

The 7 Days of Creation

What the Creation Story in Genesis Teaches Us
about the Character of God and Our Purpose in Life



A 7-Week Bible Study

By Rev. Chris Mullis



Day 1 – Genesis 1:1-5 – Light
Day 2 – Genesis 1:6-8 – Sky
Day 3 – Genesis 1:9-13 – Dry Land
Day 4 – Genesis 1:14-19 – Sun, Moon, & Stars
Day 5 – Genesis 1:20-23 – Fish & Birds
Day 6 – Genesis 1:24-31 – Land Animals & People
Day 7 – Genesis 2:1-3 – Rest

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These lessons are based on a series of sermons originally preached by Rev. Chris Mullis at Pleasant Grove Methodist Church in Dalton, Georgia in 2012





Introduction

The world we live in is breathtaking and complex. The artistic genius of it points to Something/Someone higher, greater, more wonderful than we can even imagine. How did it all come to be? Was it merely an accident or does nature's harmony point to a Higher Power?

Long before science existed, people were already asking questions about how the world began. We want to know where we

came from. We want to know Who made us. We want to know why we are here.

Genesis was written to speak to the mysterious longings within our hearts to know the Truth about God. The creation story reveals the character of God and the life He offers us. If you want to know God and why we are here, you can find out by studying the story of creation in Genesis.

Come along with me on a journey back to where it all began—Genesis Chapter 1. Over the next seven chapters, we will explore the depths of the Creation story as told to God's people for thousands of years.

What to Expect

Here's what to expect as we study the Biblical story of creation together.

First of all, I encourage you to set aside the arguments that have raged about science and religion. This study is not intended to take sides in those debates. This study's purpose is to mine the depths of ancient wisdom in the Bible's creation story, wisdom generations have found meaningful for thousands of years prior to the advent of modern science. I believe there is much to gain from a study of the Genesis account of creation regardless of whether you believe in a literal six-day interpretation of creation or accept the established scientific view that the earth took billions of years to form. My hope is that whatever you believe, you will approach this study with a fresh set of eyes and an open mind to receive new truths you may never have considered before.

Each week, you will read one message along with the accompanying Bible passage in preparation for a meeting with a small group of people. At the meeting, you will discuss the passage and your reflections from the sermon. A set of discussion questions are included with each sessions sermon. You are encouraged to think about them beforehand to aid in discussion. However, these questions are only a starting point. Actual discussions in each session may vary depending on people's interests, questions, and ideas.



Suggested Format for this Study

The following format is a suggestion that has worked well for me, but feel free to adapt it to your teaching style and the resources available. Each lesson can easily be adjusted to last between one hour and an hour and a half.

Pre-Study Preparation

I recommend providing participants with a schedule, which can be created using the “Schedule Template” document. This helps keep everyone informed of the material to be covered in each session. Additionally, you might consider starting with an “Orientation” session. This will give you a chance to introduce yourself, get to know the participants, distribute study materials, explain the study format, and answer any questions they may have. It can also foster community to offer light refreshments at the beginning of each session. Participants can sign up to take turns providing simple snacks, such as coffee and cookies. This not only helps set a relaxed tone but also gives participants a sense of ownership in the study. They can sign up for refreshments in the "notes" section of the “Schedule Template.”

Weekly Materials

Each week, participants will receive a sermon to read in preparation for the following session. I suggest distributing one sermon at a time to help participants stay focused and not read ahead. However, feel free to provide all the sermons at once if that works better for your group.

General Session Format

Below is a general format for each small group session:

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

- Begin by welcoming participants and offering an opening prayer.

2. Optional Guided Prayer Meditation Video (5-10 minutes)

- You may choose to show a guided prayer meditation video to introduce each week's topic. One is available to cover each of the seven days of creation and includes a scripture reading as well as a guided meditation to encourage participants to contemplate the themes of each day's creation work.

3. Group Discussion (20-30 minutes)

- After the introduction, guide the group through a discussion based on the questions in the “Small Group Guide” at the end of each sermon.
- Your role as the facilitator is not to have all the answers but to guide and encourage meaningful conversation. The provided questions are a starting point—feel free to adapt or ask follow-up questions based on the group's thoughts and interests.
- While some discussions may naturally stray from the topic, it's important to discern whether these tangents are worth exploring or if it's time to steer the group back to the main topic.

4. Intercessory Prayer (5-10 minutes)

- End each session with a time of prayer. Allow participants to share any praises or concerns, and then pray over them as a group.
- It can be helpful to keep a list of these requests to follow up on them in future sessions.



Bible Study

The Seven Days of Creation

As we walk through the 7 days of the creation story in Genesis, we will contemplate and discuss what the story teaches us about the character of God and our purpose in life. This Bible study is based on a sermon series by Pastor Chris Mullis. Participants will read one sermon each week, along with the accompanying Scripture and then meet in a small group to discuss the material. We'll enjoy prayer, guided meditations, heartwarming fellowship, and dive into enriching learning together.

Date	Topic	Notes:
	Introduction and Orientation	
	Day 1 – Genesis 1:1-5	
	Day 2 – Genesis 1:6-8	
	Day 3 – Genesis 1:9-13	
	Day 4 – Genesis 1:14-19	
	Day 5 – Genesis 1:20-23	
	Day 6 – Genesis 1:24-31	
	Day 7 – Genesis 2:1-3	

The world we live in is breathtaking and complex. The artistic genius of it points to Something/Someone higher, greater, more wonderful than we can even imagine. How did it all come to be? Was it merely an accident or does nature's harmony point to a Higher Power?



Long before science existed, people were already asking questions about how the world began. We want to know where we came from. We want to know Who made us. We want to know why we are here.

Genesis was written to speak to the mysterious longings within our hearts to know the Truth about God. The creation story reveals the character of God and the life He offers us. If you want to know God and why we are here, you can find out by studying the story of creation in Genesis. Come along with me on a journey back to where it all began—Genesis Chapter 1. Over seven lessons, we will explore the depths of the Creation story as told to God's people for thousands of years.

Creation: Day 1 – Light



Genesis 1:1-5

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³ Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. Then

he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.



God created the heavens and the earth – everything!

Much debate has surrounded the origins of the universe, planet Earth, and life.

However, there is something we can all agree on. This world is amazing!

The farthest known star is 13.2 billion light years from earth.^[i] In other words, it would take you 13.2 billion years to go there *if* you could travel at the speed of light!

The smallest living organism (the porcine circovirus) is only 17 nanometers in diameter.^[iii] 3,000 of these organisms could easily fit on a single grain of sand.^[iiii] The blue whale is the largest living animal, weighing 180 tons or 360,000 pounds (that’s as much as 13 school buses)! Much more impressive than facts about any single specimen, is the intricacy of how the whole of creation works together. Plant life absorbs carbon dioxide and uses it to live. Plants produce oxygen so animals can breathe. Animals absorb the oxygen and turn it into carbon dioxide so plants can live. Fungi live in the soil producing chemicals that allow plant roots to take up important nutrients and even enable roots from one tree to communicate with other trees by chemical signals!

Countless fragile ecosystems work in perfect harmony with every living thing—from the smallest bacteria to the largest blue whale—playing a crucial part to contribute to the success of the whole. Many have looked at the amazing



interconnectedness of these living systems and describe the whole system as living organism in its own right. So one could describe Creation as one BIG living organism made up of millions of tiny little parts instead of a planet made up of many different living organisms.

Within the infinite vastness of space, planet earth stands as the only known haven of life. We are so small, and yet so incredibly precious. Whether you believe this is all a happy accident brought on by chance *or* the result of an intentional act of creation by a Divine Power, is a matter of faith. Science cannot contain something so unfathomable.



The account in the book of Genesis of how it all began was given thousands of years before the advent of science. It was never intended to describe the creation of the world in purely rational, scientific terms. Genesis was written to speak to the mysterious longings within our hearts to know the Truth about God. In these verses, the creation story reveals the character of God and the life He offers us. If you want to know God, you can know Him by studying the story of creation in Genesis.

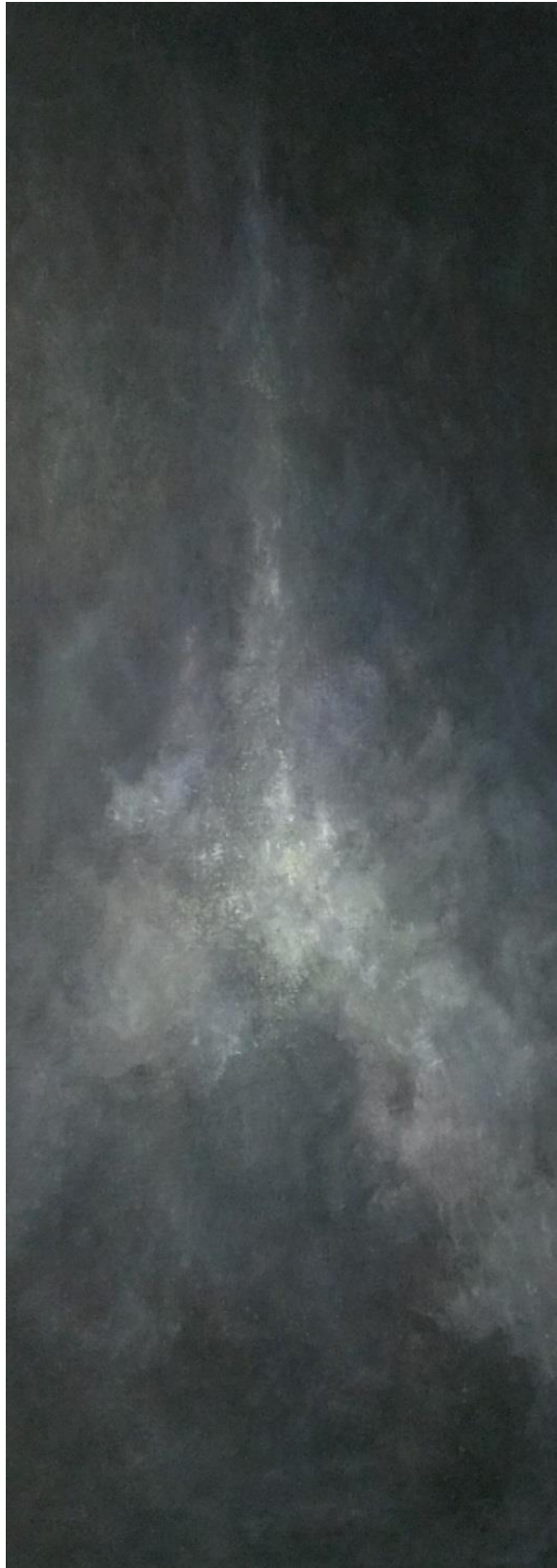


On the first day, God created light.

The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. The original Hebrew describes a place that is a wasted, worthless thing. Darkness (in Hebrew: *hšek*) figuratively describes misery, destruction, death, or ignorance. These things are contrary to the character of God. One might say the creation of the universe was inevitable. For the Creator to abide in formless, empty darkness, was as unnatural as for a rooster not to crow at the dawning of new day. And so God

said, “Let there be light: and there was light.”

This light is not necessarily the light of the sun. It is simply light. It is illumination. It is the ability to see things clearly. It is the ability to perceive. It is the opposite of darkness, misery and ignorance. Light is cheerfulness—as when your spirits brighten when the sun breaks through the clouds—even for just a moment-- n an overcast and gloomy day. Light is



"Day One" a painting by Jean Coker

understanding—as when a light turns on when you get a new idea. Light is the symbol of Truth. Not scientific information. What God gave the world swallows up scientific information as one small part of His larger Wisdom.

Today, we think so highly of science (as if it has all the answers). Science has only been part of our culture for a few hundred years. We don't know what new discipline might replace science in 100 or 500 year. But the human longing for Divine Truth has been in with us from the beginning and will last forever.

God brings understanding and Truth.

We see something important about God's character in the very way that Genesis tells the story. God works systematically, day by day, to bring order out of chaos. Day one is simply light.

Day two is the sky. Day three is land and vegetation. Each day, God moves to more and more complex systems until He finishes with the most complex of His creation—humanity. This was not a random act. It was purposeful and ordered, because the Creator is enlightened.

It is God's intention for you to know understanding and Truth. When we open our lives to Him, God does the same thing for us that He did for all Creation. God offers you understanding about your purpose in life. God seeks to awaken you so that you live your life on purpose in an enlightened state of being. While animals may wander the earth according to their instincts in a lower state of consciousness, *you* were meant to live for so much more.

You were meant to know God.

Seeing God in Creation

Romans 1:20 says, "For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly



see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.”

When I was a young man (18-19 years old), I moved away from home to attend college in Marietta. I was studying to be an engineer. For the first time, I felt I was an adult and trying to really decide what I believed about life and religion and my purpose. I was studying a lot of science and wondering (as many young adults do) if all that I'd been taught about God and faith as a child was just myths and superstition. Was it time for me to leave behind those outdated, childish ideas?

I thought of this often as I studied in my classes and lived the life of a college student. One day, I was contemplating all this as I walked across the beautiful campus. The grass was freshly cut and birds and squirrels were busy gathering their food. And as I walked through a thin stand of pine trees, I saw a parking lot through the trees filled with cars. And it struck me how different people are from all the other animals. Biologically, we are the same material--flesh and blood and bone. And yet, of all the animals on earth, we are the only ones who can take the minerals and materials from the earth fashion them together into rubber and steel and plastic and make a car with an internal combustion engine and an electrical system. Humans are so different from the other animals; so special. And it occurred to me that it could not have come to be this way by accident.

About this time, I also read an illustration that made so much sense to me. It told the story of a man walking along the shoreline on a beach who found a watch in the sand and he picked it up. He came to the logical conclusion that someone was walking on the beach and dropped the watch. Now, it is true that all the elements and materials that makeup the watch are present in the ocean. However, it would be ludicrous to think the elements naturally present in the ocean

randomly and spontaneously came together in just the right way and in just the right amounts and order to accidentally form a watch. The idea would be ludicrous and no one would believe it.

The world is far more complex than a watch. Yet science would have us accept that this incredibly complex and amazing world randomly and spontaneously came to be after an explosion. The theory requires far more faith than any religion! And so it confirmed for me that there must be Someone, Something higher and greater and beyond creation that made it all. And these thoughts drove me to dig deeper and want to know more about this Higher Power that must be in charge of it all. Soon, through my searching, I came to believe at the core of my being that the God of the Christian Bible is indeed the One True and Living God. The realization set my feet firmly on the path of seeking Him and soon serving Him and led me to the life I live today, working as a Christian minister, living as a child of God putting all his hopes in Jesus Christ.

An Invitation

I challenge you to open your eyes and look for the Truth about God in nature—His invisible qualities, His divine nature, His eternal power. Look at the birds in your yard and see the incredible creativity of a Master Craftsman who designed them. Study your pet dog or cat, whose ancestors started out as wild predators, but now is your companion and understands you better than most people. Contemplate how the flowers and grass grow from the warmth of the sun and live their own life while also providing food for animals and a virtual forest ecosystem for billions of tiny bugs and microorganisms we never even see or consider. We literally walk by them every day without a care or thought. Yet without them, we could not exist.

Through all your observations, consider the God who made it all. I invite you to pray to God now and ask Him to reveal Himself to you as you study His creation.

[i] Abell 1835 IR1916 - http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_far_away_from_earth_does_the_farthest_known_star_in_the_universe_lie

[ii] http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_Smallest_living_organism&isLookUp=1

[iii] http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_small_is_a_grain_of_sand&isLookUp=1#Q=how%20small%20is%20a%20grain%20of%20sand

Session 1 Leader's Guide

Greeting – Welcome participants, make announcements, and handout material for the next class.

Opening Prayer – Thank God for the chance to study together and pray for wisdom.

Video – Show Guided Prayer Meditation video for Day 1 – https://youtu.be/F_ZdrxhC-S4

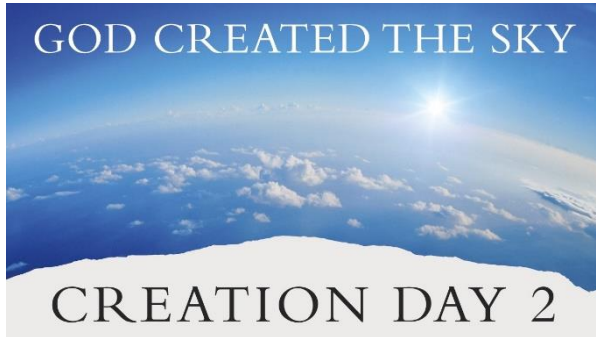
Discussion Questions

1. **The Complexity and Wonder of Creation:** How does the vastness and complexity of creation, from the microscopic to the astronomical, impact your understanding of God? Share a moment when nature made you feel closer to God.
2. **Science and Faith:** The sermon mentions the relationship between science and faith. How do you reconcile scientific explanations for the universe with the biblical account of creation? Can science and faith complement each other in understanding our world?
3. **God's Intentionality in Creation:** Reflecting on the ordered process of creation as described in Genesis, how does this shape your view of God's character? How does the intentionality of creation influence your understanding of your purpose in life?
4. **Light as a Symbol:** The first act of creation was God saying, "Let there be light." In what ways does light serve as a metaphor for God's truth and understanding in your life? Can you share a personal experience where you felt God's illumination during a dark time?
5. **The Human Role in Creation:** Considering the unique capabilities and responsibilities humans have within creation, how does this influence your thoughts on stewardship of the earth and care for other forms of life?
6. **Seeking God in Nature:** Pastor Chris shared a personal story of encountering God's creativity and intentionality in nature. Have you had a similar experience where nature prompted you to think deeply about God? How did it affect your faith?
7. **Invitation to See God in Everyday Life:** The sermon concludes with an invitation to see God in the everyday aspects of creation. What are some ways you can cultivate a practice of noticing God's presence in the ordinary? How might this practice change your daily perspective?

Close with Intercessory Prayer

Allow the class to share any praises or concerns they have. Make a prayer list to keep track of them. Close the class by praying over the praises and concerns the class named.

Creation: Day 2 – Sky



Genesis 1:6-8

⁶ Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” ⁷ And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸ God called the space “sky.”

the second day.

And evening passed and morning came, marking

On the second day, God created the sky.

At the time Genesis was written, people observed the world around them and tried to understand. They looked up into the blue sky and it reminded them of a vast ocean of water. *Yet, they could clearly see that the air above them was invisible. So it seemed there was an empty space between the blue “water” above and the water and land upon which we stand here on earth.

How would you describe the sky if you had never been told a scientific description of it? Suppose you had no way of going up into the sky or into space to look around and measure what you found. How would you explain this mysterious existence of earth below and blue sky above?

Children are inquisitive. They want to understand the world around them—even before their minds are capable of grasping it. Parents often struggle to answer their questions. One day a 5-year-old boy asked his father if a stick was alive. “No. This stick is not alive.” “But it comes from a tree. Is a tree alive?” Asked the son. “Yes, a tree is alive.” “Then why isn’t this stick alive?” How would you answer this child’s question in a way that they could understand? Even more challenging: how would you explain the same thing to a dog or a cat?

How difficult it must be for an infinitely intelligent Creator God to explain the intricate details of His creation to people whose thinking is so limited. This was especially true thousands of years ago when Genesis was written. So God used words that made sense to ancient people. He describes the sky or atmosphere as a “space” between the waters of the sky and the earth below.

The Hebrew word is translated “firmament” in KJV. This gives the impression that the



sky is firm to hold up the blue expanse that we see above us. God named the sky Shamaym, “heaven.” The word means lofty—the home of God.



God beckons us to reach for higher ideals.

God created within each of us a desire to reach for something higher. We could not even imagine God if it were not so. One cannot help but look up at the sky and wonder about it. We lay in the grass on a pretty summer day and stare up at the mysterious clouds above. What are they made of? What do they feel like? They look like giant cotton balls floating in the sky.

It was not until the 1903 that man successfully built an airplane and soared through the sky. However, people have watched birds soaring among the clouds since the very beginning, and we have longed to be up there with them. It took thousands of years of longing, stretching, reaching before humanity was able to achieve our dream of flight. If we never had the ambition to fly through the magnificent sky, we would never have achieved flight.

We don't just long for a higher altitude. God created us to yearn for higher ideals. If we were just another one of the animals, we might only care about the basics that all animals need to survive—food, water, shelter, reproduction. Yet the human spirit longs for higher ideals. We value faith, hope, and love. Our greatest joys in life come when we realize these; our greatest sorrows are when they are missing.

Faith and Hope are two higher ideals God gives us.

“*Faith* is the confidence that what we *hope* for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.” (Hebrews 11:1). Having faith gives you a distinct advantage. If Orville and Wilbur Wright never had faith that flight was possible, they never would have risked the dangers of flight or the ridicule of those who did not believe it was possible. The greater rewards in life are rarely within plain sight. Faith enables you to push yourself beyond the limits of what is immediately visible.

Faith also empowers you to trust others. Trust is the bond that enables people to work together—as husband and wife, as parents and children, as co-workers, as soldiers in an army, or as a church full of people who can count on each other. Without trust, we must do everything on our own power—which is very limited. But when we can trust others, we can work together as a group and accomplish so much more. Ultimately, faith allows us to trust the Creator.

Just because a person believes God created the world does not ensure they trust God. Many people do NOT trust God. We see the same mistrust played out in many religions—including biblical Judaism—where sacrifices were made to appease the gods. Such religious practices reveal a deep mistrust of divine power.

Yet God turns this whole religious practice of sacrifice upside down through Jesus Christ. Instead of people making a sacrifice for God, God—in Christ—sacrifices Himself for

us. God has done everything possible to show He is trustworthy. Now it is our choice whether we will take hold of the higher ideals of faith and hope. Do you have faith in God? Do you have hope?



Love is the highest ideal for which God beckons us to reach.

1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.” We were created for love. There are 21 definitions for the word love on Dictionary.com. However, the Greek word 1 Corinthians uses is “Agape,” which is “self-giving love, expressed freely without calculation of cost or gain to the giver or merit on the part of the receiver.” The clearest demonstration of love

is found in the life of Jesus Christ.

By all accounts, Jesus was an extraordinary man. A man who can heal the blind and walk on water could have gained anything he wanted—power, wealth, prestige. However, Jesus refused to seek anything for himself. Instead, he gave up even the basic things most people desire—a way to make a living, a wife, children—and he dedicated his life to helping others.

We have seen a few exceptional people, like Mother Theresa, who lived a life of sacrificial love, but Jesus went even further. Jesus showed us the greatest love of all when he laid down his life for the world. Jesus didn’t just die for his friends. He sacrificed his life for people he’d never met—people like you and me. He died for people most might overlook—the outcast, the forgotten, the neglected. He died for people most might find despicable—those who have cheated, abused, murdered. Jesus even died for those who drove the nails through his feet and hands into the cross. He said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34).

When Jesus died on the cross, he demonstrated the highest form of love. We admire his self-sacrificing love. Somehow, it speaks to our hearts. We know it is good. We know it is right. It awakens a longing within us to reach for this kind of higher love—even when it seems out of reach. However, just as early people must have thought flight was out of reach, we hope that—with God’s help—we might one day love like Jesus. The Truth is, we can love like Jesus. With man it is impossible, but all things are possible with God. And God beckons us to reach, to stretch, to grow toward love.

Closing Whenever you look up at the fluffy white clouds that float high above us in God's beautiful sky, remember to reach for the higher virtues in life: faith, hope, and love. Pray and ask God to help you. And then, keep reaching for the highest ideals in life.



"Day Two" by Jean Coker

Session 2 Leader's Guide

Greeting – Welcome participants, make announcements, and handout material for the next class.

Opening Prayer – Thank God for the chance to study together and pray for wisdom.

Video – Show Guided Prayer Meditation video for Day 2 – <https://youtu.be/Pv7Er-sv9bo>

Discussion Questions

1. **Describing the Sky:** How would you describe the sky if you had never been told a scientific description of it? Suppose you had no way of going up into the sky or into space to look around and measure what you found. How would you explain this mysterious existence of earth below and blue sky above?
2. **Explaining Complexity to Children:** Children are inquisitive and often ask questions about the world that can be hard to answer. How would you explain to a child why a stick from a tree is not alive, but the tree is? How does this reflect the challenge of conveying complex ideas in simple terms?
3. **God's Communication Through Creation:** Considering the limitations of human understanding, especially in ancient times, how do you think God uses the simplicity of the Genesis creation story to communicate profound truths?
4. **Yearning for Higher Ideals:** The sky and the act of looking up is portrayed as a metaphor for humanity's inherent desire to reach for something higher. Can you share a personal experience where you felt a deep yearning for something more than the material world can offer?
5. **Faith and Hope as Higher Ideals:** Discuss how faith and hope have played a role in your life. Can you think of a time when faith gave you the confidence to pursue something unseen or hope carried you through a difficult period?
6. **Understanding and Trusting God:** The sermon touches on the idea that acknowledging God as Creator does not necessarily mean one trusts in God. How do you develop trust in God, and how has this trust impacted your life?
7. **Reaching for Love:** Reflecting on the concept that love is the highest ideal God beckons us to reach for, how do you see the life of Jesus as a model for this kind of love? In what ways are you challenged to love more like Jesus in your daily life?

Close with Intercessory Prayer

Allow the class to share any praises or concerns they have. Make a prayer list to keep track of them. Close the class by praying over the praises and concerns the class named.

Creation: Day 3 - Dry Land



Genesis 1:9-13

⁹ Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-

bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. ¹² The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

On the third day, God created the dry land and vegetation.

We live on an incredibly beautiful planet. A picture of the planet from space reveals a stunning blue sphere with swirling white clouds, continents of green and brown, all set against vast oceans. The mingling together of all these elements paint a picture of a planet that is lovely and inviting. Though each of the other planets in our solar system has their own beauty, none seem as friendly or appealing as Earth. We look at the Earth and we feel, “This is home.” Our earth would be much less appealing if it were only water. God knew this and so He made our planet have dry land and water.



All the other planets take their name from a Greek or Roman god, but Earth derives its name from an Old English word that means “ground” or “soil.” Similarly, the Hebrew word used for Earth in Genesis 1 is “eres,” which means field, ground, or land. It would seem the very identity of our Earth is tied to the soil upon which we live and grow our crops.

The majority of the earth is covered by water. However, God made a place for us

to stand on solid ground. Thirty percent of the Earth is dry land (approximately 200 billion square miles). There are approximately 75 billion square miles of cropland or pastureland, 64 billion square miles of forests. God made sure we have enough land to live on and that there are a variety of land types for us to enjoy—mountains, deserts, forests, prairies, and more. All of this points to the creativity of our God.



God gives us a solid place to safely stand.

There is a remarkable difference between standing on solid ground with a firm footing and sliding around on slippery mud. Mud is that uncomfortable surface that is halfway between dry land and water. Mud can be fun to play in, but you don't choose mud for firm footing. No, for a firm place to stand or for a solid place to build our life, we want dry ground.

Jesus said, “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock.” (Matthew 7:24-25). God gave us the ability to think and make wise choices, but we don't have to overthink every choice we make. We are fortunate that we have the teachings of God in Jesus Christ to guide our feet along a safe path.

Does it seem like your life is firmly planted on solid ground? Or does it feel like your world is sliding around in the mud? If you are slipping around, you may need to re-evaluate what you base your choices on. Are you relying too much on your own understanding or do you rely primarily on what Jesus teaches in the Bible? Be honest. What really is the foundation of your life?

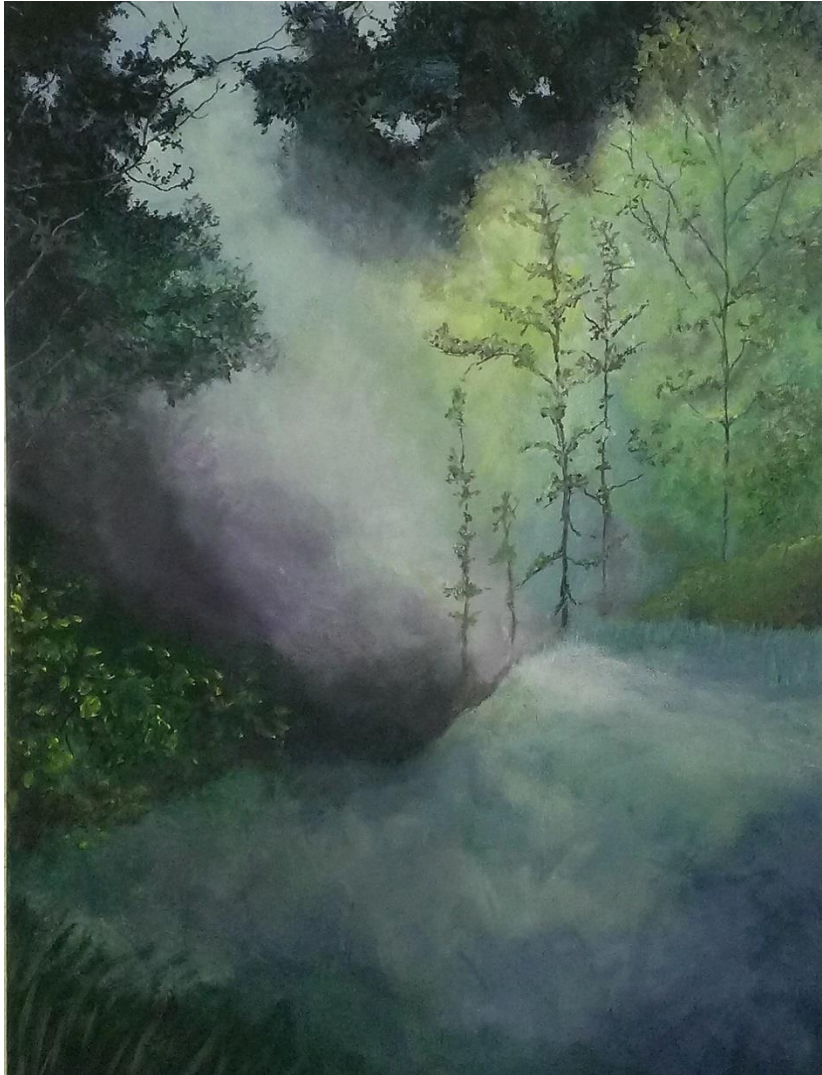
Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”



God gives us a good place to take root and grow.

You've heard the expression: “That's about as boring as watching grass grow.”

But watching a plant grow is only boring to us because it seems like nothing is happening. If you speed it up and watch in a time lapse, it's incredible. When God looks at us and sees us growing—physically and spiritually—He is pleased. 2 Peter 3:8 says, “A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.” How exciting it must be for God to



1 “Day Three” painting by Jean Coker

watch us grow, because He sees things at a different speed! Maybe it is something like a time lapse for God.

Part of the reason we are on this earth is to learn and grow from our life experiences. Why would God put us here if it were not so? Either God would have skipped the whole earth-experience or He would use His unlimited power to solve all our problems in an instant. But that is not the way our lives work. We must struggle. We must exert ourselves. We must stretch. We must endure hardships. And through these trials, we learn and grow.

In Mark 4:3-9 Jesus taught a parable about how we can grow and be fruitful in God’s Kingdom. He said, “*Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. ⁴ As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. ⁵ Other*

seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn’t have deep roots, it died. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” ⁹ Then he said, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

A relationship with God is soft enough for us to set down roots in. God is not hard and harsh like the footpath or rocky soil. Seeds (and relationships) cannot survive in these because there is no way to set down roots for a solid foundation or for nourishment. God gives us the freedom to think for ourselves. He gives us principles to live by in the Bible that steer us clear of unnecessary harm, yet we are free to apply those principles in ways that are relative to our current situation. God is like the good soil that is soft enough for roots to grow down into and yet also firm enough to provide a plant with a sure foundation. When we are firmly rooted in the

Truth of God, we are nourished by the Living Water. We have a hidden resource of refreshment to carry us through the tough times of life. We look around at others who wither when life gets too hot for them, and yet we press on because we draw refreshment from our relationship with God. The deeper our roots, the more secure we are. Even when the storms of life beat upon us relentlessly, we may bend, but we do not break or fall over. We are upheld because we are firmly rooted in faith and God holds us up when others topple over.

Conclusion

God made dry land for us to stand firm on and He gives us a firm place to take root and grow. Is your life planted firmly on faith in Jesus Christ? Are you tending your spirit each day to put down roots deeply in Him? Days of drought are coming in your life when the trials of this life will beat down like the scorching summer sun. Are your spiritual roots deep enough to draw refreshing nourishment from Christ when you need it most? Storms will come too—storms that will threaten to uproot you and throw you down to the ground. Are your spiritual roots deep enough in Christ to hold you firm when the storm comes? Christ calls to you today. "Come. Plant your life in me."



Session 3 Leader's Guide

Greeting – Welcome participants, make announcements, and handout material for the next class.

Opening Prayer – Thank God for the chance to study together and pray for wisdom.

Video – Show Guided Prayer Meditation video for Day 3 – <https://youtu.be/t4QgXWbj8k>

Discussion Questions

1. **The Beauty and Diversity of Earth:** Reflecting on the description of Earth as seen from space and its diverse landscapes, how does the beauty and variety of our planet enhance your appreciation for God's creation? Do you have a favorite type of landscape or natural setting that particularly speaks to you about God's creativity?
2. **The Significance of Dry Land:** Considering that the majority of Earth's surface is water, how does the existence of dry land shape our experiences and opportunities on this planet? Why do you think God created both land and sea, and how do they complement each other in the story of creation?
3. **Solid Foundations:** Jesus used the metaphor of building a house on solid rock versus on sand. How does this imagery resonate with your own life choices and spiritual journey? Can you share a time when your "foundation" was tested, and how you found or reaffirmed a solid base in your faith?
4. **Growth and Transformation:** The sermon suggests that part of our purpose on Earth is to learn and grow through our experiences. How have life's challenges contributed to your spiritual growth? Do you see difficult times as opportunities for growth, and how does your faith help you navigate these periods?
5. **The Parable of the Sower:** Jesus' parable highlights different responses to God's word based on the condition of one's "soil." Reflecting on your own heart and life, which type of soil do you most identify with, and why? How do you cultivate a receptive heart that allows God's teachings to take root and flourish?
6. **Relationship with God as Good Soil:** The idea of God providing a nourishing environment for growth likens Him to good soil. How do you maintain a relationship with God that is both deep enough to nourish you and strong enough to support you in times of hardship?
7. **Preparing for Life's Droughts and Storms:** In considering the metaphor of spiritual roots, how do you prepare for the inevitable "droughts" and "storms" of life? What practices or beliefs help you deepen your roots in faith to withstand these challenges?

Close with Intercessory Prayer

Allow the class to share any praises or concerns they have. Make a prayer list to keep track of them. Close the class by praying over the praises and concerns the class named.

Creation: Day 4 - Sun, Moon, and Stars



Genesis 1:14-19

¹⁴ Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵ Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and night,

and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

On the fourth day, God created the sun, moon, and stars.

Before we go any further, we need to consider the magnitude of this claim. The Greeks and Romans and many others civilizations saw the sun, moon and stars and believed *they* were gods. It is no wonder. One cannot help but be in awe of these mysterious heavenly bodies floating across our sky. However, Genesis claims that even these heavenly bodies are a creation of the One, True, and Living God.



This was an amazing testament to the early readers of Genesis about the power and majesty of God. The Moon has a mass of approximately 81 Quintillion Tons. Yet it travels around the earth at the blazing speed of 2,288 miles per hour. At this speed, it still takes a little under 28 days to go all the way around the earth.



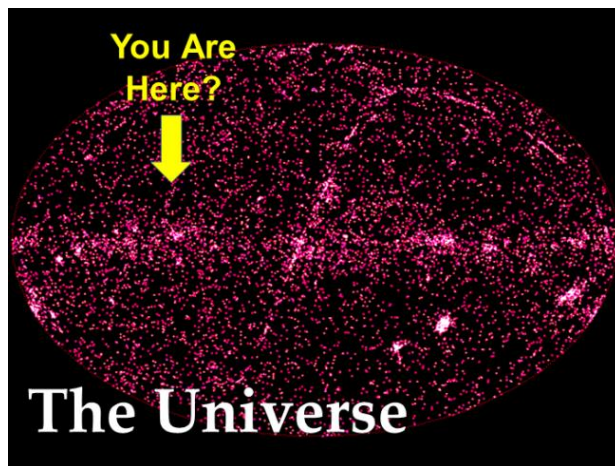
Our Sun is even more impressive. The sun looks small to us because it is 93 million miles away. It's so far away it takes about 8 minutes for sunlight to reach us. It's a good thing it *is* so far away or we would be incinerated. The surface of the sun is 10,000 degrees F, but that's nothing. The core of the sun is believed to reach 27,000,000 degrees F! The sun is huge! If the Sun were a hollow ball, it would take 1 million earths to fill it up!

Genesis makes a stunning claim. The creation of the sun, moon, and stars was no big deal for God. He simply said, “Let lights appear in the sky...” Psalm 33:6 puts it this way, “The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.” Wow...

The sun is only one of the gazillion stars in space. There are so many stars in the Milky Way galaxy that if we counted one star every second it would take 2,500 years to count them all! *The Milky Way galaxy is so large, it would take 100,000 years to cross it *if* we could travel at the speed of light – 186,000 miles per *second*.



If our whole solar system—the sun with its 9 orbiting planets---was the size of a quarter, the Milky Way Galaxy would be the size of the North American Continent. Where is the quarter? All this God breathed into existence, but it gets even more mind boggling.



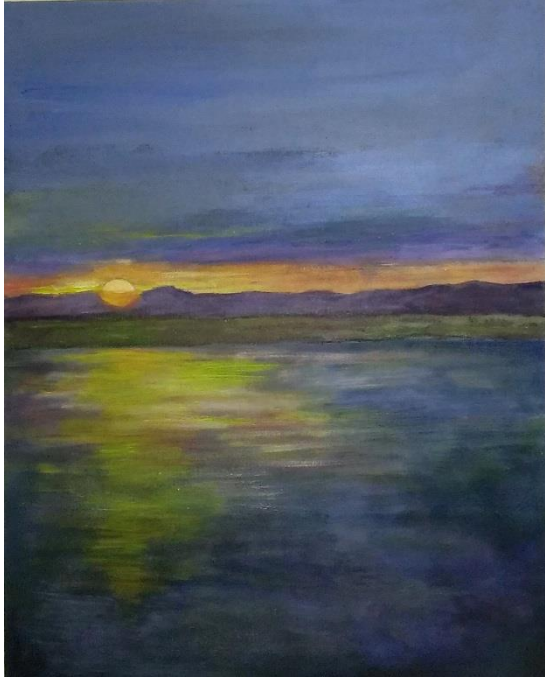
The Milky Way galaxy is only *one* among a hundred billion other galaxies—each galaxy filled with hundreds of billions of stars with orbiting planets! This is a composite picture of the known universe. Somewhere inside there is a dot that is the Milky Way galaxy. Somewhere inside that tiny dot is our solar system of the sun and 9 planets... “The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born...” How great is our God!

The sun, moon, and stars point us to God.

Genesis tells us God created these “lights” to be signs for us. Through them, we know the time of day and the seasons. But the sun, moon, and stars can guide us to even deeper understanding.

The Prophet Isaiah said in 40:25-26 – “To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?” asks the Holy One. Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.”

When we see the sun, moon, and stars, it gives us a sense of the magnitude of God’s power. It reminds us how big God is and how small we are. This—if anything—should cure us of our selfish misunderstanding that life is all about us. And yet, the Bible also tells us God knows



*(Above) "Sun" (Below) "Moon"
paintings by Jean Coker*



exactly how many hairs you have on your head (Luke 12:7). God is infinite enough to create a universe too big for us to comprehend and yet He is personal enough to be interested in every single hair and the DNA inside every cell of your body!

God gives us guides so we can know Him.

All of Creation guides us to know God. As Romans 1:20 says, "Ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God."

However, God doesn't stop with astrological and natural witnesses. God goes even further. He gives us people to guide us to Him. Think about your own life. There have probably been people who have taught you, inspired you, encouraged you, and helped show you the way. Do you realize that God put these people in your life to help you? God wants you to know Him and He often uses special people to help you. You will probably never know how many prayers have been said on your behalf by people who care about you?

God also gave us the Bible to guide us to Him. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path." The Bible is an amazing tool to help you know God. Everything you need to know for salvation is written there. Even more amazing, the Bible is the Living word of God. That means you can read it as God speaking to you at this very moment. If you open your heart to hear God's voice, you can hear Him guiding you in your moment of need.

The greatest guide God gives us so we can know Him is Jesus Christ...

We can look at creation and know that there is a God and that He is incredible and that we are so small. But God sent Jesus so that we can know for sure that this incredible God is deeply concerned about *us*. John 3:16 says, "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

Imagine, God made a universe that is 96 billion light years in diameter. (It would take 96 billion years for a beam of light to get from one side of the universe to the other). We cannot even comprehend how incredible God is, and yet He is so interested in *you* that He sent His one and only son to personally guide you to know God.

You might be thinking, “A God like that could never be interested in me.” YES HE IS! He would do *anything* to have a personal relationship with you! He *has* done *everything* to have a personal relationship with you. The only thing left is for *you* to choose to have a relationship with God.

Invitation

On behalf of this incredible God, I have the privilege today of inviting *you* to have a relationship with the One, True, and Living God of the Universe. The One who made it all, invites you to choose a relationship with Him. Why don't you pray to Him right now? You don't have to use any special words. Simply talk to Him the way you would talk to a loving father. He'll listen and understand.



Session 4 Leader's Guide

Greeting – Welcome participants, make announcements, and handout material for the next class.

Opening Prayer – Thank God for the chance to study together and pray for wisdom.

Video – Show Guided Prayer Meditation video for Day 4 – <https://youtu.be/RJyl8yN3WR0>

Discussion Questions

1. **The Magnitude of Creation:** When you consider the size and power of the sun, moon, and stars, how does this impact your understanding of God's greatness? Have you ever experienced a moment when observing the night sky or a sunset dramatically influenced your perspective on God's majesty?
2. **Sun, Moon, and Stars as Divine Creations:** How does the Genesis account, which portrays the sun, moon, and stars not as gods but as creations of God, challenge or reinforce your view of the natural world and its relation to the divine?
3. **The Personal Nature of God:** Despite the vastness of the universe, God is described as knowing the number of hairs on your head (Luke 12:7). How does this intimate knowledge God has of us influence your relationship with Him? Can you share a time when you felt God's personal care for you?
4. **Guidance Through Creation:** The sermon suggests that all of creation guides us to know God. Can you recall a moment or aspect of nature that particularly spoke to you about God's character or presence?
5. **People as Guides to God:** Reflecting on your own journey, who are the people who have guided you towards a deeper understanding of God? How have their influences shaped your faith?
6. **The Bible as Our Guide:** Psalm 119:105 highlights the Bible as a guide for our lives. How has the Bible served as a "lamp to your feet and a light for your path" in practical ways? Are there specific scriptures that have been particularly meaningful to you?
7. **Jesus Christ as the Ultimate Guide:** Considering the vastness of the universe and the complexity of creation, why do you think God chose to reveal Himself through Jesus? How does Jesus' life, teachings, and sacrifice personalize your understanding of who God is and His plan for humanity?

Close with Intercessory Prayer

Allow the class to share any praises or concerns they have. Make a prayer list to keep track of them. Close the class by praying over the praises and concerns the class named.

Creation: Day 5 - Fish & Birds



Genesis 1:20-23

²⁰ Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” ²¹ So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ And

evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

On the fifth day, God created *swarms* of living sea animals and birds.

Both birds and fish are animals that swarm together as one unit in large flocks or schools. On the fifth day, God concentrated on abundance.

Notice that Genesis 1:20 specifically commanded the waters to “*swarm* with fish” and the skies to “be *filled* with birds.” It was not enough to create a few fish or birds here and there. No, God intentionally went overboard with amazing extravagance. Birds and fish were to *fill* the world with an overabundance. And then, as if to make the point even more clear, God instructs the swarms to “Be fruitful and multiply.”

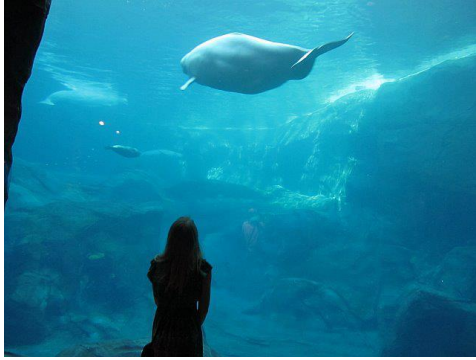


The fifth day of creation is the first time God said, “Be fruitful and multiply.” It is a statement God will repeat seven times in the Bible. It is clear that God desires life to be *abundant*.

There are over 15,000 known species of fish and some 10,000 species of birds. Scientists believe there are another 2 million species we haven’t even identified yet. According to wikianswers.com, it is believed there are somewhere around 500 billion fish swimming in the ocean right now. That’s enough fish to cover all of Whitfield County with a layer of fish six inches deep! It is estimated that there are 100 billion birds living on the planet right now. That’s



enough birds for every person in the state of Georgia to have 10,000 pet birds! This is extravagantly amazing, but even more amazing is Jesus’ statement in Matthew 10:29: “Not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.”



God Makes Life Abundant

From the very beginning, God intended for life to be abundant. He intended for us to have everything we need and to be satisfied. God did not plan for death or disease or disappointment to be part of His creation. We have seen throughout this study that God most assuredly has the ability to accomplish His plans. Why is it then that so many in our world do not experience the abundant life God wants us to have?

God is not to blame for this. We are. We have gotten off track. Because we choose not to fully cooperate with God's plan, we do not experience the fullness of the life God wants for us. Our choice to stray away from God is called sin.

The Bible tells us that the consequence of sin is death (Romans 6:23a) and experience proves this is true.

It is truly amazing that God didn't just give up on us. Instead, He actually still wants us to come back alongside Him and experience life in its full abundance. That is why Jesus came.

Jesus said, "I came that [you] may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10b). So it is still possible for us to have an abundant life.

What is Abundance?

It depends on who you ask. Every person will have a different answer. Some would say abundance is all about how much stuff you have. Another person would say abundance is more about quality than quantity. Abundance means you have more than enough to satisfy.

It is hard for us to comprehend an unlimited God who can provide more than enough to satisfy. We grow up thinking there is only so much to go around. We fight with our siblings for the last cookie because we know there are only so many cookies. When we run out, someone must go without.

God provides more than enough to satisfy all our wants and needs. Just when we think we will run out, there is more. You cannot exhaust God's resources. In Matthew 14, Jesus miraculously fed over 5,000 people with only five loaves of bread and two fish. After everyone ate and was satisfied, there were twelve baskets of leftovers—more than what they started with.

God knows what we really need. God knows what we really want. He wants to provide an extravagant abundance. He can and He does. Unfortunately, we do not partake because we are usually chasing after the wrong things.

The Truth is we often don't know what we really want or need. We may have some things in mind, but we don't really know if they will really satisfy. We often find they don't. Our disappointments leave us hungrier than before for the next "new" thing that we hope will satisfy.



(Above) "Birds of the Air" (Below) "Fish of the Sea" paintings by Jean Coker



Life in Christ is Abundant.

Only God knows what abundance is. Only God knows what you really need. He is the source of life. When we abide in Him, life is abundant, the way He intended. Apart from Him, we merely survive (for a time) desperately clinging to a dwindling life that quickly fades away. We find abundance, moment by moment, as we live *in* God through Jesus Christ. People think Christians live boring lives. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We are following in the footsteps of Christ. It is a path that leads us to heal the sick, bring sight to the blind, walk on water, and change the world forever. We are waking up to realize that we are not here to be amused. We are here to *live*. There is a deep yearning within us for real purpose. We refuse to pacify our hunger with the sweet lies an evil world tells, because we know how we live really does matter.

So many people miss out on the abundance God

wants for them. Even people who come to church regularly settle for less than God's abundance. They are like dogs that only catch the crumbs that fall from the table because they are afraid to surrender their lives to God completely. Don't be bashful when it comes to abundance. God set a place at His table *for you*. He invites you to His Feast! Come, taste and see that the Lord is good!

A Responsive Reading from Psalm 36:5-9

Leader: Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens;

People: Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

Leader: Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your justice like the ocean depths.

People: You care for people and animals alike, O Lord.

Leader: How precious is your unfailing love, O God!

People: All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

Leader: You feed them from the abundance of your own house,
letting them drink from your river of delights.

People: For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see.



Session 5 Leader's Guide

Greeting – Welcome participants, make announcements, and handout material for the next class.

Opening Prayer – Thank God for the chance to study together and pray for wisdom.

Video – Show Guided Prayer Meditation video for Day 5 – https://youtu.be/2zObTnDZP_U

Discussion Questions

1. **God's Intention for Abundance:** Reflecting on the vast numbers of fish and birds created, how does this image of abundance speak to you about God's intentions for creation and for your life? Do you see this kind of abundance reflected in your own experiences?
2. **"Be Fruitful and Multiply":** This commandment from God is repeated several times throughout the Bible. How do you interpret its significance in the context of both the natural world and human life? How can we apply this principle in our spiritual lives and communities?
3. **The Reality of Abundance vs. Scarcity:** Given the abundance of life God created, why do you think scarcity exists in the world? How does this discrepancy challenge or strengthen your faith, and what role do you believe humans play in managing God's creation?
4. **Sin and Its Consequences:** The sermon points out that sin has led us away from experiencing God's intended abundance. Can you discuss ways in which turning away from God has impacted both the world and personal experiences of abundance?
5. **Jesus and Abundant Life:** Jesus promises life in abundance (John 10:10b). How do you reconcile the concept of abundant life with the realities of suffering and need in the world? How has following Jesus led you toward a more abundant life?
6. **Understanding True Abundance:** How do you define true abundance in your life? Is it more about material possessions, or does it have a deeper spiritual meaning for you? Share how your understanding of abundance has evolved over time.
7. **Living an Abundant Life in Christ:** What are some practical ways we can live out an abundant life in Christ? How can we resist the temptation to settle for less than what God wants for us and truly embrace the fullness of life He offers?

Close with Intercessory Prayer

Allow the class to share any praises or concerns they have. Make a prayer list to keep track of them. Close the class by praying over the praises and concerns the class named.

Creation: Day 6 - Land Animals and People



Genesis 1:24-31

²⁴ Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵ God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make human beings[a] in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰ And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹ Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!
And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.



On the sixth day, God created land animals and people.

Science and religion have been embroiled in an unnecessary argument for at least 150 years. Science argues that humans evolved from animals. Religion argues this cannot be because it is not the way the Bible describes it. Unfortunately, the debate misses the point. Genesis was given thousands of years before the advent of science. It was never intended to describe the creation of the world in scientific terms. Genesis was written to speak to the mysterious longings within our

hearts to know the Truth about God. Science offers us information, but the Bible offers Truth that is far more profound than information.

Why does it seem so important that the sequence of creation in Genesis does not match what the prevailing scientific theories of our time? God must have told the story the way He did to reveal a wisdom that is different than that which science reveals. It is unfortunate that science and religion have spent so much time trying to prove each other wrong. It is much more fruitful to spend our time and energy pondering what God is really trying to tell us in the Genesis story.

We see in Genesis that God works systematically, day by day, to bring order out of chaos. Day one is simply light. Day two is the sky. Day three is land and vegetation. Each day, God moves to more and more complex systems until He finishes with the most complex of all—humanity. God is telling us something important here. Humanity is special in all of God's creation.



People are different from animals.

Each day when God reviewed what He created, He recognized that it was good. But on the sixth day, after God made people, He reviewed His handiwork and recognized that it was *very* good. What is it that sets people apart from animals?

Biologically, humans and animals are very similar. We share the same basic structure and biological functions. However, there is something special about humans. It is more than intelligence. There are animals that are smart too. (One could make an argument that some animals are even smarter than people—depending on how you define intelligence.) Some have said that being self-aware is the characteristic that sets humans apart from animals.

But we see that many animals are self-aware too.

Genesis tells us the difference between animals and humans in verse 26. It says, “Then God said, “Let us make human beings *in our image*, to be like us.”” The Hebrew word for image is *salem*. *Salem* is the same word people would use to say that a son is the spitting *image* of his father. Salem is also the word used for idols and for idol worship.



God created us to be like *Him*.

Throughout the Bible, God continually forbids people to make or worship idols. In the Ten Commandments, the second command is do not make or worship idols of any kind. Yet this is a perversion that humanity struggles with over and over again—even to this day. We can find insight in this—not just that we shouldn't make or worship idols. We can also learn something about ourselves and God from this prohibition.

We were made to be the image of God—the reflection, the representation of God in visible form. God wanted us to be like Him, as a son is like his father or mother. No other image of God or representation of God is adequate or permitted. *We* are the only authorized “idols” who may represent God. *We* were created to represent Him.

Out of all the extraordinary creations that came from the infinite imagination of God, *people* were the creatures God designed to represent Him best.

Idolatry is such an affront to God because it fundamentally goes against the very core of who God is, who we are, and our whole purpose for being. When we make an idol, we attempt to change the whole order of creation. We try to make God the way we want Him to be. We make God in *our* image instead of recognizing we are made in His image. We switch the roles of our relationship around until we pretend to be the creator while demoting the God of the universe to our underling. It is a reversal that is an outrage to all of creation, and an abomination to God.



Idols are not just a thing of the past or primitive cultures. Unfortunately, idol worship is alive and well in our modern world right here in America. Some idols we worship today are: money, celebrities, power, and possessions. People may be more actively involved in idol worship today than at any time in our history. And it is just as abominable to God today as it ever was.

We engage in idol worship anytime we put something or someone (even ourselves) before God. It is the very definition of Sin—letting something else besides God be the first priority in your life. This is not what God created us for. God created us to be a perfect representation of Him and to worship Him as the center of our lives.



Jesus succeeded where we failed.

We have lived as selfish, sinful people who do not fulfill our primary purpose in creation for so long that we can hardly even imagine what it is like. What are we supposed to do? What does the perfect human even look like? Jesus is the one who shows us.

Jesus came to show the way. He is the perfect, uncorrupted image of God. If you want to see God, look at Jesus. He represents God the way humanity was supposed to from the very beginning. And the most wonderful thing is, Jesus offers a way to restore the image of God in us.

Right now, because of sin, our “God-image” is broken. But Jesus offers a way to put the pieces back together again. He says, “Repent of your sins and believe the Good News.” (Mark 1:15)

Invitation

Jesus laid down his life to pay the penalty for your sins. The blood he shed on the cross washes away all your sins. If you will accept this gift He wants to give you, you can be forgiven and made whole again. All the things you have done that you regret—both the mistakes you’ve made and the things you did on purpose—can be forgotten. All you have to do is believe, repent, and start following Jesus today. Pray today to get your heart right with God.



“Day Six” painting by Jean Coker

Session 6 Leader's Guide

Greeting – Welcome participants, make announcements, and handout material for the next class.

Opening Prayer – Thank God for the chance to study together and pray for wisdom.

Video – Show Guided Prayer Meditation video for Day 6 – <https://youtu.be/3LdYSoUfSUI>

Discussion Questions

1. **The Genesis Story's Purpose:** How does understanding Genesis as a narrative to reveal God's truth rather than a scientific explanation change the way you perceive the relationship between faith and science?
2. **Humanity's Distinction:** Reflecting on humanity being created in God's image, how does this unique status influence your sense of responsibility towards the environment and other creatures?
3. **Modern Idolatry:** In light of the sermon's definition of idolatry, can you identify any priorities or practices in your life that might be considered modern idolatry? How can we address these to focus more fully on God?
4. **Living as God's Representatives:** Given that we are made to represent God on Earth, in what ways can we more effectively embody God's character in our daily interactions and decisions?
5. **Jesus as the Perfect Model:** How does Jesus' life and teachings guide us in understanding and living out our purpose as God's image-bearers? What steps can you take to align more closely with this model?
6. **Sin's True Nature:** Considering sin as putting anything before God, how does this perspective help you identify areas in your life that need realignment with God's priorities? What practical changes can you make to address this?
7. **Responding to Jesus' Invitation:** Reflecting on the sermon's call to believe, repent, and follow Jesus, how has accepting this invitation impacted your life? If you are still considering it, what questions or concerns do you have?

Close with Intercessory Prayer

Allow the class to share any praises or concerns they have. Make a prayer list to keep track of them. Close the class by praying over the praises and concerns the class named.

Creation: Day 7 - Rest



Genesis 2:1-3

¹ So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ² On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

On the Seventh Day, God Rested.

We live in a hectic world that values productivity. Rise early, work hard all

day. Get off work and go to one or two or even three extra activities before you go to bed too late at night. Studies show that 60% of Americans don't get enough sleep. Lack of sleep increases the risk of being overweight, heart disease, and breast cancer in women. It also leads to more car accidents and medical errors. Yet we have too much living to do to get more sleep.

It is not just a lack of sleep that plagues us. There is also a lack of resting—a time when we just *refrain* from working. Studies show that 1/3 of Americans don't take vacation time even when their jobs offer it. Often this is because they feel pressure not to—either pressure from their bosses or pressure they put on themselves. When people do take a vacation, they rarely use the time to “rest.” Instead, they opt to fill the time with numerous activities. How many of you have gotten home from a vacation and thought, “I need a vacation from my vacation!”?



In our busy world, the idea that God rested and that He made “resting” a Holy commandment may seem alien. Yet rest is essential to healthy living. God did not design us to be machines that work nonstop. God wants us to take time to “Be still and know that He is God.” (Psalm 46:10). When we pause from our labors and other distractions, we have time to remember who we are and who God is and to just enjoy life. When we do not rest, we are less human than God wants us to be.

The very first thing God calls “holy” in the Bible is the Sabbath rest. A weekly day of rest was so essential that it became one of the most important religious laws in the Bible. It was a day

that God ordered teachers and priests and prophets to defend again and again. We also see that when God's people did not keep the Sabbath, they suffered or were punished.

Mark 2:27

In Mark 2:27, Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath." This is a reminder not to let religious devotion to the Sabbath outweigh common sense or common decency. However, Jesus' words also remind us that the Sabbath is an incredible gift God has given us—something we need. Jesus observed the weekly Sabbath all his life. The Bible tells us it was his custom to worship God in the synagogue each week.



God created the Sabbath for rest and worship.

Work is important. But working too much can be a way for us to cover up and hide from things. People—known as workaholics—use work as an escape the same way alcoholics or drug addicts use substances to escape from reality. When we rest, we sometimes must confront things we might rather have left uncovered—things that need to be confronted. So we must rest and worship.

Worship is the adoration of God. It is when we pause to recognize the wonder of God and His goodness and express our gratitude to Him. Proper worship humbles us, reminding us of our proper place in Creation. It also opens us up to the voice of God who reveals where we need to change or grow. At the same time, worship lifts us up as we recognize we are unconditionally loved by an incredible God.

We were designed to worship God. It is such an integral part of our DNA, that we cannot avoid it. Every society that has existed since the world began has had some notion of God and has sought to worship Him. This fact testifies to both the reality of God's existence and the innate desire within humanity to worship God. How else would so many different kinds of people from so many different backgrounds who never spoke to each other to share ideas, all reach such similar conclusions?

Some people—especially in our modern times when we place more value in science than religious traditions—have chosen not to worship God. Yet we see that even these people worship *some* kind of "god." Perhaps they worship people they admire or things they can acquire. They may worship an ideology or even themselves, but they cannot avoid worshipping something. Because of the way God made us, we must worship just like we must breathe. The question is not "*Will* you worship?" The question is "*Who* or *what* will you worship?"



Jesus came to help us worship the One True God.

He shows us what God is really like. Before Christ, humanity was limited in their understanding of God. We only knew about God from the religious scriptures or from the stories others told. God recognized that because of our sin, we were no longer able to recognize His voice and worship Him in His fullness. So God decided to come to earth to live among us. God was born as the baby Jesus. He grew up under the supervision of a mother and father. He learned how to live, suffered the same temptations

and disappointments we face, and was obedient to the very laws He created. Ultimately, Jesus died on the cross to atone for the sins that keep us from worshiping God.

And so now, through Jesus Christ, we can turn away from our sins of error and sins of willful disobedience and come to worship God. Jesus said, “Come to me all you who are weary and carrying heaven burdens, and I will give you *rest*.”

Conclusion

Are you weary from carrying heavy burdens? Are you working yourself to death trying to do too much? Are you weighed down with the burdens of grief, guilt, worry, stress, loneliness, disappointments, shame, or anxiety? The grace of God through Jesus Christ calls to you: “Come, and I will give you rest.” Jesus wants to forgive you, to wash away all your sin sickness, and give you a brand new life. Jesus wants you to use your time reasonably. He wants you to work, but Jesus also wants you to take time to rest and worship and enjoy the amazing life God created in you and all around you. So what’s stopping you?



“Day Seven” painting by Jean Coker

Session 7 Leader's Guide

Greeting – Welcome participants, make announcements, and handout material for the next class.

Opening Prayer – Thank God for the chance to study together and pray for wisdom.

Video – Show Guided Prayer Meditation video for Day 7 – https://youtu.be/N4Ed0-C_maY

Discussion Questions

1. **The Importance of Rest:** In a culture that often values busyness and productivity over rest, how does the concept of Sabbath challenge modern attitudes towards work and leisure? Have you experienced the benefits of intentionally incorporating rest into your routine?
2. **Rest as a Holy Commandment:** Considering that the first thing God declared holy was the Sabbath rest, what does this signify about the value of rest in God's eyes? How does this influence your view on taking time to pause and rejuvenate?
3. **Workaholicism vs. Rest:** The sermon suggests that excessive work can be an escape mechanism similar to substance abuse. Can you identify ways in which you or those around you might use busyness to avoid confronting deeper issues? How can rest help address this?
4. **The Role of Worship in Rest:** How does incorporating worship into your rest reflect on your relationship with God? Discuss the interplay between rest, worship, and acknowledging our place in creation as described in the sermon.
5. **Innate Desire to Worship:** Reflecting on the sermon's point that humans have an innate desire to worship, how do you see this manifest in society today? What or whom do you find yourself or others worshipping, and how does this impact your life?
6. **Jesus as the Path to True Worship:** Considering Jesus' life and teachings, how does He guide us to worship the One True God? In what ways has understanding Jesus' example changed your approach to worship and rest?
7. **Responding to Jesus' Invitation for Rest:** Jesus invites those who are weary to come to Him for rest. How can you respond to this invitation in your daily life? What steps can you take to embrace the rest and worship Jesus offers, especially when faced with the pressures of modern life?

Close with Intercessory Prayer

Allow the class to share any praises or concerns they have. Make a prayer list to keep track of them. Close the class by praying over the praises and concerns the class named.