

GENESIS 1:1-27 | THE KING'S CREATION

This guide is designed to be used for community groups discussions, but can easily be adapted for personal reflection.

ENGAGE (15-20 MINUTES)

Real Biblical community involves people “doing life together.” As much as we can, we want to create an atmosphere where people get to know one another, and feel comfortable sharing the ups, downs, and in-betweens of life. So take some time for people to get acquainted. A possible icebreaker question: Share a high and a low from the previous week. Or, rate your week 1-10. Or, make up one of your own.

REFLECTION AND STUDY (30-35 MINUTES)

Opening: We all recognize that origins play a large part in understanding who we are and where we're going. That's why we ask people where they're from when we meet them. The first chapter of Genesis tells us a lot about the origin of the created world. This week we'll focus on the creation of the universe as a whole. Next week we'll hone in on the creation of man.

Read Genesis 1:1-27

- 1.) What sort of God do we meet in Genesis 1?
- 2.) How should we respond to this God?
- 3.) What do you learn about the created world? What significance is there in Genesis 1 repeatedly calling the world “good”?
- 4.) A quick reading of Genesis 1 reveals a highly patterned structure. What are the main repetitions – words, phrases, ideas?
- 5.) What questions are you left with from this passage?

Article: Read the sermon summary on the next page (or hand it out for everyone to read).

- 6.) Does anything stand out to you as helpful, challenging or confusing?
- 7.) If you really believed the truths found in Genesis 1, what would change in your life?
- 8.) Discuss the meaning of this statement: “Secularism can lead us to exploit nature, paganism to worship it, legalism to fear it, pantheism to ignore it. Genesis 1 will lead us to love it, care for it, and have an almost child-like delight in it.”

PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

Break into men and women for prayer. Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

THE KING'S CREATION

The Doctrine of Creation

Genesis 1 is not easy to interpret. Martin Luther, in his *Lectures on Genesis* (1535), comments that the passage is so difficult Rabbis wouldn't let anyone under 30 even try and expound the passage. There have been various interpretations of Genesis 1 throughout the ages.

Even within evangelicalism today, scholars and theologians disagree on how best to read Genesis 1. The crux of the disagreement is whether it should be read as prose (historical narrative) or poetry. If it's prose, then Moses is attempting to give a straightforward account of the creation of the world. Most people who take this view believe that the creation of the world happened in six calendar (24-hour) days. Some who think it is poetry believe that the days are analogical (God is explaining the majestic creation in a way humanity can understand – a normal work week). Others think the days are a framework for cataloguing the various things God creates (Days 1-3 describe “realms” of creation, and Days 4-6 populate those realms; further Day 1 corresponds to Day 4, Day 2 to Day 5, and Day 3 to Day 6). Those who see Gen 1 as poetry do not view the days as literal 24 hour days.

It's good and important for Christians to study these things. In so doing, a couple of things should be noted: First, we ought to have a charitable view toward those who disagree with us. John Calvin said when we talk about creation we need to bring with us “a sober, docile, mild, and humble spirit.” There are Christians who agree on almost everything else, and still disagree about how to read this passage. That ought to be a clue that the interpretation of Genesis 1 is not cut and dry.

That said, we need to remember that Genesis 1 was written in direct contradiction to many widely accepted ideas in the ancient world. For example:

- *Astrology*: Many ancient civilizations were convinced that the stars played a dominant role in human affairs. Genesis 1 directly attacks this idea. The stars are not our masters, but our servants. They are part of the created world, over which man has been given dominion.
- *Polytheism*: There is no room in Genesis for a score of gods each doing a bit here and there. There is only one God. And the Genesis account, rather than deifying creation, makes clear that one God creates everything.

Similarly today, if we are to take Genesis seriously, we cannot simply accept any view of the beginning of the world. Whether you think this passage is prose or poetry, it is clearly at odds with the Grand Theory of Evolution. In that view everything we see is the product of time, chance and matter. Any elements of “design” are in actuality natural selection doing its thing over long periods of time. But Genesis emphatically claims that God creates. He creates with purpose, and he creates different species and assigns them functions.

What We Learn About God

God creates everything, both large and small. Nothing is outside the scope of his work. Consequently, there's nothing we see, taste, touch, or come into contact with that God did not make, and that doesn't belong to him.

God creates in an orderly and purposeful way. Genesis does not picture God creating arbitrarily, or on a whim. Nor is he haphazard. God creates an orderly world, in which we can live orderly, purposeful lives.

God is personal. The verbs in this chapter show us that God is not in any way an "It." He speaks, plans, creates, sees, evaluates, enjoys. This means that God is not a blind force in the universe. This affects the way you approach God. If you think God is a force, you will try to commune with God by virtue of meditation or some mystical experience. But if God is a person, then you get to know him by listening to what he says (Bible), speaking to him (prayer), and consciously coming into his presence (worship).

God is powerful. Other Ancient Near Eastern religions teach that the world came about as a result of struggle between gods. But in Genesis, there is one creative power. He is sovereign over everything.

What We Learn About the Created World

The goodness of creation. Over and over again, God calls the world good. This gives Christians a profound motivation for enjoying the world God has made (1 Tim 4:4). Christians shouldn't be perpetually solemn and dour. There should be a playfulness built into our worldview. We should be the first people to take joy in good meals, good wine, and beautiful sunsets. While asceticism teaches spiritual growth happens through denial of the physical, Biblical Christianity encourages us to enjoy and give thanks for the physical world.

The limits of creation. The created world is good. But it's not God. Genesis 1 is a call to repentance for those tempted to worship the created world. As Paul says in Romans 1, people tend to reject God and serve created things instead. Genesis 1 calls us to repent of worshipping created things (money, power, jobs, relationships, nature) and serve the one true God.