

SESSION 1

*God Creates*



# Introducing the Study

*In the beginning...*

These three words serve as a launching pad. They set the stage for the story of everything that comes next. They serve as the foundation for all we know, experience, love, and understand. And yet, these three words lose their meaning without the next word we find in Scripture:

**In the beginning, *God*...**



Why are these four words so crucial to understanding all of reality?



What do these words teach us about the nature of God?

# Setting the Context

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God was there at the beginning of the storyline of Scripture—and so was the Son of God, which the New Testament makes explicit: The Son is before all things and He created all things (Col. 1:16-17). “**Seeing Jesus in Genesis**” (p. 9) shows just some of the ways the centrality of Jesus in Scripture was the plan of God from the very beginning.

How can Christ connections throughout Scripture help us make sense of God’s Word?

Also vital to the beginning of Scripture is **the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo***, a Latin phrase that means “out of nothing.”

We use the word *create* when we cause something to come into being, but we always form something out of other things that previously existed. We create music using notes, art out of paints and a canvas, books from words, language, paper, and binding.

**God, however, created from nothing.** Everything in existence came to be because of Him—rocks, trees, the very air we breathe. Not only that, but intangible realities such as courage, love, and laughter come from Him as well. All of this came from the heart of God at the beginning.

So this is where our story begins—with nothing. Nothing except God, and then came much, much more.

What are some of the ways we might, through our lives, neglect the fact that God is our Creator?



## CHRIST Connection

Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God, the only One who rules wisely over creation, perfectly relates to God and others, and through His work, earns our everlasting rest. By the Son, for the Son, and through the Son, all things exist and hold together.

# Seeing Jesus in Genesis

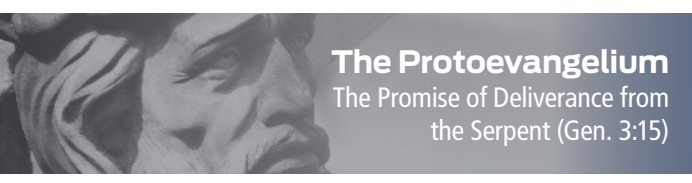
## OLD TESTAMENT

## NEW TESTAMENT



**The First Adam**  
Brought Death (Gen. 3)

**The Second Adam**  
Brought Life (Rom. 5)




**The Protoevangelium**  
The Promise of Deliverance from  
the Serpent (Gen. 3:15)

**The Fulfillment**  
Jesus Destroys the Works of  
the Devil (1 John 3:8)



**Abel's Blood**  
Cries Out for Justice (Gen. 4)

**Jesus' Blood**  
Proclaims Forgiveness (Heb. 12:24)



**The Almost Sacrifice of Isaac**  
"The LORD Will Provide" (Gen. 22)

**The Crucifixion of Jesus**  
"The Lamb of God" (John 1:29)



**Joseph Suffered**  
According to God's Plan (Gen. 50:20)

**Jesus Suffered**  
According to God's Plan (Acts 2:23)

# Continuing the Discussion



Watch this session's video, and then continue the group discussion using the following guide.

What ideas or phrases regarding God as Creator were most striking to you in the video? Why?

In what ways does this biblical truth—human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation—affirmed in our culture? Denied in our culture?

*As a group, read Genesis 1:1-2,31.*



What are some of the things we can learn about the nature and character of God from these verses alone?

Why might spending time in God's creation be a valuable exercise for the Christian?

Why is it important for us to remember not only that God created everything but that He created everything good?

How might our lives go off track if we fail to recognize this truth?

God is not only our Creator, He is also our good Creator. When we embrace God as our Creator, we must also embrace the truth that we owe Him our obedience. If we fail to see creation as God's activity, then we can and will easily justify any kind of disobedience.

*As a group, read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16-25.*

What is different about the way God created humans from everything else?

What do you think it means to be created in God's image?



Why is it important that we recognize that all humans are created in God's image?

To be created in God's image means that we have a unique ability to relate intimately with God and others. When we recognize this fact, we can only conclude that every human being is deserving of respect and honor.

*As a group, read Colossians 1:15-17.*

What description of Jesus sticks out to you the most in these verses?

What do these verses tell us about the process and purpose of creation?



How does it change our perspective of creation and life to recognize that all things were created by the Son, through the Son, and for the Son?

The Bible is a God-centered book. We have been given Scripture so that we might know God. That means when we read Scripture, we should focus primarily on what we can learn, love, and embrace about God and His Son, Jesus.



## MISSIONAL Application

Record in this space at least one way you will apply the truth of Scripture as an image bearer of God.

# Personal Study 1

## God creates everything good.

*Read Genesis 1:1-2,31.*

How else could you describe the creation of everything unless you're first introduced to the Someone who preceded everything? That's the whole point of Genesis 1:1. The God who simply is, who preceded everything and is not dependent on anything, created all that we know and all that we don't know as well.

The original audience of the Book of Genesis was the ancient Israelites on their way to the promised land (a story for a later time). They likely would not have been asking some of the questions that pique our interest, such as the age of the earth or the science behind creation. So what, then, was the original purpose for the creation account in Genesis?

The Israelites would have wrestled with questions such as “Is our God the real God?” “Is He the best God?” “Is He the most powerful God?” Having lived so long among the gods of the Egyptians and being introduced to the gods of the foreign nations that surrounded them, the Israelites struggled to believe that their God was *the* God.

To remedy such wandering hearts, God wrote Genesis 1:1 to help His people understand that the God of their bedtime stories—the God of their fathers and their fathers' fathers—was the very same God who created the world.

We are no different than the original audience of the Book of Genesis. Though perhaps not tempted to bow down to wooden statues, our hearts are just as prone to wander. Lazy Sundays instead of early Sunday worship sure sound nice. You dream about all the things you could've bought with the money you gave the church by the end of the year. There's an ever-present guilt each time your eyes steal a glimpse of your attractive coworker.

Obedience, at times, seems too costly, and our hearts wonder: *Is God real? Does He love me? Is He worth it?* When we have these questions and struggle to believe in the realness and goodness of God, He wants us to recount Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, God...” When there was nothing but nothing, God was, and that ought to create in us a sense of wonder about Him that trumps all our other wonderings.

But not only did God create everything, God created everything good. When God created something and called it good, He was saying it was doing well at performing its intended purpose and design.

So what is the purpose and design of creation? To declare God's glory and proclaim the work of His hands (Ps. 19:1). To reveal things about God that are invisible to us (Rom. 1:20). Creation reveals God's eternal power and divine nature in a way that we should clearly see and understand them. The purpose and design of creation is to tell of the glory of God, to display plainly His power and His divine nature. When God created the heavens, the stars, the trees, the mountains, the birds, and the animals, they did their job well, and God called them good. They're still doing their job well, even if it is now obscured as a result of sin in the world.

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How does creation still testify about the nature and character of God?

How should the reality that God is the Creator of everything and that He created everything good impact the way you live each day?



# Personal Study 2

## God creates people in His image.

*Read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16-25.*

God created, and God created everything good. In the first three days of creation, God dealt with its formlessness by giving boundaries, separating, and organizing to make the heavens, the seas, and the land. Then, in the second set of three days, God dealt with the emptiness of the world by filling the spheres that He had created in the first three days. He filled the expanse with the sun, moon, and stars, and He filled the sky, seas, and land with living creatures. Throughout all of this, God stepped back from each moment in creation and “saw that it was good.” But the crown jewel of His creation was still to come. God created humankind in a unique way from everything else in the universe.

In this aspect of creation, we see God not just displaying His power by commanding, “Let there be human beings,” as He did with all the other elements of creation, but He also displayed His closeness toward humanity in fashioning the first people. He began by forming Adam from the dirt, shaping him, and breathing life into his nostrils.

The key here is to notice that God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26). To bear God’s image fully means to have a relationship with Him. We were not merely spoken into existence by God’s power but formed by His hands to hold His very breath. We were created not just by power but through intimacy—for the purpose of relationship.

Our image-bearing relationship started when God created us. The account in Genesis 2 shows how powerful a scene this was, when God’s face was toward us, when He breathed into the first man the breath of life. Just as a mirror best reflects an image when the mirror is in perfect “relationship” with, or directly in front of, the object that it’s imaging, so too do we best reflect God’s image when we are aligned with Him in relationship. We reflect God best—we image Him best—in two ways: in our relationships and in our stewardship.

Being made in God’s image means we are meant to be relational creatures. In other words, we are best able to show the world who our God is and what He is like when we walk closely with Him, meeting with Him daily through His Word and prayer. God’s desire is that we live in intimacy with Him, for we alone among creation have the capacity to do so since we are created in God’s image.

But bearing God's image doesn't point only to the relationship we have with God; we also have relationships with each other. God created us "male and female." The God who exists in community by nature—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created human beings to live in community as well.

After multiple statements of God seeing His creation and saying it was "good," then came the first moment when something was described as "not good"—the man whom God had formed was alone. We were not created to bear God's image on our own, to have an isolated relationship with God. We reflect God best when we are in community with one another, relating to others in the love and grace of God, and when we are pursuing an intimate relationship with Him ourselves. This is the core of what it means to be made in God's image.

Not only do we image God in our relational capacity, we also image Him in our stewardship. When God placed humankind in the garden, He immediately gave these humans work to do. They were to care for and cultivate the garden as His representatives in worship of Him. As they worked and rested and cared for the earth, they were to do so in the same way God cares for all of creation. Because we are created in God's image, we are to mirror that image in the way we steward everything God has given us charge over.

Because we are image bearers of God, we reflect His glory in how we steward the earth, work and rest, and cultivate relationships with Him and others.

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What does the fact that all people are created in God's image indicate about the way every human being should be treated?

What are some of the barriers in your own life to living in true community?

# Personal Study 3

## God creates everything through the Son and for the Son.

*Read Colossians 1:15-17.*

Why did God create? Was it because He was lonely? Because there was something deficient in Himself? To fulfill some need that He had? Far from any of these reasons. God created not because He was lacking but because He was overflowing—spilling over with the perfect fellowship between the three Persons of the Trinity from the very beginning.

It's not uncommon for people to misunderstand the nature of the Trinity—one God in three Persons—to mean that at creation, God was the Father, then in Bethlehem, God became the Son, and then in the Book of Acts, God became the Holy Spirit. This is not true and is actually an ancient heresy called modalism. Contrary to this, the Bible teaches that God has always existed in these three distinct Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even more, the Bible teaches us that God created everything through the Son and for the Son.

These New Testament verses from the Book of Colossians work in concert with the account of creation from Genesis to show us this truth. This passage of Scripture teaches that Christ was “before all things,” which indicates that He is eternal. Christ is not created; He is the eternal Creator. Whenever the beginning took place, He was already there making everything become a reality. In John 8:58, while debating with the Jewish leaders, Jesus made it clear that He was preexistent and divine: “Before Abraham was, I am.”

Christ not only created all things but He also maintains the entire cosmos. He sustains the order in the universe. He holds it all together. Doesn't this give you hope? If He holds the universe together, surely He can hold our lives together as Christians! Whenever we are tempted to give up hope, to feel like we can barely “hold it together,” like the world is spinning out of control, we ought to remember that God is God and we are not. Jesus holds everything together by the power of who He is!

Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God, the only One who rules wisely over creation, perfectly relates to God and others, and through His work, earns our everlasting rest. By the Son, for the Son, and through the Son, all things exist and hold together.

It is through Jesus that all things were created; it is through Jesus that all things hold together; and it is for the glory of Jesus that everything exists. The most basic implication this truth has for us is that we, like everything else in creation, exist through and for Jesus. It would be a drastic mistake for us, then, to read the story of the Bible as if we were the main character in Scripture. We are not. We are supporting players, and we only find true meaning and purpose when we align our lives with God for the glory of Jesus rather than trying to find how He fits into ours.

When we read the Bible, then, we should not be asking primarily how this passage or text relates to me and my story. Instead, we must read Scripture as the revelation of God that we might know Him and His Son. Consequently, our question shifts from asking what these verses say about me and my life to what this passage says about God and His story, and then how we fit into that overall narrative.

Jesus is the main character in Scripture. He is the center of the story. Everything revolves around Him.

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How does understanding that the entire Bible is the story of Jesus change the way you approach reading it?

What are some areas of your life that you need to fight to remember that Jesus holds all things together?



# Session 1 • Leader Guide

## Session Objective

Show God's good purpose in creation, specifically how He positioned humankind to bear His image and glorify Him through our ruling over creation, our relationships with Him and one another, and our work and service for Him.

## Introducing the Study

Use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.

- ✱ • All that we experience as a part of creation had a beginning, so it is not ultimate in our lives.
- God, who was before all things, is the greatest reality ever to exist, and all of our reality must be interpreted through Him.
- ✱ • In Genesis 1:1, we meet a God who is simply there. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself, not an argument for His existence.
- God existed before the beginning; therefore, He is outside of time and is eternal.
- We see that God is present and active in His creation from the very beginning.

Read this paragraph to transition to the next part of the study.

God is the One who created everything we see and know. It is from Him that we understand the meaning of our own lives. It is through Him that all things continue to hold together in our world today. And it is to Him that all glory is properly due.

## Setting the Context

Use the following activity to help group members see the significance of a Christ-centered reading of Scripture.

Ask group members to look at **"Seeing Jesus in Genesis"** (p. 9) and to come up with a statement that ties together and summarizes these five Old and New Testament connections from the Book of Genesis. (*ex. Jesus sets right what humanity destroys through their sin, and He does so by sacrificing Himself for the sake of humanity.*)

A good summary statement here will lay the foundation for the gospel of Jesus, who died on the cross for the sin of the world. If the basics of the gospel can be found foreshadowed in the first book of the Bible, then imagine how much the rest of Scripture points to the Son, the Word of God, who created all things with the plan and purpose to lay His life down for God's image bearers.

# Continuing the Discussion

Watch this session's video, and then as part of the group discussion, use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.

## *Genesis 1:1-2,31*

- ✱ • God is eternal and exists outside of time.
- God is all-powerful, the Creator of all things.
- God is good.

## *Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16-25*

- ✱ • Recognizing the image of God in other people will help us to treat them with respect and dignity, whether they are as yet unborn, among the elderly, an acquaintance, an unknown, or counted as family, friend, or foe.
- Seeing people as created in the image of God, just as we are, can help us spot injustice in the world and work toward justice for the oppressed.
- Treating people with respect as image bearers of God honors the God who made all human beings.

## *Colossians 1:15-17*

- ✱ • We can no longer take things for granted nor live for our own selfish pursuits and desires.
- Everything we see and interact with and use in creation should serve the purpose of honoring the Son of God.
- People who live only to please themselves are missing their true purpose in life, and we who know Christ can share His gospel with them.

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Share the following statement with the group. Then direct them to record in the space provided in their book at least one way they will apply the truth of Scripture as an image bearer of God.

## ✚ MISSIONAL Application

Because we are image bearers of our good Creator God, reflect His glory in how you steward the earth, work and rest, and cultivate relationships with Him and others in the name of Jesus Christ.

Close your group in prayer, thanking God for His creative power and praying for a greater vision to live out what it means to bear His image.