

Net•Work Notes

Week 1, Day 1: Creation—The Good Beginning

How well God must like you—

you don't hang out at Sin Saloon,
you don't slink along Dead-End Road
you don't go to Smart-Mouth College

Instead you thrill to God's Word,

you chew on Scripture day and night. Psalm 1:1-2, *The Message*

Stepping Out

Welcome to Net•Work Notes! I want to find ways to encourage you as we learn what it means to be followers of Jesus. I hope that as you consider a life of following Jesus you will discover more deeply who God is and, as a result, gain a new understanding of who you are. Together we want to become all that God created us to be and know more deeply a true experience of life. We don't want to merely exist, we want to live!

Perhaps you have seen the movie *Dead Poets' Society*. In that movie, the students learned the meaning of "carpe diem": "Seize the day." In order for us to make the most of our discipleship, we want to seize each day and draw from it all we can, all that God wants to give us.

The Psalmist in Psalm 1 compares life to the choosing of a path. There are paths, he says, that lead to destruction, to death. And then there is the path that is blessed by the presence of the Living God. Which path do you hope to walk? **Take this moment to read Psalm 1.** God's "way" involves "meditating" on his Word daily. The Hebrew word for meditating meant "chewing." Each week in Net•Work we will consider 5 "Net•Work Notes", spiritual food for you to chew on. Make a commitment now to take a few minutes each day to read and consider your Net•Work Note.

On the back of each page there will be space for your current thoughts, reflections, and prayers. Try to write a little each day. Perhaps your family can talk over one thing you have learned, discovered, or thought about. Go now with God's blessing!!

What do you think it means for people to really live? What do you think it means for people to be blessed?

In what ways do you think you or someone close to you have been blessed?

Net•Work Notes

Week 1, Day 2: Creation—The Good Beginning

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!" And light appeared. Genesis 1:1-2, *The*

Message

Good Beginning

At the beginning, we must know what our goal is. The goal is simpler to say than it is to experience: the goal is communion: closeness and oneness with God. But because it may be easy to say in words, we do not assume that this is easy for you or us. Most of us have lots of questions about God and life and what it means to get on in this world we are in. Through Net•Work we hope that you will really know God with a closeness that you can count on. We want you to not only be able to say, "I know about God." We hope you will be able to say, "I love God, and I am confident that God knows and loves me."

The Challenge of Creation

Our learning will take us through a number of challenges. Our first challenge is to grasp the wonder of the beginning of human life, the mystery of creation. What do you know about human beginnings? What do you believe about the beginning of life?

Genesis begins with this startling word: Human life is the key part of God's creation of the universe! **Read quickly through Genesis 1.** Notice that the end of God's immense, intricate act of creation is the creation of humankind. The first thing to learn here is that this position indicates that we matter to God.

What is the second thing to notice? Humankind is made in God's image.

As you read through Genesis 1, what do you think is the most surprising thing about this story of God's creative action?

What do you find most interesting in this creation story? What question(s) are you left with?

Net•Work Notes

Week 1, Day 3: Creation—The Good Beginning

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

The Power of Creation

What can we learn about God and the creation? Yesterday we began by noticing human beings were created as the end or goal of God's creative work and we learned that we are created in God's image.

But what does this mean that we are created in God's image? What does the word "image" suggest to you? Take a moment to think about how you understand this idea.

Let's venture a few thoughts. First, an image bears a similarity and a resemblance to the thing it "images" or reflects. To be created in the image of God means to in some way "look" like God! That is quite an awesome thought. But that leads to a completely new question: What is God like?

Take another moment to read Genesis 1. What is God like? God is the Creator. God takes delight in spinning out galaxies and knitting gnats. Have you ever wondered at the imagination God must have to create the universe in all its bewildering beauty and mystery? We also learn that God is a passionate, loving creator. He looks on his work to insure that it is good. And then He blesses the creation. These are acts of love. Notice, too, how personal creation is for God: God *speaks* creation into being! The question is: how do we reflect the God who is personal and passionate, who takes delight in creating wonders?

As you think about the people around you in your life, who do think is a good example of someone who is a "creator" and takes delight in creating?

In what other ways do you think we can be "images" of God?

Net•Work Notes

Week 1, Day 4: Creation—The Good Beginning

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." Genesis 1:14-15

Mysteries upon Mysteries!

God has created a world of startling scope and complexity. The dimensions of space are almost beyond our capacity to imagine and even one cell of any living organism is like a universe unto itself! In other words, there are mysteries beyond us and mysteries within us.

Sometimes it seems as if all the mystery leads us only into darkness and uncertainty. Certainly the complexity of our universe ought to leave us in awe and wonder. Yet, Genesis tells us that God's creation is not chaotic and random. Instead, we are told that God's creative power fashioned an *ordered* universe. Genesis 1 sets forth a picture not of chaos and confusion, but of an intricately patterned world governed by ordering forces (the sun and the moon to order the "heavens," for example). The humbling truth to learn here is that humans were created with the responsibility for carrying out God's ordering of the earth: "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth..." Dominion means responsible ordering of life under a person's care.

Reflecting the Living God

As creatures made in the image of God, we thrive (are blessed) when we reflect God's careful ordering of things, when we live in harmony with God's patterns and designs. What are the patterns or habits you have that order your life? Write a few of them

down below in the space provided. Mark a "check" next to those you believe reflect God/blessing. Put an "asterisk" next to those you think do not reflect who God is.

My list of patterns and habits:

In what ways are patterns and habits a good thing in life? Why can they be a challenge?

Net•Work Notes

Week 1, Day 5: Creation—The Good Beginning

God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...." God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. Genesis 1:28, 31

A Well-ordered World

Yesterday we read how God's world reflects God's patterns, God's blessed ordering. Genesis affirms that God's ordering of reality is "good", indeed that the creation of human beings was "very good!"

You may have been wondering, How do I fit the Bible's witness about creation with the understanding of modern science? Actually we have already gone a long way toward answering that question: science *cannot* proceed without the conviction that the world "makes sense," that it has an order or pattern that we can know and discover. Science seeks to discover the nature of those patterns and how they work together. Genesis proclaims that there is a passionate, loving God who spoke this creation into being: that the fascinating order, the beautifully intricate patterns, reflect the mind of God. Science tries to ask What? and How? Genesis answers the questions Who? and For what purpose? Both our quest to know our world and to know God depend on the faith that both the world and God *can* be known.

A World of Relationships

This leads us to notice another thing about creation: it is filled with relationships: the sun and moon and stars, day and night, heavens and earth, wild animals and cattle, God and human beings, men and women (notice that "male and female, God created them" make up the fullness of the image of God!). All live in relationship. The blessed pattern of the world is the proper ordering of relationships. In the area provided

below list some of your significant or close relationships.

Who are the people that are a regular part of my life (family relationships? Friends/classmates? Co-workers?)?

How can our relationships be influenced by good patterns? How do you think that happen?