

The First Week
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Allen Power

Genesis 1:1-5, 26-2:3

It's not uncommon for people who believe in God to sometimes see something and ask, "How could anyone witness this and think there is no God?" What are some examples of things you've seen that caused you to have that thought?

Today is a new beginning in our study of God's word. We are beginning at the beginning over the next few weeks as we study the first nineteen chapters of Genesis, the first book in our Bible. Some say it's pointless to study the first five books of the Old Testament [the Pentateuch or Torah inspired by God and likely compiled by Moses]. They are wrong. One commentator states: "*They provide an overview to God's plan of redemption and...a backdrop to everything in Scripture that would follow. Like all of the Old Testament, the promises, types, and prophecies contained in the first five books of Scripture have their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.*"ⁱ

Genesis famously begins with the words: "*In the beginning, God...*" In today's study we'll see that the God of the Bible, the One true God is a God of beginnings. Why is it sort of ironic to say that God is a God of beginnings?

Though God never HAD a beginning and will never have an ending, where human beings are concerned, He is about beginning and not ending. We call that eternity.

The point: The God of the Bible, our Heavenly Father, is the God of new beginnings and no endings. He created everything from nothing and every human in His image and for a purpose. Because we bear His image, we can have an eternal relationship with Him by trusting Christ. Those who trust Christ will become a new creation made by God. When we trust Christ, our "new birth" is really an eternal new beginning.

If I were outlining today's study, I would use these words: Power, Purpose and Plan. God's power displayed in creation (1:1-5), God's purpose for people (1:26-31), and God's plan to make us new creations in Christ. Let's begin by reading about His power.

Genesis 1:1–5 (ESV) — **1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **3** And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

- Before we unpack those verses let me prepare you for what today's study will NOT be.

- Quoting our lesson writer: *“The first chapters of Genesis are probably the most contentious passages in all the Bible. Nothing stirs greater debate than the origin of the earth.”* Some have described the creation account as a “minefield.”
- We are not going to attempt to tiptoe through the minefield of debate on the age of the earth, if creation was seven 24-hour days, progressive evolution, etc.
- We are going to walk all the way around that minefield. Not because it isn’t important. It just isn’t the point of today’s study. For a wealth of information about creation visit <https://answersingenesis.org/creation-vs-evolution/> .
- We are going to take the same position as Moses. Our lesson writer: *“...Moses knew nothing of such controversy. For him, the fact was straightforward: God created the heavens and the earth. There was no room for any other thought.”*
- *“In the beginning God...”* Because Genesis describes the creation of our universe, we might think the book is about US. It is really about God. Who He is, what He is like and how He desires to have a relationship with human beings.
- The complete first thought of Genesis is: *“In the beginning God created...”*
- We admire creativity. Life is enhanced by God-given creativity. But there is a difference between creativity and creation.
- Michelangelo is quoted as saying: *“Only God creates. The rest of us just copy.”ⁱⁱ*
- The earth was “formless and empty”; God created everything from nothing.
- We see several repeated phrases in this text. One of them is *“God said....”*
- In **Psalm 33:6 (ESV)** — The Psalmist wrote: **6** By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
- God is so powerful that He spoke and the universe was created.
- That reminds us that God’s word is powerful because HE is all powerful!
- **Jeremiah 32:17 (ESV)** — **17** ‘Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.
- God’s power is displayed in His creation. Why should we think about that daily?
- Paul prayed for the Ephesian church (and us) to have *“eyes of our hearts enlightened”*, to know *“the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe...”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- It’s important to be constantly focused on God’s limitless power. More about this in a moment when we consider God’s plan for people.
- Let’s turn to His purpose for creating people. Over days two through five God created the sky, dry land, plant life, stars, planets, the sun and moon, all that lives in the sea, insects and birds. On day six he created creatures to live on dry land.

Genesis 1:26–31 (ESV) — **26** Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **28** And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” **29** And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant

yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. **30** And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. **31** And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

- Why did God create people? There were practical purposes: To “manage” the lower creatures (“have dominion” “subdue”), to populate the earth (“multiply”). To be vegetarians (temporarily). Let’s look beyond the practical purposes.
- God created humans in His image. We call that “*imago Dei*” (image of God).
- What does it mean? How should it impact how think about ourselves and others?
- This is a BIG topic for a short session. Scholars believe “*the imago Dei may include the presence of will, emotions and reason; the ability to think and act creatively; or the ability to interact socially with others. Scripture attributes the imago Dei solely to humans...*”^v (Sorry, Rover isn’t made in God’s image.)
- Knowing how flawed humans are, David wrote in **Psalm 8:4–5 (ESV)** — **4** what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? **5** Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.
- Amazingly, in John 15, Jesus said of His followers: “*I have called you friends...*”
- God didn’t need an employee or someone for emotional support. He created man in His image because He desires relationship with us. More on this in a moment.
- Question: How should being made in God’s image impact how we feel about people in general and ourselves in particular?
- The singer Ethel Waters said, “*I am somebody cause God don’t make no junk.*”^v
- When Satan lies to us about our worth, we should quote Ethel and Genesis 1:27! “*God don’t make no junk and I’m created in His image!*”
- Aside from our own self-image how should this affect how we treat others?
- Because people were created in the image of God, all human life has value and dignity from conception to the grave, full stop. That has major implications for topics like abortion, assisted suicide, abuse, elder care, race relations and more.
- A couple of sidebars. Sidebar #1: “*Let us make man...*” likely means the Trinity.
- Sidebar #2: “*...male and female he created them...*” This is God’s design for genders. Distinct genders that are equal in dignity and bearing the image of God.
- Here’s another “sidebar” of sorts and we’ll be brief.

Genesis 2:1–3 (ESV) — **1** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. **2** And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

- God never gets tired or slumbers (Isaiah 40:28) but WE do so He taught us to pause for rejuvenation and rest. Later He would command that His people should “set aside” a sabbath to not only rest but to focus on Him and worship Him.

- The concept of taking a sabbath break from our labors to focus on God is a reminder that we are not in control, He is. We can rest in that knowledge.
- Let's not be legalistic about the day (Rom. 14:5), just serious about sabbath rest.
- We've seen God's power in creation, His purpose for people, now let's wrap up with His plan to make us new creations in Christ.
- We said, the God of the Bible, the One true God is a God of beginnings where human beings are concerned. He is about beginning and not ending -- eternity.
- The ultimate new beginning for people is trusting Christ as Savior and Lord.
- Earlier we talked about the power of God's word in printed form.
- He also gave us His Word in the form of His Son coming to earth to save us.
- **John 1:1–3 (ESV)** — **1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- **Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)** — **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
- Genesis 1:2 says, "*The Spirit of God was hovering.*" Where is His Spirit today? What does that mean for me if I've trusted Christ as Savior and Lord?
- When we trust Christ as Savior and Lord, He gives us His Spirit so we can access His power, enjoy relationship with Him, and fulfill His purpose for us.
- The Apostle Paul said in **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** — **17** ...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
- In Colossians 3:10 Paul said Christ's followers, "*...have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*"^{vi}
- Not only does God give us a new beginning as a new creation on the day we trust Christ, He gives us a new beginning every day.
- **2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV)** — **16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.
- **Lamentations 3:22–23 (ESV)** — **22** The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; **23** they are new every morning...
- If we will read and obey God's word, be intentional to spend time in relationship with Him through prayer, He will fulfill His purpose and plan for our lives.
- What is that plan? **Romans 8:29 (ESV)** — **29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... We will become more like Jesus!
- What about when we mess up? Confessing our sins and receiving his forgiveness is another example of a new beginning because of His grace.

So, What's the Takeaway?

An old song posed the question: "How big is God?" The answer?

*"To try and tell, these lips can only start.
He's big enough, to rule this mighty universe.
Yet small enough, to live within my heart."^{vii}*

If you remember nothing else, remember these things:

- God made everything from nothing, that's How powerful He is!
- God created people in His image, for His purposes and God don't make no junk!
- He desires a relationship with people, has a purpose in mind for each one, and His Son came, died, and rose to make that possible.
- Through His power I can fulfill His purpose for me as a new creation in Christ.
- For followers of Christ, it's a new beginning every day.
- Do you believe those things? If so, let's go this week and live like it and at the end of the week pause for some worship and rest.

ⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Pentateuch.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://quotefancy.com/quote/1324941/Michelangelo-Only-God-creates-The-rest-of-us-just-copy>

ⁱⁱⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Eph 1:18–19). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

^{iv} Grenz, S., Guretzki, D., & Nordling, C. F. (1999). [*Pocket dictionary of theological terms*](#) (p. 63). InterVarsity Press.

^v <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/ethel-waters-1374.php>

^{vi} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Col 3:10). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

^{vii} <https://www.letssingit.com/bill-and-gloria-gaither-and-their-homecoming-friends-lyrics-how-big-is-god-j7msl9f>