



## Getting Starting

Our hearing is amazing. Even in the presence of loud noise, you can pick out specific sounds because your ear has a feedback loop to cancel out signals you don't want. You can carry on a conversation in a crowded, noisy auditorium. A parent can hear their child's cry in a room full of crying babies. Your brain learns a sound such as the complex tones of speech or your child's cry. Your brain not only processes those tones but also sends neural signals back to the same cells that enabled you to sense sound and actively tune the sensitivity to accentuate what you are listening for. And, at higher levels, the brain attaches meanings to the sounds and connects those meanings with other thoughts. That's a lot going on! And that's just one of the amazing ways our brains have developed.

Many people wonder how and why human beings developed as we have. Was it pure chance? Was there some sort of divine plan? This guide addresses some differing views on how we came to be here. We'll talk about evolution, creation, and how our understanding of these things impacts how we live our lives.

*"One of the things that is wrong with religion is that it teaches us to be satisfied with answers which are not really answers at all."*

**Richard Dawkins**

*"You weren't an accident. You weren't mass produced. You aren't an assembly-line product. You were deliberately planned, specifically gifted, and lovingly positioned on the Earth by the Master Craftsman."*

**Max Lucado**

### Choose one

When, if at all, have you struggled with the ideas of God and evolution?

In your opinion, is the world getting better or worse over time?

What beliefs do you currently have on the truth of the Bible vs. what views you used to have?

What did your parents teach you on evolution or the truth of the Bible?

There are many differing views on how humans came to exist. Many would reference the creation story in Genesis, which has been interpreted in lots of different ways. Read the first two chapters of Genesis along with these supplemental questions. After mulling this over, try identifying where your beliefs lie on this spectrum of views about evolution. One main purpose of asking ourselves where we stand on these topics is to better understand differing views and to have better conversations in which we learn about ourselves and others.

### Choose one

What was a pivotal moment that changed everything for you?

Why do you believe God started with heaven and earth, and ended with humanity?



## Spectrum of Truth: Scientific

Since the days of Charles Darwin, Christians have wrestled with how to integrate evolution with the biblical story of creation. Over time, Christian views have ranged from ignoring it, to resistance, to working to integrate the two.

Below are five general approaches that Christians have argued could resolve the conflict between God and evolution. These are simplifications; the readings on the last page are much more detailed.

### ◆ Young Earth Creationism

Genesis 1 is literal and God created the world as stated. We see evidence of an older earth because everything was created in the middle of the process (e.g., adult animals, aged rocks).

### ◆ Old Earth Creationism

The earth is older but the Bible describes the order; each day represents millennia. The language is poetic or written as early languages and people would picture it with their words.

### ◆ Intelligent Design

The earth is very old and God was involved in affecting the process of evolution, because it couldn't have occurred by chance alone.

### ◆ Evolutionary Creationism

God created natural laws and laid in the codes for the universe and life to develop through evolution.

### ◆ Science and Spirituality Are Different

The Bible was not written to be a scientific document but a spiritual one, so the poetry of Genesis 1 does not need to be reconciled with science.



## Spectrum of Truth: History, Arts, and Culture

Below that are the outcomes which may rely on a mix of the different interpretations whether scientific or not that would be appropriate in ancient times and also translate forward to us directly (more or less).

Interpretations that do not seek to reconcile Science and the Creation Narratives:

### ◆ Proclamation Day

Genesis 1 is a recording of what happened in God's throne room, not physically on Earth. Therefore the story is more about God and God's action than explanation of time/space occurrences.

### ◆ Creation Poem

The number and ordering of the "days" of Genesis 1 are chosen for poetic and thematic reasons rather than historical ones. This pattern is seen in other parts of scripture and helps to tie together themes of Fall/Redemption, Creation/Destruction/re- or new-Creation, etc.

### ◆ Kingdom and Temple

As the great King, God gives humans dominion as in a "land grant" covenant. Alternatively, God inaugurates the cosmos as his temple. In both cases, the text is not focused on the physical universe but on the relationship between God and humankind.

### ◆ Ancient Near Eastern Cosmology

Genesis 1 matches the physical picture of the world believed in Ancient Near East religions, but presents a dramatically different theological picture, proclaiming one God as a creator of all rather than many Gods (rewriting the prevailing mythologies of ancient Israelite neighbors).

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Why does it matter that we have a thoughtful interpretation of the Creation Narrative, or any other larger-than-life/inexplicable narrative in scripture?

Culture is defined by these events and others in human history, and that culture informs our rules, laws, and customs today. (e.g. Pro-life vs. Pro-choice; positions on environment care; gender roles and sexual orientation).



## Why Explore Spectrums of Truth

### 🛡️ As Liturgy

Liturgy is a word that is often used to distinguish what the church does in its Sunday morning worship, but at its root it is anything that God's people do within and outside of the church. It comes from the Greek word leitourgia, which means "public service, worship of the gods." The Creation narrative then serves as one source document of how we order our time (Sabbath/7-day rhythm of work and rest), order our work (tending the garden), and our relationships to one another (Adam and Eve).

### 🛡️ As a Festival/Seasonal Calendar

The Creation Narrative has been looked to by culture present and past as a foundational document to help define the ways we interact with nature (ordered and interrelated), agriculture (seasons of sowing and harvesting), and caring for creation (preserving and allowing of seasons of fallowness and renewal).

### 🛡️ As Connection to the Creative Process

In more ancient times, documents like this might be literally interpreted for how temple processes and spaces were created and maintained.

That translates forward to today where these passages might still help guide the creation of overt religious space and process, but also might be appropriated in secular pursuits of music, architecture, ceremony, prose and other creations. Additionally it may help promote healthy relationship with the human impulse to create, toil, rest, relate and find meaning, vocation, and identity in those activities.

\_\_\_\_\_ speaks to me as an individual and as I relate to my community.

\_\_\_\_\_ speaks to me and how I relate to the natural world and the place where I live.

\_\_\_\_\_ speaks to me as a person who lives into a vocational calling to create, work, or craft.

- 🛡️ You've already been asked to share which view you resonate with, now share which one challenges you most and why.



## Going Deeper

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand*

*And a Heaven in a Wild Flower*

*Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand*

*And Eternity in an hour...*

**Auguries of Innocence by William Blake**

### Choose one

Which view has most resonated with you or challenged you?

How might your understanding of how the world came to be affect how you live your life?

What is humanity's role in the ongoing creation of the world?

## The Journey Ahead

Read one of the books below for a deeper understanding to build a well-informed understanding.

In the biblical story, God left humankind in charge of caring for the earth. What can you do?

The biblical story says that humankind continues God's creation. What's something creative you can do this week that you can say "this was good"?

## To Learn More



*Four Views on the Historical Adam* by Denis Lamoureux, John Walton, John Collins, & William Barrick

[This book lays out various approaches to understanding Genesis in the context of modern science. Atheism is not covered.]

*Language of God* by Francis Collins.

[Written by a leading scientist of human genome project. A very readable, personal book by Collins that speaks of his journey from agnosticism to faith and the role that science played in it.]



[www.biologos.org](http://www.biologos.org)

[This is your one stop shop for all things Theistic Evolution. Done in a very professional (& careful) way. Founded by Francis Collins, director of the NIH. Great resource with strong scientific credibility.]



Blog on talking with creationists and how to have tough conversations - [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-talk-to-creationis\\_b\\_9557542](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-talk-to-creationis_b_9557542)