

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT™
FOR ADULTS



The Old Testament

WINTER 2012-13: LEADER GUIDE

Ed Stetzer General Editor
Trevin Wax Managing Editor

LifeWay | Adults

God's Word to You:



A Summary of the Bible

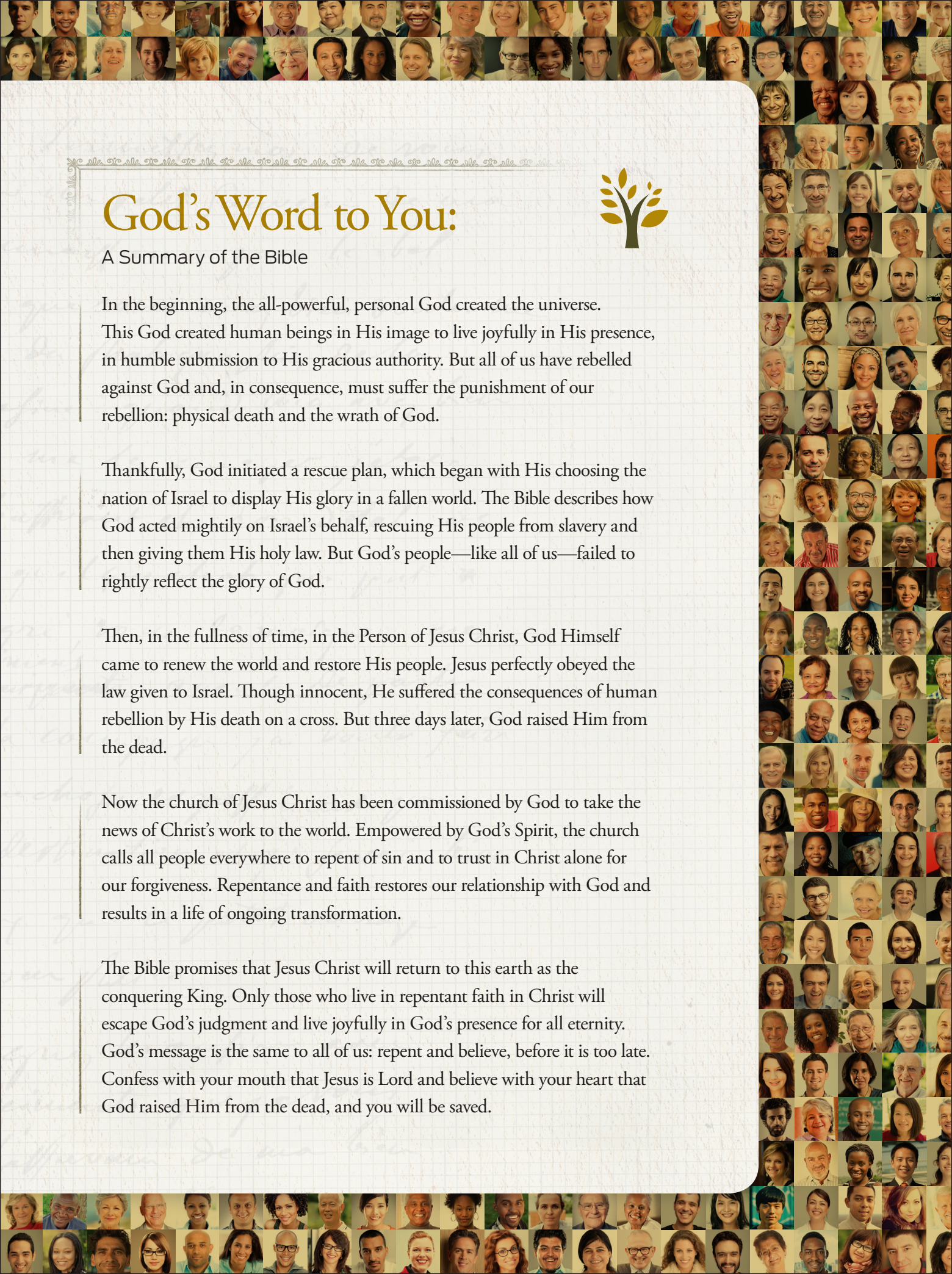
In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.



Ed Stetzer

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*
PRESIDENT, LIFEWAY RESEARCH



Theology is “the study of God.” But unlike academic disciplines where the acquiring of knowledge is viewed as a good thing in and of itself, studying truth about God has a specific purpose—that we might know the God who has shown us grace in the Person of Jesus Christ and that we might make Him known. Theology, in the Christian sense, is knowledge about God that leads us into deeper knowledge of God. The gospel is what makes possible this knowledge, and a life of mission is to be the outcome.

The Gospel Project is a curriculum now three years in the making. Churches have expressed their desire for a theologically driven curriculum that is biblical and accessible. The development of this new curriculum has taken place with the input from an advisory council and insights offered from churches willing to test the material. I am excited to see a new curriculum that will assist small communities within the church to include a solid theological and missional focus in their discipleship process.

Theology, gospel, and mission. Our goal has been to incorporate each of these important elements in *The Gospel Project*. As we learn more about the grand narrative that the Scriptures tell, we see Christ’s death and resurrection as the focal point of the story line. The good news of Jesus then empowers us—God’s people—to live on mission, representing Christ to those around us and proclaiming His name to the world.

Trevin Wax

Managing Editor—*The Gospel Project*
AUTHOR OF *Counterfeit Gospels* AND *Holy Subversion*



The Old Testament is a puzzle for many Christians. How many of us have started a daily reading plan at the beginning of the year only to lose steam once we get into the dense passages of laws and genealogies? It’s tempting for many Christians to jump to the New Testament, where we are more comfortable. But when we neglect the Old Testament, we miss the beauty of how God’s plan of redemption took shape.

In this volume, we will take a fast-paced journey through the story line of the Old Testament. Along the way, we’ll stop at key passages, observe different kinds of literature, but most importantly, we’ll see how the stories of the Old Testament are woven together into one big story—a story that points forward to ultimate redemption provided through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As you study the Old Testament at a break-neck speed, remember that if you are a Christian, these stories are your stories too. As one who has been grafted into Israel, your lineage of faith goes all the way back to Abraham. The resurrection faith on display in his obedience to sacrifice Isaac is the kind of resurrection faith we have today—on the other side of the empty tomb. And the heart of our missionary, rescuing God is to be reflected in us as we compassionately proclaim the gospel to those around us.

EDITORS

The Gospel Project™
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Eric Geiger
Vice President, Church Resources

Ed Stetzer
General Editor

Trevin Wax
Managing Editor

Bill Craig
Director, Adult Ministry Publishing

Faith Whatley
Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments to:
Managing Editor,
The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0102;
or make comments on the Web at
www.lifeway.com.

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or write to the above address.

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salvation for its end; and truth, without any
mixture of error, for its matter and that all
Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To
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About the Writers



Unit 1: Halim Suh and his wife, Angela, have three kids and live in Austin, Texas, where he is pastor of equipping at The Austin Stone Community Church. He is the author (with Matt Carter) of two Threads studies: *Creation Unraveled* and *Creation Restored*. Halim has a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Unit 2: Jonathan Leeman lives with his wife and three daughters in Cheverly, Maryland, where he is a member at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC. He is the author of *Reverberation: How God's Word Brings Light, Freedom, and Action to His People* and the editorial director for 9Marks Ministries. Jonathan has a Master of Divinity from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Unit 3: Christian George is assistant professor of biblical and theological studies at Oklahoma Baptist University. He is the author of *Sex, Sushi, & Salvation*, *Godology*, and *Sacred Travels*. He earned his PhD from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

WRITERS

Unit 1: Foundations

- 7** *Session 1*
Creation: The Story Begins
- 19** *Session 2*
The Fall: Paradise Lost and the Aftermath
- 31** *Session 3*
Abraham's Covenant: The Call of a Covenant-Keeping God
- 43** *Session 4*
The Exodus: God Comes to the Rescue
- 55** *Session 5*
The Law: God Gives the House Rules

Unit 2: God Develops His Covenant People

- 67** *Session 6*
The Land: God's Place for His Covenant People
- 79** *Session 7*
The Kings: God Raises Up Kings to Lead His People
- 91** *Session 8*
Psalms: Songs for New Creation Hearts
- 103** *Session 9*
Wisdom: Its Role in the Lives of God's People

Unit 3: God's Covenant People Divided, Scattered, and Brought Back

- 115** *Session 10*
Israel: The Decline and Fall of the Northern Kingdom
- 127** *Session 11*
Judah: The Decline and Fall of the Southern Kingdom
- 139** *Session 12*
The Exile: God Prepares His People for Deliverance
- 151** *Session 13*
The Return: Further Deliverance Awaited

Tips from Trevin on how to best use this Leader Guide

From one leader to another...

Welcome to *The Gospel Project*! Think about the awesome responsibility we have every week—to guide people through Bible study so that they have an encounter with the living Christ. I hope that *The Gospel Project* will provide you with the tools and resources you need as you prayerfully seek to apply the truth of the gospel to the people God has placed in your group.

Here are some things to remember that will help you maximize the usefulness of this Leader Guide:

Pray. Pray for your group. Don't lead in your own strength.

Adapt. You know the style of your group. If your group is more discussion-based, then encourage participants to read the lesson ahead of time. Make good use of the “For Further Discussion” questions provided in the Teaching Plan so you can facilitate discussion that stays grounded in the lesson. If you take a more master-teacher approach, then spend a little time each day over the course of the week mastering the Expanded Lesson Content. Select the questions that make the most strategic sense for moving the lesson along.

Cut. If it seems to you that the lessons for *The Gospel Project* provide too much material for one session, you're right. We chose to deliver more than you need and to include the bulk of the lesson in the Personal Study Guide so that you don't feel pressed to get all the content delivered in the session time itself. Refer your group members to the Personal Study Guide.

Personalize. Take the truths expressed in *The Gospel Project* and enhance them. Add personal stories. Ask penetrating questions that go to the heart of the people you know and love.

Encourage Preparation. The Personal Study Guide includes three devotionals, two that prepare the participant for the group time and one that follows up and reinforces the lesson. Challenge your group to work through the lesson and devotionals each week on their own.

Resource Yourself. Make good use of the additional resources suggested at the end of every lesson. Download a podcast. Read a blog post or a chapter in a book. Check *The Gospel Project* blog for weekly updates for teaching tips and further thoughts from our writers.

Overflow. Remember...*The Gospel Project* is not just a curriculum. WE are the project. The gospel is working on us. Don't let your preparation time be simply about the content you're going to deliver. Let the truths of God's Word soak in as you study. A great leader is not a dispenser of information but an overflowing river of gospel passion. Let God work on your heart first, and then pray that He will change the hearts of the people He has entrusted to your care.

SESSION 1

Creation

The Story Begins

Summary and Goal

The creation of our world reveals the power and authority of God. Human beings are created in the image of God, and human relationships shine light on the nature of God. Because the Creator is sovereign, transcendent, and has chosen to personally reveal Himself to us, we are called to reflect His glory in our work and in our relationships.

Steps to Prepare

- 1. Read the background material for this week's lesson, recording insights and questions:**
 - Genesis 1-2
 - Pay special attention to the main passages for this week: Genesis 1:1-5; 1:26-2:3; 2:18-25
- 2. Study the Expanded Lesson Content (pp. 10-17)**
 - Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
 - Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.
- 3. Review the Teaching Plan (pp. 8-9)**
 - Refine the lesson plan based on your group's particular needs.
 - Adjust the plan if necessary.
- 4. Pray for the Lord's guidance as you lead your group through this material.**

Lesson Outline

- 1. God has all power and authority over His creation (Gen. 1:1-5).**
- 2. God desires to be glorified by human beings (Gen. 1:26-2:3).**
- 3. God reveals His nature through the creation of human relationships (Gen. 2:18-25).**

Creation

Session 1

Introduce the Lesson

Use the illustration about TV crime shows to make the point that evidence leads to conclusions (leader p. 10; personal study p. 10). In creation, we can see the evidence of God's existence and the clues of His character. Summarize the goal of this week's lesson (leader p. 10; personal study p. 10).

1. God has all power and authority over His creation.

Invite the group to read Genesis 1:1-5 with you, asking them to consider all that these verses tell us about God's power and authority.

- ❓ What does the emergence of light tell you about God? What clues about Him are woven into that act of creation, the manner in which He made light?

Make the point that the name *Elohim* used in this passage reflects God's transcendent power (leader p. 11; personal study p. 11). Then invite the group to read Genesis 2:4-8, looking for differences in how God is presented.

- ❓ Can you think of some reasons Moses would want to give us two perspectives on the same creation story by referring to God in two distinct ways? What do you think he is trying to tell us about God?

Highlight the personal name for God (LORD, or *Yahweh*) used in the second passage and how this change of name shows us God's immanence and desire for personal relationship with us. "Because our God is Elohim, we *must* give Him all our worship, but because He's Yahweh, we *gladly* offer it" (leader p. 12; personal study p. 12).

- ❓ Is there anywhere else that we see the transcendence of God and His nearness displayed so clearly at the same time? Can you think of a time in your life when His power and authority met with His gentleness and closeness?

Point to Jesus as the Almighty God who took on flesh (leader p. 12; personal study p. 12). Transition by mentioning that God wants us to know not only who He is but who we are as well.

2. God desires to be glorified by human beings.

As you read Genesis 1:26–2:3, ask the group to look for the different way God goes about making humans in comparison to how He made everything else.

- When it comes to the creation of man, what does God say? What is different about how God decides to create man?

Reread Genesis 1:26–2:3, asking the group to look for clues as to what the “image of God” includes. Show that it refers to how we relate (v. 27), rule (v. 28), work (vv. 29-30), and rest (1:31–2:3) (leader p. 14; personal study pp. 13-14). Discuss each briefly.

- In what ways do you image God best? In other words, in what area of your life (relate, rule, work, rest) do you feel most confident that you reflect God?
- In what area do you feel you’re the weakest, and why do you think that is your weak area of bearing the image of God? What are some practical ways you can improve?

Highlight that none of us can image God perfectly, which is why Jesus came as the perfect “image of the invisible God” (leader p. 15; personal study p. 14).

3. God reveals His nature through the creation of human relationships.

Recap Genesis 1:1–2:3, emphasizing the “goodness” of creation. As you read 2:18-25, ask the group to look for what God suddenly declares not good.

Highlight the complementarity of male/female relationships as an aspect of reflecting God’s triune nature (leader pp. 16-17; personal study p. 15). Point ahead to marriage as a picture of the gospel (leader p. 17).

Conclusion

Conclude by summarizing the lesson and the awesome privilege of being made in the image of an awesome God (leader p. 17; personal study p. 15).

Encourage your group to read the devotional intended to serve as a follow-up for this lesson as well as the two devotionals for preparing your heart before next week’s session.

? For Further Discussion

How does it impact you to think of the God who made the heavens and the earth choosing to make you in His image? What does that tell you about the way He feels about you specifically?

? For Further Discussion

Relate: In what ways does the truth about the image of God affect the way we treat others?

? For Further Discussion

Work: How does the recognition that work is assigned by God change our perspective on our jobs?

? For Further Discussion

What does the picture of Eden teach us about sexuality and marriage? In what ways can we evaluate our marriages in light of God’s original intention?

Expanded Lesson Content

Creation

Session 1



Opening Illustration and Introduction

Have you noticed the common thread in TV crime shows? Usually the suspense builds as the investigation comes to a standstill. But then the investigators figure out something game-changing by taking another pass through the crime scene or revisiting an old, dusty file from the archives. Part

of the appeal of these programs is that the answer is there the whole time. That one earth-shattering piece of evidence is screaming out to everyone, trying to be noticed, yet everyone seems blind and deaf to it.

What if you lived in an environment in which someone intentionally left behind clues to tell you valuable information about who he is and what he is like—and he actually wanted to be found? What if there were someone who wanted you to know him so much so that he made an environment with the purpose of teaching you *about* him in order to lead to a relationship *with* him? And what if the depths of your heart rejoiced in new and unimaginable ways every time you learned something new about this amazing person because of the magnitude of who he was?

This is exactly what we see happen in the opening chapters of Genesis. God makes Himself known to us through the evidence of His being and the clues of His character that are sown into nature.

Lesson Summary

In this lesson, we will see that the creation of our world reveals the power and authority of God. Human beings are created in the image of God, and human relationships shine light on the nature of God. Because the Creator is sovereign, transcendent, and has chosen to personally reveal Himself to us, we are called to reflect His glory in our work and in our relationships.

1. God has all power and authority over His creation (Gen. 1:1-5).

To understand better what creation can tell us about God, we should look first to the way creation came into existence.

¹ *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

² *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, 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 *God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.* ⁵ *God called the light "day," and He called the darkness "night." Evening came and then morning: the first day.*

There was nothing. Imagine that for a moment. The only mentionable presence other than God we see after the beginning was darkness. Formless. Void. Let that reality steep in your mind for a moment. Deadness. Emptiness. Lifelessness. That was the state before God continued.

Then for the first time in created history, God spoke. With the exercise of only His voice, God called forth light out of nothing, and light appeared.



What does the emergence of light tell you about God? What clues about Him are woven into that act of creation, the manner in which He made light?

God's transcendence, power, and authority are what commanded creation into existence. The very name used to describe Him in the account of creation above is *Elohim*, the common name of God in Hebrew that means mighty, powerful, and exceedingly great. It is the name that describes the kind of God who speaks and the universe is born, the name to describe a God who owns everything in creation because He spoke it into being. He is high, seated on the throne of the heavens that He spoke into existence. All created beings, including mankind, owe their allegiance to this amazing God because there is none like Him; there is no other God who has such power and authority, such bigness and transcendence.

At the same time we see the author of Genesis take a moment to retell the story of creation again in chapter 2, this time with a subtle yet critical difference. In the second account we see Moses refer to God as "LORD God." This name is different from the first. This name is the personal name of God; it doesn't describe an attribute or role of God but instead calls Him by His personal name: *Yahweh*.



Can you think of some reasons Moses would want to give us two perspectives on the same creation story by referring to God in two distinct ways? What do you think he is trying to tell us about God?

When Moses uses the personal name of God, he is communicating something about Him. While we see God as powerful and authoritative in Genesis 1, we see that in the same process of creating, God is personal and intimate in Genesis 2. While He is separate and holy, He is also near and able to be known. And we don't just see Moses teach us that through His personal name. We see it in the very unique and intimate way God made man compared to the rest of creation.

He didn't just speak man into existence, though He absolutely could have as Elohim. Instead, God put His hands into the dirt and formed, shaped, and knitted man together with his fingers. And if that wasn't intimate enough, the Almighty lowered His head to the ground and met us face to face and breathed life into us. Can you imagine Adam's lungs inflating for the first time with the very breath of God giving him life? Do you see how intimate and close this Yahweh is as described in chapter 2?

It is true that as Elohim, God owns everything. All allegiance and worship is due Him because He is powerful and holy, set apart from all creation as the infinitely mighty Creator. He has rights over us, and we are accountable to Him. But there is this amazing truth we miss so often because our view of Him stops there. Yes, because He is Elohim, we *have* to give Him our all. But because He is Yahweh, the God who is near and compassionate with His people, we should *want* to give Him our all. We should *want* to surrender all of our rights because this kind of God wants better things for us than we could ever dream up for ourselves! Because our God is Elohim, we *must* give Him all our worship, but because He's Yahweh, we *gladly* offer it, as nothing else could make us happier.



Is there anywhere else that we see the transcendence of God and His nearness displayed so clearly at the same time? Can you think of a time in your life when His power and authority met with His gentleness and closeness?

The clearest place you see the greatness and closeness of God is in the Person of Jesus Christ. Even in the story of creation, we see Jesus play an active role. According to John 1, all things were made through the power and authority of Jesus Christ—the Word of God. And the same Word would later put on flesh and come to dwell with sinful man and would pay the highest price to see us reconciled to the Father. The Word who was present from the beginning and who will return at the end is Jesus. This is the One through whom all of creation was made and the One for whom all of creation exists.

2. God desires to be glorified by human beings (Gen. 1:26–2:3).

We've seen that one of the major purposes of Genesis 1 and 2 is to teach us something about God's nature. He wants to tell us who He is. But He doesn't stop there. He not only wants us to better understand His nature, He wants us to better understand our own nature, namely that we are made in His image. In the creation account, there is a special place given to the creation of human beings.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."²⁹ God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This food will be for you,³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it. I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.³¹ God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

^{2:1} So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed.² By the seventh day God completed His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done.³ God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it He rested from His work of creation.

In the language of Genesis 1, we see creation coming into being simply because "God said." God said this and God said that and it was so.



When it comes to the creation of man, what does God say? What is different about how God decides to create man?

It's almost as if God pauses, almost as if He stops to contemplate and deliberate before He creates man. It's noticeably different, isn't it? He doesn't say, "Let there be man!" He converses within the Trinity and decides to do something with man that has not been done with the rest of creation. There will be something uniquely glorious about man, making him the pinnacle of all God's handiwork.

Voices from the Church

"If God came into the world, what would he be like? For the ancient Greeks, he might have been a philosopher-king. The ancient Romans might have looked for a just and noble statesman. But how does the God of the Hebrews come into the world? As a carpenter."¹

—Phillip Jensen and Tony Payne

Further Commentary

When it comes to our responsibility to work, we have the opportunity to take the raw materials God has created from nothing and work with them for the universal flourishing and enjoyment of man and creation. That is the model for all work, and we see it all around us. This is exactly what a musician does: he takes the raw material of sound and rearranges it to make the best and most pleasing music. This is also what an author does: he takes the raw material of words and rearranges them for the purpose of telling the best and most pleasing story. When we work and create using the things God has provided to meet our needs, we continue to display Him to the world.

Voices from Church History

“Work is permeated with purpose; it is intended to serve God, benefit humankind, and make nature subservient to the moral program of creation...Therefore we apply our whole being—heart and mind, as well as hand—to the daily job. As God’s fellow workers, we reflect God’s creative activity on Monday no less than on Sunday.”²

—Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003)

We are the only creation of God made in His image. That is what God is showing us about our nature; it is defined by the fact that we bear His image.

God gifts parents in a special way to further understand this concept of image-bearing. See, there are a lot of things that are mine, but none are like my children. Unlike my house, my car, and my big screen LCD TV, I myself am bound up into their very physical and spiritual makeup. And because of that, they have access to parts of my heart that no one else and nothing else will ever have access to.

What practically does being made in the image of God include? Look again at the text. From this passage we see that the “image of God” refers to how we relate (v. 27), rule (v. 28), work (vv. 29-30), and rest (1:31–2:3).

Relate: We see something passed on to man through God’s decision to make them male *and* female, to keep Adam from being alone. In creating different persons within “man,” God is re-creating within humanity the same sort of structure that has existed within the Trinity for all of eternity. There is a community between the three Persons of the one God. The complementary nature designed for man and woman to display in creation is also seen within the fellowship of the Godhead. In this we see God inviting us to reflect His personal and relational nature by making us in His image.

Rule: When God determines that He is going to make man in His own image, the first thing He attaches to that new kind of creation is the capacity and responsibility to rule. All throughout the creation narrative, we have observed God demonstrate His power and dominion over all that He has made, right? And now we see God entrust some of that power and rule to mankind. He is allowing man to share in who He is by passing that authority on through His image.

Work: This one can be surprising. There are many people who think work was a result of the fall of man. But here in Genesis 1 and 2 we see God give the command to Adam and Eve to work. Essentially He makes them gardeners. He is commanding that Adam and Eve properly steward and tend to what God has created in order to make it flourish.

Rest: Lastly we see God pass the concept of rest down to man by sharing His image with him. This is a beautiful and blessed thing. God didn’t rest because He was exhausted and needed a break—we know that from other places in Scripture. He’s God. He did not rest because He was tired or worn out. But He knows that after working, we will be.

In the command for us to rest, He’s showing us again what it means to bear His image. He’s showing us that even though we are unlike any other creature in that we are most “like” God, make no mistake, we are not God. There is an unbridgeable difference between us and God. One of the most critical ways we can image Him to the world is by showing that we are not God.

See, He knows something about us. We have a tendency to try and take His place and act like Him. We have a bent to want to take Him off His throne, even in the most unintentional of ways. And so He wove into the fabric of creation the rhythm of work and rest that must be obeyed if we are to flourish. He has even designed that we sleep a third of our lives away to show us that we're not God. A third of our lives we lay unconscious, accomplishing nothing but a symphony of snoring, all the while testifying that we're not God. And that's our nature. Our purpose is to reflect God, to show God to the world without making ourselves out to be God.

- ❓ In what ways do you image God best? In other words, in what area of your life (relate, rule, work, rest) do you feel most confident that you reflect God?
- ❓ In what area do you feel you're the weakest, and why do you think that is your weak area of bearing the image of God? What are some practical ways you can improve?

While we have been given the honor and privilege above all other created beings to share the image of God and bear it to the rest of the world, we fall terribly short most of the time, don't we? It can get discouraging when we are confronted with our shortcomings if we are supposed to be the best at this, right? If only we evangelized better. If only we didn't mess up so much. How is there any hope if we, out of all of creation, are to image God and let the rest of the world see fully who He is?

Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is the "image of the invisible God." He is the perfect image bearer. In every way that we fall short, Jesus displays God perfectly and fully. There is no deficiency in His image. There is no distortion or mar. He is the perfect representation of man displaying God in creation. He does what we were meant to do but never could because of sin, and because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, God looks at us as if we represented Him on earth just like Jesus did. We get the reward of perfectly reflecting God in the world while Jesus took the penalty we were owed for trampling upon God's image. Jesus fulfilled all that was lacking in our ability to image God to the world.

3. God reveals His nature through the creation of human relationships (Gen. 2:18-25).

Throughout this story, we have seen God make everything in creation; after each new thing, He steps back and affirms that it is good. With the emergence of mankind, He declares that the creation is *very* good. But out of everything that was good, there was something that He declared *not* good.

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper as his complement."¹⁹ So the LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found as his complement.²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place.²² Then the LORD God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.²³ And the man said:

*This one, at last, is bone of my bone
and flesh of my flesh;
this one will be called "woman,"
for she was taken from man.*

²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.²⁵ Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

What happened? There was something missing from the creation of man when it was just Adam. His aloneness and isolation was not right; it wasn't good. In fact, it didn't rightly represent God. Do you remember the personal part of His nature that was passed through the sharing of His image? There was a relational component to His nature that was shared in the making of man as male *and* female.

We touched on the male and female relationship a little earlier and would do well to revisit it again since this can be a controversial issue, even in the church. The distinct roles between the different sexes have long led to debate and frustration, but what we know for certain is that there is something important to God in the fact that He created them male *and* female; otherwise He would have stopped after creating Adam (that would've been bad on multiple levels).

The topic of men's and women's roles matters not because there is an argument to be won but because it has something to teach us about God. Both men and women are needed to rightly reflect God because just as the completeness of the Godhead exists within the community of the Trinity,

the completeness of man could not be expressed in Adam alone apart from community.

The implications don't stop there; the marital relationship between men and women exists to demonstrate something about Jesus as well. Both men and women in a marriage relationship are called to display the Person of Jesus to this world.

Ephesians 5:22-33 teaches that husbands and wives put on display the beauty of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ in the way we relate to one another. In both instances of this calling, for males and females, the way to show Christ to the world goes against everything the world teaches about marriage relationships.

For husbands, instead of leading within the marriage through dominance and overpowering, you are called to serve, sacrifice, and give yourself up as Christ did for the church. Husbands, in the way that you lead your wife, you are saying something to the world about how Jesus leads the church.

For wives, though you are equal in dignity and personhood with your husband, there is a call on your life to lay down your rights and submit to your husband's leadership. This is such a countercultural worldview, isn't it? Yet it's exactly what we see in the gospel; it is exactly the example we have in Christ (see Phil 2:5-8).

Jesus was absolutely equal in personhood and dignity with the Father, but He didn't grasp this right with a clenched fist. Instead, He laid it down and submitted to the Father, even at great cost to Himself. The marriage relationship is such a unique and special calling. God has created the special place of marriage so that the world will see Him accurately, through the roles of both husbands and wives.

Conclusion

God designed creation to reflect His character and nature. There are clues everywhere about Him because He wants to make Himself known. From the twinkling stars to the vast oceans, breathtaking mountains, and image-bearing man—He is telling His story and displaying Himself for all to see.

Truly there is no God like ours. He speaks and the heavens obey. Day and night, all of creation sings of His glory and majesty. May we, as His image bearers, the most equipped to represent God in this world, join with the rest of creation in bringing glory to the Father who allows us to know Him. May we look forward to the day when we will know Him fully as He is, face to face, in the light of His glory that illuminates all of heaven.

Voices from the Church

"Besides the immensity of the creation, we dare never lose sight of God's celestial Joy in doing it."³

—Marva Dawn

Voices from the Church

"To fill the whole world with his image-bearers who know him, trust him, depend on him, and enjoy him was and is the mission of God in creation."⁴

—Keith Whitfield

References

1. Phillip Jensen and Tony Payne, *Beginnings: Eden and Beyond* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), quoted in *What Were We Put in the World to Do?* by Tim Keller (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2006), 13.
2. Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), quoted in *What Were We Put in the World to Do?* by Tim Keller, 16.
3. Marva Dawn, *Talking the Walk* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 119.
4. Keith Whitfield, "The Triune God: The God of Mission," in *Theology and Practice of Mission*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 30.

Additional Resources

Creation

Devotional Material

Encourage your group to read the three devotional readings included in the personal study guide.

Study Material

- “In the Beginning Was Jesus”—Session 1 from *Creation Unraveled* by Matt Carter and Halim Suh
- “The Image of God: Biblical Teaching”—Chapter 3 from *Created in God’s Image* by Anthony A. Hoekema
- “The Pattern of the Kingdom”—Chapter 1 from *God’s Big Picture* by Vaughan Roberts
- “Light of the World”—Article by Jim Carattini; find a link to this article at gospelproject.com/additionalresources
- “In God’s Image”—Article by Harold R. Mosley on *Biblical Illustrator Plus* (CD-ROM); order at www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator

Sermon Podcasts

Halim Suh: “Displaying Jesus Through Silence”—
The Austin Stone Community Church

W. A. Criswell: “In the Image of God”—First Baptist Church, Dallas

Find links to these at gospelproject.com/additionalresources

Tip of the Week

Trading a Party for a Project

Too many times when we think of a class project, we think of going to the soup kitchen and forget about the needs that might be right under our noses. There may be someone in your class needing some type of help this month. Encourage care group leaders to ask the people in their group about any needs they may have this Christmas or if there is a need in their neighborhood. As needs are discovered, mobilize the class to meet the need. You may even want to suggest that in lieu of a Christmas party, your class be involved in meeting a need in your community.