

THE BIG STORY

Week of September 13

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

Creation & Exile

Daily Readings

The daily readings for this week follow the story of Creation throughout the BIG story of the Bible so that we get a sense for how important Creation and New Creation is to this story.

Monday

Psalm 8
Proverbs 8:22-36

Thursday

Psalm 136
John 1

Tuesday

Psalm 19
Job 38

Friday

Psalm 139
Colossians 1:15-23

Wednesday

Psalm 104
Isaiah 65:17-25

Saturday

Psalm 147
Revelation 21

Conversations on Genesis 1-2

These questions are written for personal reflection and also to be discussed with others – in your household, your Connection group or with a spiritual friend.

“The answer to the question ‘who am I’ can only be given if we ask ‘what is my story’? and that can only be answered if there is an answer to the further question, ‘what is the whole story of which my story is a part?’”

-Lesslie Newbigin

What family, ethnic, national or religious stories give meaning or help make sense of your life experiences or give you a sense of identity and purpose?

For children: What are some of the favorite stories that we tell about you? What are some of your favorite stories about our family? Do you have some favorite stories in the Bible?

For the Jews, the Creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 set the course for the entire BIG story of the Bible – the story of God’s mission to rescue and renew all of creation and her people. It is a story that begins with the Spirit hovering, or brooding, over the dark emptiness before speaking all of the material universe into being. It is a story of God’s word bringing order out of chaos.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3 out loud as a group.

- What words and phrases are repeated? How does the form of the repetition lend a sense of order emerging in time and space?
- What strikes you about God in these passages?
- What strikes you about humans?

Genesis 1:26-27 has at least 3 features that have caught the attention of Jewish and Christian interpreters:

- 1. Mutuality** God says “let us make them in our image” ... which theologians such as Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggest emphasizes how important relationship and mutuality is to being made in the image of God: “human beings ... are created in the image of one who chooses to create in a way that shares power with others.”
- 2. Dignity** It has also been observed that in that time, “Israel was surrounded by cultures where the image of the divine was an indication of royalty, a symbol of the power and authority of the king.”
- 3. Purpose** Immediately after stating the intention to make humanity in God’s image, God says, “So that they may have dominion (rule / authority) over all ...”. This suggests that the care of the creation – ruling in a way that results in flourishing (fruitful and multiply) – is a big part of what it means to be made in the image of God.

Families – For older kids and teens this Bible Project Video is a great starting place to talk about the Image of God: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/image-god/>

Talk about these three characteristics of being made in the image of God – mutuality, dignity and purpose.

- Which seem especially important to recapture in our view of human persons?
- How are these expressions of the good news of God's grace in creation?
- Which feels most encouraging or important to you, right now, in your relationship with God?

The story in Genesis 2 is very different than Genesis 1. In this second Creation account, the focus is particular and intimate – a particular place, people and purpose (to cultivate this garden...).

- What similarities or differences strike you in the Genesis 2 account compared to Genesis 1?
- What is added to the description of God as creator in this account:
- What is added to the description of humanity?
- Where do you see divine/human mutuality – dignity – and purpose in Genesis 2?

Sermon reflection

When compared to other Creation accounts that were told at the same time the Jews were telling their story Genesis 1 and 2 are remarkable for the lack of violence in the process of creation or subjugation in the relationship between humans and the gods. What assumptions are made about the role of violence or subjugation in bringing order out of chaos in our time?

Pastor Laurie spoke about the combination of dependence and dignity in the creation accounts – of authority and vulnerability – and how the crisis in the BIG story begins in Genesis 3 (next week) when humanity rejects dependence on God for their dignity. Reflect on our culture, and the way that we speak about human dignity. Do we, in our time, see dependence on God or vulnerability with others as essential to human dignity?

Personal Growth

What characteristics of God in these passages invites your worship and/or encourages you to fully entrust yourself to God?

What descriptions of humans being created in God's image are an encouragement to you?

Where are your assumptions about who God is, or what it means to be human, challenged by these stories?

How can we be praying for you / each other this week?

Going Further

There are so many other themes and questions that come up in relationship to Genesis 1-2! Things like Faith and Science – Creation Care – Gender and Marriage – Sabbath – Creativity & the Arts – Theology of Work – just to name a few! Here are a handful of resources to begin exploring more of the BIG story ... send us your links and discoveries and we'll start to build a BIG story online resource library!

FAITH AND SCIENCE: BioLogos

BioLogos, founded by Francis Collins, exists to show the church and the world the harmony between science and biblical faith.

[This video](#) gives an overview of their mission.

You may also enjoy this [15 minute video](#) of the story of the Bible told from a scientific perspective or this [book review](#) by former President of Fuller Seminary, Richard Mouw on "Preserving Orthodoxy and Honoring Scientific Reality."

There is so much wonderful content on this website – here is a [whimsical video](#) to enjoy with New Testament scholar N.T. Wright and Francis Collins singing about Genesis.

Discovery Institute

Closer to home, the [Discovery Institute in Seattle](#) seeks to advance Intelligent Design to the universe.

You can find more of their resources on faith and science [here](#).

CREATION CARE: ARocha

ARocha is just one of many wonderful Christian organizations dedicated to Creation Care – here is a [great link](#) to the Lausanne Global Classroom that connects evangelical leaders to the stewardship of creation.

WORK, CREATIVITY & SABBATH

We haven't even touched on the fact that many of our views of God's purpose for work originate in the creation stories!

Check out this [Theology of Work website](#) for great resources on living out discipleship and work and here's a [great page](#) with multiple links on Theology and the Arts.

WEDNESDAY ZOOM CONVERSATION: Sabbath

Our Wednesday Zoom Conversation is on **Sabbath** this week – a preview of Sabbath can be found in this [article by Norman Wirzba](#). For Digital Sabbath resources here is a [good place to start](#).