

the**GOSPELPROJECT**®

how to use
The Gospel Project
for adults



FROM CREATION TO CHAOS

ADULTS / DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE / FALL 2021 / VOL. 1



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Daily Discipleship Guide

IN THE BEGINNING

DAY 1

READ:

Genesis 1:1–2:3

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 1:1

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #25: CREATION OUT OF NOTHING

The Bible teaches that God created the universe—everything both visible and invisible—out of nothing (sometimes expressed in the Latin phrase, “creation ex nihilo”). This means that before God created anything, nothing else existed except God Himself. God alone is eternal; every created thing has a beginning. Therefore, the eternal God rules over all of His creation and He alone is worthy of worship. Denial of this doctrine has implications for God’s sovereignty over and providence in creation. Because God created out of nothing, creation has meaning and purpose and points us to the Creator.

The word prequel was not a normal part of English parlance until the last twenty years. Why? Mainly because of movies, and more particularly because of the Star Wars films. As is well known by moviegoers, the first film in the Star Wars saga, which was released in 1977, began in the middle of a larger story, carrying the subtitle “Episode IV: A New Hope.” The film dropped the audience into a story with an assumed history to which they had no access other than the allusions made within the film itself.

The perspective of Star Wars fans in the late 1970s matches on some level with the experience of the ancient Hebrews (or, later on, Israelites). With their exodus from Egypt (Ex. 13–14), the Hebrews were reintroduced to the one true God, Yahweh, through a great act of redemption. Having some knowledge about God’s promises to their ancestors, the Hebrews rediscovered that they were in the middle of God’s story, with the Book of Genesis providing the background for this story of stories.

So, Genesis was the prequel of sorts that the Holy Spirit led Moses to compose in order to give the people of Israel their backstory, which is God’s story. The God who made promises to their ancestors—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—was the God who created the heavens and the earth. Therefore, Genesis 1:1 gave the formerly enslaved Hebrews the proper outlook on who this redeeming God is, namely, the maker of heaven and earth (cf. Gen. 2:4b).

Yahweh was not just another deity among the pantheon of gods the Hebrews heard about from their neighbors. He is the God, the Creator of the universe, the only God and the only Savior (Isa. 43:10–11), the God of gods and Lord of lords (Deut. 10:17).

Why do we need to be reminded that the God who saved us is also the God who made the universe?



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GROUP

NOTES

POINT 1: God created everything good (Gen. 1:1-5).

Genesis 1:1 is foundational for the biblical creation account and the whole of Scripture because it introduces us to the main character of the Bible—_____.

? How should we read the Bible knowing that God is its main character?

God called His creation _____ as He brought _____ to it through His word.

? What are some ways you have seen the goodness of God's creation?

POINT 2: God created everything by design (Gen. 1:14-19).

God's design in creation demonstrated God's _____ toward humanity and His _____ as the one true God as He formed and filled the creation by His words.

Day 7: _____			
FILLING	Day 4:	Day 5:	Day 6:
	_____, _____, and _____	_____ and _____	_____ and _____
FORMING	Day 1:	Day 2:	Day 3:
	_____ and _____	_____ and _____	_____ and _____

? What are some ways human beings have twisted God's good design in creation?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

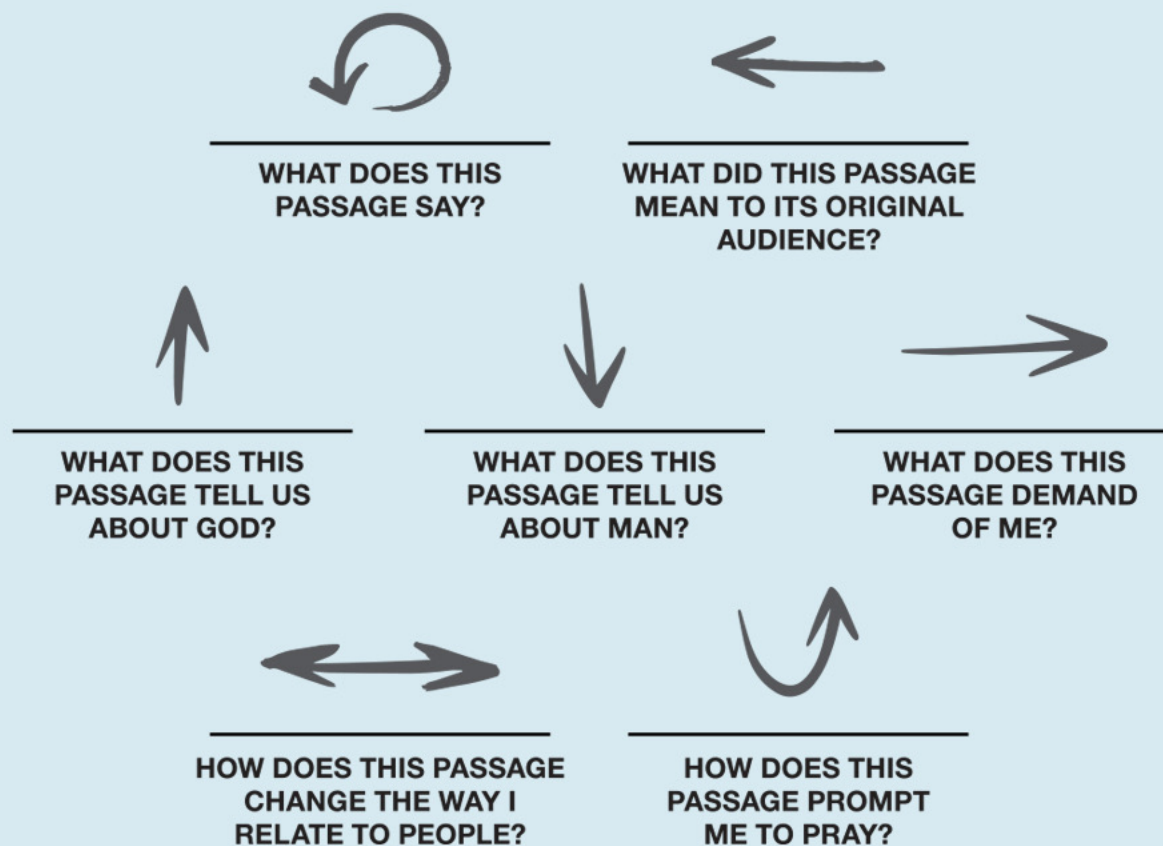
"Nothing comes from the hand of God that is not intrinsically good. He is the good God who does all things for good."³

—Barnabe Assohoto
and Samuel Ngewa



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7 arrows





discussion time



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NOTES

THE CULTURAL MANDATE

Human beings are called to develop the latent potential of the world through the growth of the human race, development of culture, and care for the world God made (Gen. 1:28; 2:15).

POINT 1

WE BEAR GOD'S IMAGE IN OUR ROLES (GEN. 1:26-28).

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, the whole 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."

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Genesis 1:26-28** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 26-28** commentary to help explain the nature of the image of God in humanity and how this plays out in our cultural mandate as God's image-bearers (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #28: *Image of God in Humanity:* The image of God in humanity is understood as mirroring God's attributes in our **nature, actions**, and relational capacities. In **Jesus**, we see the true image of God. He perfectly mirrors God's attributes, fulfills God's will, and enjoys a perfect relationship with the Father. The Bible continues to speak of the image of God in humanity even after our fall into sin, even though our ability to rightly reflect God has been marred.

OPTIONAL VIDEO: Show the "99 in :99" video about the essential Christian doctrine *Image of God in Humanity* (1:48 in length) at this link: <https://www.gospelproject.com/bear-god-image>.

DISCUSS: What are some specific ways we can faithfully reflect God as His image-bearers in our culture? (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

TRANSITION: At the heart of our responsibilities as people made in God's image is caring for and cultivating creation for God's glory. As we'll see by exploring Genesis 2, not only do we bear God's image in our role of ruling righteously over the earth but we also bear God's image in our relationships with other human beings.



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COMMENTARY

VERSE 1 / How do you begin the story to explain all stories? Genesis 1:1 shows us how—“**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**” These words prepare the reader for everything that will follow, both for the entirety of the creation narrative (Gen. 1:1–2:3) and the whole of Scripture. This is the start of the true story of the God who created His good universe by His Word—the Son of God—and by His Holy Spirit (see Ps. 33:6; John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:1–3). This is the same triune God who, in His goodness, will “re-create” and restore all of creation through the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, God’s Son (see Rev. 4–5; 21–22).

First written in ancient Hebrew, Genesis 1:1 is comprised of seven Hebrew words. The number seven has significance in many places throughout the Bible, as it communicates completeness. Here, these seven words alert us to a couple of literary features within the passage. These features highlight the sovereign God’s exclusive agency and power as Creator and point to the order, artistry, and goodness of His creation:

- The refrain “God saw that it was good” occurs seven times, which correlates with the seven-day structure of the creation account (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).
- The title “God” in Hebrew (elohim) appears thirty-five times (a multiple of seven) and with God always functioning as the subject of a verb—He is the One who acts, bringing His goodness to bear upon His creation.²

The creation account introduces us to the main character of the Bible: God. Verse 1 credits God with bringing all of creation into existence, albeit not yet in a perfected state (i.e., v. 2, “formless and empty”). Most importantly, verse 1 reveals that God was there **before the beginning**; in fact, He existed before there even was a “before.” Nothing preceded God, in other words, and no one or no thing can compete with Him (Isa. 43:9–10; 44:6).

Unlike the gods depicted in the creation stories of ancient Israel’s neighbors, this God is not a being confined within the universe, and He did not need pre-existent materials in order to create. Genesis 1 is foundational, then, to the historic Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (Latin, “out of nothing”), the teaching that God created everything from nothing and out of nothing (Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11). In the Old Testament, the verb “to create” (Hebrew, *bara*) is assigned exclusively to God and His activity, namely, to create or bring about order (see Isa. 40:26).

VERSES 2–5 / The state of creation is described initially as “**formless and empty**,” a Hebrew phrase used elsewhere to refer to a realm of chaos or an empty wasteland (cf. Isa. 34:11; 45:18–19; Jer. 4:23). At this initial stage, the creation has yet to receive its proper order and function. **The Spirit of God** is introduced as the agent who will bring about order, life, and purpose from amidst this **darkness** at God’s word. The Spirit who “hovered” over the watery depths is the same divine Holy Spirit who “overshadowed” Mary to bring about the eternal Son of God’s incarnation within her womb (Luke 1:35) and the same Holy Spirit responsible for the “washing of regeneration and renewal” in our salvation (Titus 3:4–7), both creative acts of God.

After God declared, “**Let there be light**,” He saw that it was **good**, describing the order that He was establishing by separating light and darkness and thus distinguishing between **day** and **night**. The constructs of day and night then allow for the organization of time, **evening** and **morning** constituting **one day**. God’s ordering of creation demonstrates both His goodness and His sovereign power. Throughout the creation account, there is no struggle, violence, or conflict as portrayed in the creation myths of Babylon and Mesopotamia. Indeed, there cannot be because only the good, all-powerful God existed to create and bring order to His creation.



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MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus is at the center of creation, all that we do is done for Him and His glory as we live with complete dependence and trust in His faithful promise.

HEAD:

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creator
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VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Just as he gave
existence to that which
did not exist, so he
gave new creation to
that which did exist."
-Gregory of Nazianzus
(c. 329-390)

EXTRA

POINT 1: THE LORD'S HAND HOLDS TOGETHER ALL OF CREATION (COL. 1:15-17).

+ COMMENTARY

"The image of God, referred to in the creation account of Gen. 1, is the Son, eternally and as he becomes flesh and the glory of God is beheld. The language Paul uses here, rich in Old Testament background, 'firstborn of creation,' does not refer to the first distinctive thing in a series of like things. It refers to the status the Son has vis-à-vis God himself. The firstborn is heir of all things of the Father. He is the image, he is the firstborn of creation, that is, creation is the work of the image alongside God himself."³

+ COMMENTARY

"Paul begins his Christology in verses 15-16 by identifying Christ as 'the image of the invisible God' (v. 15) ... 'No one has ever seen God,' writes John, but 'the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known' (John 1:18). Here, Paul makes the same point by declaring that the Son has perfectly reflected the Father from eternity and now perfectly reveals the invisible God in the incarnate Christ. Only a divine Son can be this image ... Paul confirms that even now, Christ is the Lord of cosmic preservation and providence: 'and in him all things hold together' (v. 17)."⁴

POINT 3: THE LORD'S HAND PROVIDES WHAT WE NEED (MATT. 6:25-34).

+ COMMENTARY

"Our final good is therefore the kingdom of God and his justice. We ought to seek this good and fix our aim upon it. Let us perform all our actions for the sake of it. Yet, since we are waging war in this life in order to be able to reach that kingdom and since this life cannot be maintained unless those necessities are supplied, he says, 'These things shall be given you besides, but seek you first the kingdom of God and his justice.'"⁵

References

1. John Wesley, "On Divine Providence," in *The Works of John Wesley, A. M.*, vol. 4, 3rd ed. (London: John Mason, 1802), 315.
2. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 40.7, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, vol. 7, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1994), 361 [Logos].
3. Christopher K. Seitz, *Cosmology*, in *Brace's Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 96 [Logos].
4. Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 179-81.
5. Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount* 2.36-37, in *Matthew 1-13*, ed. Manlio Simonetti, vol. 1a in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) [Logos].



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Leader Pack Items



discussion time

how to make
the most of
your time with
The Gospel Project

**how to make
the most of
your time with
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focus on what's important
for your group

**how to make
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focus on what's important
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keep your discussion tight

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for your group

keep your discussion tight

encourage personal study



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