) and the apostle Paul (Ephesians 5:31) refer to as the basis for human marriage. The Hebrew concept of “one flesh” means an inseparable, closely held union of a man and woman at every level of human intimacy.

QUESTION

How have you seen the biblical view of marriage being challenged in secular culture today?

Reflect

The first words of the Bible are “In the beginning God created” (Genesis 1:1). Everything else in life finds its significance and meaning relative to this truth. Because God created us, we are not here by accident. Life has God-given purpose. Our lives have value that no one can take away from us.

But even more remarkably, we were created in God’s own image (Genesis 1:27). Our personal creativity, our capacity to sacrificially love others, and our passion for goodness and justice all flow from this. Nothing of life will ultimately find its fulfillment without God the Creator at the center.

Listen to God

The goal of *Listen* is not only to gain an understanding of God’s Word, but also to pause and listen to what God our Creator might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Choose the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

Personal Reflection Question

Record your answer to the following question in the space provided or in your personal journal.

QUESTION

What stood out to you from this session?

QUESTION

What makes you feel valued as a person?

QUESTION

What experiences have you had that made you feel devalued?

QUESTION

How should knowing that you are created in God’s image refute any feelings of inferiority or insignificance you may have had?

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QUESTION

If you are married, what will you do next to invest in the health of your relationship?
If you are single, how are you embracing that calling in an energizing and healthy way?
If you are single again (divorced, widowed), how have you been trusting the Lord to walk with you?

Think on this thought from our Group Session time: Adam is portrayed in Genesis as distinct from the animal world. People were uniquely created to bear God's image and partner with God in His mission on earth.

QUESTION

As you partner with God in His mission on earth, how will your career or current role be impacted?

Prayer Requests

Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week.

Before next time, continue to listen with the personal devotions.

Did You Know?

The growing atheistic movement denies that God created the universe. In fact, this "new atheism" increasingly characterizes religion as being the enemy of science. Yet many of the significant scientific breakthroughs of the past millennium were accomplished by scientists who believed in a Creator God and held to a Christian worldview. Some of those individuals include: Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) the father of modern astronomy; Robert Boyle (1627–1691) the father of modern chemistry; and Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) the father of modern physics.

We could add to that list such textbook-famous names as experimental physicist and chemist Michael Faraday (1791–1867); mathematician and physicist Lord Kelvin (1824–1907); physicist James Maxwell (1831–1879); quantum theorist Max Planck (1858–1947); and rocket scientist Werner Von Braun (1912–1977). A list of contemporary scientists would include Oxford mathematician John Lennox (1943–present), world-renowned physical chemist Henry Schaefer (1944–present), and leader of the human genome project Francis Collins (1950–present).

Endnote

1. Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God* (Orange, CA: Promise Publishing, 1991) 53–59.

Personal Devotion

Listening to God is something we need to do every day. Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answer to the following question in the space provided or in your personal journal.

Day 1

Read Genesis 1–2.

Look back over the Group Session and your responses to the Personal Reflection Question. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

QUESTION

What do you sense that God is saying to you about Himself as the Creator?

Personal Devotion

Day 2

Read John 1:1–5.

In these verses, Jesus is revealed as God’s active agent of creation. He is the living Word. This reminds us of how God spoke in Genesis 1:3 “and there was light.” Jesus as Creator is consistent with other teaching in the New Testament. (Read Colossians 1:15–17 and Hebrews 1:1–3.)

QUESTION

Compare Genesis 1:1–3 with John 1:1–5. Write down any similarities that you see.

QUESTION

What does this passage in John say about the identity and divinity of Christ?

QUESTION

How might these New Testament Scriptures describing Jesus as the active agent of creation relate to Paul’s declaration in 2 Corinthians 5:17?

Personal Devotion

Day 3

Read 2 Corinthians 13:14.

This closing blessing of Paul's letter to the Corinthians is immensely comprehensive. Here we see all three persons of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) as well the three triumphs of God's redeeming work, thus meeting the three greatest needs of the human condition—our need for grace, for love, and for relationship. This is our Creator's will for His creation and the means by which He brings fullness to our life.

QUESTION

Glance back at Genesis 1:1–3 and John 1:1–3. What is the role of each member of the Trinity in creation?

Just as God invested the totality of who He is (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in our creation, so He has also invested the totality of who He is in our rescue (redemption) according to 2 Corinthians 13:14.

QUESTION

What specific actions does Paul relate to each member of the Trinity in this verse?

Genesis 1:2 describes the surface of planet Earth as being initially formless and empty, yet God's Spirit was hovering over it.

QUESTION

How is the Holy Spirit bringing forth new life in your life right now?

Personal Devotion

Day 4

Read Romans 1:18–32.

Paul reminds us that creation reveals two things about God's nature—His eternal power and His divine nature (Romans 1:20). Theologians call this "general revelation" through nature. (See also Psalm 19:1–3). General revelation is God making Himself known to all humanity through things like creation and the conscience. The created world is like a book that can be read, calling us to

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thank and worship an awesome God. “Special revelation,” on the other hand, refers to God speaking through specific people with a specific message. A perfect example of this is the book of Scripture by which we can know God’s redeeming work on our behalf through Christ.

QUESTION

In what ways can we replace worship of our Creator with the worship of His creation?

QUESTION

List several of the human consequences that Paul mentions in this passage when humanity no longer honors or serves God.

Use this moment to pray for family members and friends who do not know Christ. Pray also for believers to be sent to those nations where there is presently little or no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Personal Devotion

Day 5

Read Colossians 1:18–23.

After identifying Jesus as being the very image of the invisible God and the active agent of creation in Colossians 1:15–17, Paul then goes on to describe Jesus as not only our Creator, but our Redeemer. This reminds us that the whole Bible could possibly be summarized in this one simple statement: The God who created us has acted to redeem us.

QUESTION

Notice the emphasis on Christ’s blood and physical body in this passage. When you think of Jesus as the Creator, what does this say about the remarkableness of what God did for us when He sent His Son to our world?

QUESTION

Colossians 1:20 teaches us that God reconciled everything to Himself through Jesus. Based on the rest of verse 20 through verse 22, describe in your own words what you think this means.

QUESTION

Paul characterized the Colossians as once being far away from God (Colossians 1:21). Does that describe the condition of your life right now?

QUESTION

Where might faith in Jesus or repentance from sin need to happen at a deeper level in your life?