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STUDIES
FOR LIFE

SMALL GROUPS

UNVARNISHED TRUTH

LIFE'S GREATEST STORY



BLAKE GIDEON



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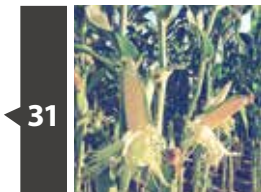
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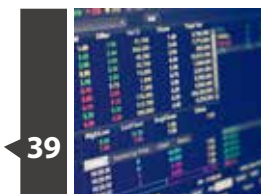
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ABOUT THIS STUDY

Peel away the lies. Find the truth.

What is truth?

A lot of people have asked that question through the ages. Unfortunately, our own opinions or desires often obscure the truth. For many, truth can become whatever we want to believe.

If a man took a key and scratched down the side of your car with it, he could say: “I believe it was perfectly OK to do that. It wasn’t wrong, and that’s the truth.” But I’m sure you would disagree with him on the definition of that truth! Such a scenario may sound absurd, yet the same approach is used constantly in our society regarding the issues of life, morality, ethics, relationships—and even death.

So we need to ask again: what is truth?

In much the same way a person strips away layers of old paint to get to the original beauty of a priceless antique, this study seeks to remove all the layers of lies and opinions that have clogged our culture in recent decades. Our goal is to get to the unvarnished truth of what really matters. And in the process, we’ll see that the truth in Christ becomes our greatest story—the one we must believe to enter a relationship with God, and the one each of us must go and tell to help others do the same.

Now more than ever, our culture needs to see the unvarnished truth about Jesus Christ. Now is the time to share the hope that truth has brought to the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Blake Gideon

Blake Gideon serves as senior pastor for First Baptist Church in Edmond, Oklahoma. He is passionate about the gospel and finds his greatest joy in seeing the lost become saved. Blake is married to Kelly, his best friend, and they have four children.

1

ONE GREAT CREATOR



*When has an invention or discovery
blown your mind?*

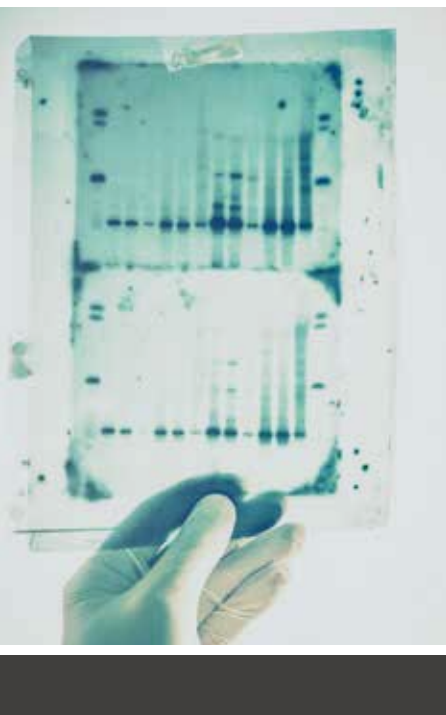
QUESTION #1

#BSFLtruth

UNVARNISHED TRUTH **7**

THE POINT

God created us—and He knows each of us.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

One question has been universal to every culture and civilization in human history: *How did we get here?*

People often attempt to answer this question by looking through two different lenses: science and religion. Unfortunately, many people have come to the conclusion that these lenses are in opposition to each other—that we must embrace one and reject the other.

The truth is that science and faith are not enemies. In fact, they should be viewed as partners. That's why I'm glad to know 72 percent of Americans—including 46 percent of non-religious Americans—believe the universe points to some form of intelligent Creator.¹ Many scientists feel the same, including brilliant minds such as Francis Collins, who was head of the National Human Genome Research Institute for 15 years.

Still, acknowledging a generic “designer” won't help us on a spiritual level. We need to go deeper. Thankfully, we can learn more about our Creator by exploring the Bible, which is His Word.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Psalm 33:6-9

⁶ The heavens were made by the word of the LORD, and all the stars, by the breath of His mouth. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into a heap; He puts the depths into storehouses. ⁸ Let the whole earth tremble before the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. ⁹ For He spoke, and it came into being; He commanded, and it came into existence.

As a whole, Psalm 33 is an expression of praise to God as our Creator. When we look at verses 6-9, specifically, we see an emphasis on God's power as Creator. The heavens and all they contain were made by the spoken "word of the LORD." Indeed, God is so powerful that He created the universe out of nothing (see Heb. 11:3). His mere command resulted in the vastness and majesty of everything we see. And when we observe the beauty of God's creation, we naturally marvel at His handiwork.

God also created you. He formed you in your mother's womb so that you are fearfully and wonderfully made (see Ps. 139:13-14). God created you for a purpose, and you can only realize and fulfill that purpose as you follow Him. Creation is meant to bow daily in submission to its Creator.

Obviously, some people challenge the reality of God's existence. Atheists deny God's existence, while agnostics are unsure. So, can we be certain that God exists? Absolutely!

The complexities of the human body offer a great deal of evidence for the existence of God. The intricacies of our biology point to divine design. And divine design, in turn, points to a divine Creator. Paul wrote, "For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made" (Rom. 1:20).

Objective morality is another type of evidence for God. In general, we find that certain acts—such as murdering an innocent person—are deemed immoral in all places and in all times throughout history.

***What thoughts or emotions surface
when you read these verses?***

QUESTION #2

Therefore, any person (including an atheist) who agrees that murder is evil has adopted an objective morality.

Objective morality points to a moral standard or moral law, which in turn points to a moral Lawgiver. This is God. He has placed a moral compass within the makeup of humanity. He has made Himself known through our inner consciences.

In other words, the universe around us and our own consciences within us both scream, “There is a God.”

Let’s not miss the incredible fact that God’s creation includes us! Motivated by His infinite love, God created us with moral freedom—with the ability to choose between right and wrong. Why? Because true love doesn’t force itself upon someone. Freedom is a divine gift bestowed on us by our loving God. Sadly, we responded to this act of love by rebelling against our Creator, which is the essence of sin.

What are the implications of accepting the reality of a Creator?

QUESTION #3

Psalm 33:13-15

¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven; He observes everyone.

¹⁴ He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth from His dwelling place. ¹⁵ He alone shapes their hearts; He considers all their works.

While verses 6-9 identify God as the all-powerful Creator; verses 13-15 remind us that God is also omniscient; which means He is all-knowing. As God looks down from His throne in heaven, He sees all and knows all. Nothing escapes His notice.

That thought might strike fear in us, but it shouldn’t. Why? Because God cares deeply about us. He desires for each one of us to know Him intimately. For this reason, God uses the circumstances of our lives to shape our hearts. You may not understand why you’re going through what you’re going through at times, but you can trust God.

He is loving and infinitely good. When you place your trust in Him, you have the assurance of His divine presence and care—forever.

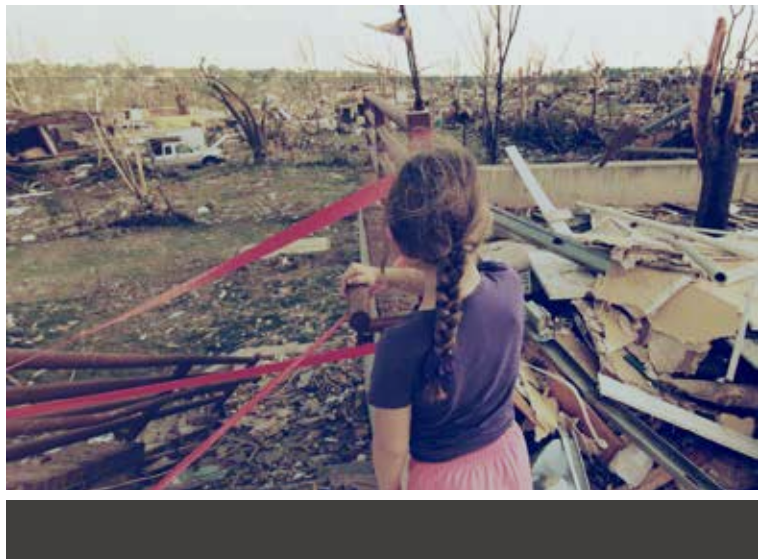
Just as some people question God’s power in light of the evil in the world, others question His love for the same reason. *If God is so good, why does He allow people to suffer?* This question has a relatively simple answer: we live in a fallen world because we are stained by sin. And sin is something we choose to do, not God.

Still, even in the midst of a sinful world, God in His goodness can—and often does—use suffering in a redemptive way.

- ▶ Joseph suffered again and again, but in the end he told his brothers: “You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people” (Gen. 50:20).
- ▶ When Jesus’ disciples encountered a man born blind, they asked Jesus whether it was the man’s own sin or that of his parents that had caused his blindness. “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him” (John 9:3).
- ▶ The greatest example of suffering was the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet through His suffering, God brought life and salvation (see 1 Pet. 3:18).

Where do we see evidence of God’s care and concern in the world today?

QUESTION #4



Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

¹⁷ He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.

We find another poem about God in Colossians 1:15-20, although this poem is centered on Jesus, who is God the Son. Let's make sure we understand that distinction before we go any further. Jesus is the Son of God, but being God's Son is more than a relational tie. Jesus *is* God.

Jesus Christ is the physical manifestation of the eternal God. In other words, Jesus is the exact representation of God because He is God (see Heb. 1:3). The term "firstborn" in verse 15 means Christ is preeminent (or most important), not that He was a created being. He is the Creator who entered creation. He is "over all creation" and "before all things." He is supreme.

Since Jesus is God, we need only look to Him to understand the character of our Creator.

- ▶ **God is powerful**, as we see in the miracles of Jesus.
- ▶ **God is caring and compassionate**, as we see when Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and fed the multitudes.
- ▶ **God is holy and hates sin**, as we see in Jesus' righteous anger over the desecration of God's temple (see Matt. 21:12-13).
- ▶ **God is loving and just**, as we see in Jesus' death. Justice demands payment for sin. In His love, Jesus took our sin upon Himself (see 2 Cor. 5:21).

How do these verses influence your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?

QUESTION #5

A SONG TO CHRIST

Psalm 33 and Colossians 1 are both poems that describe our Creator. Read Philippians 2:5-11, often referred to as the “Song to Christ,” and record any insights these verses teach you about the nature and character of Jesus, our Creator.

*⁵ Make your own attitude
that of Christ Jesus,
⁶ who, existing in the
form of God,
did not consider
equality with God
as something to be used
for His own advantage.
⁷ Instead He emptied Himself
by assuming the
form of a slave,
taking on the likeness of men.
And when He had
come as a man
in His external form,
⁸ He humbled Himself by
becoming obedient
to the point of death—
even to death on a cross.
⁹ For this reason God
highly exalted Him
and gave Him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—
of those who are in
heaven and on earth
and under the earth—
¹¹ and every tongue
should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

LIVE IT OUT

Your Creator is real, and He really knows everything about you. How will these truths influence your life this week? Consider taking one of the following steps as a response:

- ▶ **Evaluate.** Does your life say you know God personally, or just that you know about Him? Ask some of your friends and family members to answer this question about you.
- ▶ **Study.** Broaden your understanding of the scientific view of creation by reading a book such as the *Holman QuickSource Guide to Understanding Creation* (B&H, 2008).
- ▶ **Invest.** All people are created by God, which means all people have value. Be intentional about spending time with someone this week in order to bless that person and reflect Gods' care for His creation.



We live in a world that is increasingly reliant on science and the scientific method. Don't let that scare you. The more science reveals to us about creation, the more we will learn about our wondrous Creator who loves us.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLtruth**

1. <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2015/10/07/nonreligious-americans-see-evidence-of-creator/>