

WEEK 2 - Creation & Purpose - The Story Begins

Fall Focus 2024 // Canopy Guide

The Big Story

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- The story of God creating the world is magnificent. What part of the creation story amazes you most?
- One way God reveals himself is through his creation. He loves and celebrates creation. What do you celebrate in his creation? How do you connect with the creator through his creation?

VIDEO INTRO | STUDY GUIDE

The first eleven chapters of Genesis function like an overture of a symphony. Overtures work like this: they set the key musical themes that the listener will hear throughout the entire symphony; lines and phrases will be repeated over and over again. The same thing is true about the opening chapters of Genesis and how those opening chapters relate to the rest of the biblical narrative. This week, we are thinking through the creation story (primarily Genesis 1 and 2).

If you ask a scientist and a theologian to sit down together and talk about the Creation story, you'll likely find places where they disagree with each other. But one thing is certain: science and the Bible address two fundamentally different but complementary questions: Science focuses on the *how and when*, while Scripture focuses on the *why* of Creation. The Creation narrative is a story with a *theological* point. So while the *how* of Creation is important, what is more important is the *why*. In particular, this week we'll be honing in on two crucial aspects of the creation account.

1. What does the creation story say about God?
2. What does the creation story say about humanity and our purpose?

With respect to question 1, the answer is this: the creation story tells us that God is king. Here is how: in the biblical account of Creation, the only voice bringing about action is

the Israelite God, Yahweh, commanding things to happen, and then those things happening. This is intended to show that Yahweh is the king. Kings speak and things happen. This is in contrast to the narratives of surrounding nations in the ancient near east, whose accounts had warring gods, each with their own set of authority. In those accounts, Creation resulted from chaos and conflict, and was essentially accidental. In the Biblical account, Creation was purposeful and good. The one true God, the God of our Big Story, brought order out of chaos *on purpose* making all things good. This shows loving intent. God, then, is an almighty and loving king who speaks beauty, life, and purpose into his creation.

Let's turn, now, to question 2. Of all of the things that God made, humans made "in the image of God" is a vital piece for our Story. Genesis 1:26 tells us that humanity was made in the image (צלם, tseh'-lem) of God, according to his likeness (דמויות, dem-ooth') to reign over creation. The main point isn't that humans look like God; rather, the point is how humans relate to and represent God. Humans were created to bear God's image. In the biblical context, 'image' could be thought of in the same way the ancients would have thought of an idol statue (in fact, the Hebrew word used for 'image' is just the normal word for idol (צלם, tseh'-lem)). That is, humans are meant to represent God and tell creation that Yahweh rules the world. How does humanity do this? Well, the Bible is actually pretty clear: humanity is meant to rule and reign over God's creation on God's behalf (see Gen 1:28). We were created to bear God's image, care for God's good creation, and direct all glory back to him, the one true King and Lord of creation.

Scripture to Read

- Genesis 1, Genesis 2:4-25
- Proverbs 8:22-31
- Psalm 19:1-6

Scripture to Memorize

- Genesis 1:3-4


Deeper Discussion Questions

1. If the world (i.e., the creation) is intended to be God's dwelling place, how should this impact how we think of its present and its future?
2. If humans are made in God's image, how do we make sense of really bad people?
3. Humans are described with royal language ('rule', 'have dominion', etc.). How should this impact how we think of other humans (think, e.g., about the 'lowest' in social status, and so on)?

PRAYER

Thank God for creating everything to be good, for making us in his image and inviting us to carry out and work toward the good of creation. Make sure to claim some time as a group each week to pray specifically for each other.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. Roger Turner (part of our Grandview Discipleship Team) wrote a longer original version of this study guide that provides more academic depth and scholarly content. [Check it out here.](#)
2. Check out this YouTube video from the Bible Project on the theme of temple as present at creation, through the OT, and fulfilled and expanded through the person of Jesus: [We Studied the Temple in the Bible \(Here's What We Found\)](#). This theme may resonate through some of our conversations this semester and is a great side road if your group wants to dig deeper into discussion question #1.
3.  Science and Genesis - N.T. Wright, John Polkinghorne, Allister McGrath , 12 minute video that explores Genesis texts in light of ancient near eastern culture, *contains ancient art depictions of human form.*
4. Carmen Joy Imes on what it means to be God's image: [What Is God's Image? | Carmen Imes | Seminary Now Scene](#)