

THE CHARACTER OF GOD: GENESIS 1-2:3

Focus Idea: God is relational, and God's desire for more relationships is clear in the first verses of the Bible.

The Context: Genesis 1 is the first chapter in the Christian Bible. Though the events it describes were not written until thousands of years later, this is the beginning of the story. At the outset, the world is formless and void. Nothing exists; there is only God, who is hovering as a spirit above the formless waters.

The Characters: God, that's it. At least at the beginning.

The Core: The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, and the journey of cosmic history begins with one sentence. *Let there be light!* (vs. 3)

With these words, God illuminated the universe. Order began to govern chaos. Blackness gave way to brilliance.

In the next verses, God continues to speak. With each command, his universe takes greater definition. God separates waters from land, calls forth seed-bearing plants from the ground, and creates animals to enjoy the planet he made. Heavenly bodies beam down warmth and light. The skies and seas teem with life (vs. 9-23).

At the end of each day, God takes stock of his handiwork. And what he sees is good. The love that has eternally existed in his heart now turns toward the world he has made. God loves what he has made.

But it's in verse 26 that things get *really* interesting. And all it takes are two little words: *us* and *our*. God says: "Let us make mankind in our image." The creation is good. The planets and parakeets and pine trees are good. But creation is not complete until God creates human beings which he desires to make in *our* image.

Now, how can this be a plural pronoun? Isn't God only one? *Yes, the Bible says, except that he isn't.* He's plural. He is an "us"!

Christians reading this text see here a textual marker of something supremely significant about God – God can speak to himself. God can deliberate within himself. Why? Because God is not simply one person. As the story of God's revelation moves forward, Christians begin to understand that God is three persons – the Father, the Spirit who was moving over the waters, and the Son.

When God makes mankind in that image, then, God is creating a special kind of being. He is out to make more persons, persons with whom he can experience new relationships. The loving community that existed even before life began, that "Forever Us," is expanding to include male and female.

And as soon as they are made (Genesis 2 describes this in greater detail), God brings people into his created world and into his creative work (1:28-30). Living in God's world means a living in relationship with him and participating in his purposes for all creation.