

Creation of Humankind



Genesis 1 and 2



In our session today, we continue our journey through the story of creation. We'll recap the key events of Genesis 1 and amplify the creation of humankind outlined in Genesis 2. We'll consider what sets humans apart from the rest of creation and what aspects of our nature reflect the image of God. In our Sound Check we'll consider what it means to see every person we meet as God's precious creation, deeply loved and cherished by him.

You will need:

- Creation Story handout
- Paper and pens



Beat

Say:

In last week's session we explored the different interpretations of the creation story and reflected on our own beliefs about how the world began. Despite centuries of debate, we still have no clear answers. As humans, we want those answers, but sometimes, even after years of study, parts of God's creation remain a mystery.

Leader's notes:

Watch and discuss the following clip with some weird and wonderful animals. Which animal do they find the most fascinating?

Watch:

Weird But Wonderful Animals – Awesome 8 (2:40)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBL-CeDduDU

Say:

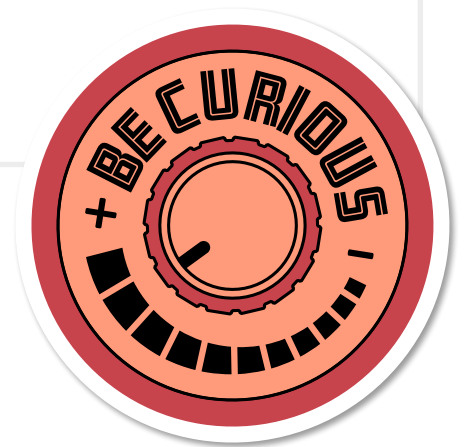
Some animals appear weird and wonderful to us, while others seem like mysteries. What other mysteries would you like answered about creation?

 **Bridge****Leader's notes:**

As an additional activity, some groups may enjoy delving a bit more into some interesting facts about creation, presented in a more philosophical yet comedic way. Watch the clip from the show *QI* and discuss the question, 'Is it true that there is no such thing as a fish?' Encourage the group to share their own 'Quite Interesting' fact about creation.

Watch:

QI - No Such Thing As A Fish - QI - (2:35)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhwcEvMJz1Y

 **Amplify****Say:**

This week we continue our journey through the story of creation. Before we Amplify Genesis 2, let's revisit the Scripture from our last session.

Leader's notes:

Give each member of the group a copy of the Creation Story handout (at end of document). Allocate the parts within the group and read Genesis 1 together.

Ask:

As we've just heard a different translation of this Scripture passage, are there any phrases that stood out for you? Explain your choice.

Say:

We're going to watch a clip that explains the context of Genesis 1 in more depth and helps us to understand why the Bible's creation story is so different from other origin stories.

Leader's notes:

Use the timings below to watch and discuss the clip.

Watch:

Genesis 1-2 - Creation Bible Study - Spoken Gospel (3:56)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFHefc6WwfQ

Watch: 0:00-2:21

Ask:

- When we think about the wide range of creation stories, how is God different from the other gods of the ancient world?
- How does Genesis 1 try to set the true God apart from the gods of other pagan religions?
- Read Genesis 1:26-27. What phrase is repeated in the description of how humans are created?
- What do you think it means when the Bible says that we are created in God's image?

Leader's notes:

The theologian Tony Lane in his book *Exploring Christian Doctrine* (2013) suggests that there are six main areas that distinguish humans as being made in the image of God. The six reasons are listed below with an explanation. Discuss each point with the group and see if they can think of any other ways that humans are distinguished as made in the image of God. The list below aims to distinguish humans from other animals which may be another interesting discussion point.

1. **Reason** – Human beings are able to think through and make decisions about different situations. We can also use language to communicate what we are thinking.
2. **Will** – We have the free will to make choices about our lives based on moral guidelines understood within our community.
3. **Spirituality** – We have the ability and desire to worship.
4. **Authority** – In Genesis 1 and 2, God gave authority to humankind to look after his creation. Whether we are doing a good job using that authority is another question, but it is still a God-given purpose for humans.
5. **Creativity** – We reflect God's creativity by being creative ourselves.
6. **Community** – God is the Trinity, three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God calls us to live in community with each other.

Say:

In Genesis 2, we discover more about the creation of Adam and Eve.

Read:

⁷ Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

¹⁸ The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹ Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.’

– (Genesis 2:7-25)

Ask:

- What do we learn about the character and purpose of humans in Genesis 2?
- If we are made in the image of God, then what do these verses tell us about God’s nature?
- Why do you think God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden only to tell Adam and Eve not to eat from it? You may want to think back to the six characteristics of humans mentioned earlier by Tony Lane.

Say:

God placed his trust in humankind to have authority over the world he created. He also believed that they would place their trust in him, relying on him for everything they needed. We will explore next week what happened when Adam and Eve made a different choice.



 **Bridge****Say:**

Genesis 1 reminds us that we are made in the image of God. God himself came to earth to show us how to live our lives in his image. Jesus was there right at the beginning of creation.

Watch: 2:22-3:56**Ask:**

How is Jesus connected to the creation of the world?

Say:

The clips says:

'The God who made humans in his own image, is the God who came in the image of humans.'

Ask:

How does Jesus' lived experience here on earth separate Christianity from other religions?

 **Sound Check****Say:**

We live in a world that often focuses on what divides us rather than what unites us. We live in a world that focuses on group identities that can often form further divisions. Right at the beginning of the Bible we are given the valuable lesson that every single one of us is made in the image of God. Every human is created in God's image and deeply loved by him (even the ones we disagree with or don't like).

In our Sound Check you will have the opportunity to think of a way to communicate this message to your church community creatively. Think about how to be creative and catch people's attention to tell them how loved they are by God. You could make a TikTok or reel, or a leaflet to give to people before church.

Leader's notes:

The aim of this activity is for the young people to plan a resource that shares the message that we are all made in the image of God and are precious to him. There is only time in this session for planning, but it would be great if the young people could follow this up and create an actual resource to share. It could be a social media post or clip, a handout to share before worship, or a time of devotion for a rehearsal. The clip below is aimed at junior soldiers within The Salvation Army, but it could kickstart ideas for their own resource. You don't necessarily have to watch the whole thing.

Watch:

Module 7, Unit 4, Lesson 2: Created in God's Image (2:19)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkgypBmAWE

Give the group time to create their plans and then share them with the rest of the group. Encourage the young people to make the plans come to life. We would love to see anything that your young people create! Share with us via email (childrenyouth@salvationarmy.org.uk) or social media (Salvation Army Children and Youth).

 **Bridge****Ask:**

- Which person in your life needs to hear the message that they are made in the image of God and deeply loved by him?
- How could you share that message with them this week?

 **Selah****Leader's notes:**

Read and discuss the following quote:

'While I know myself as a creation of God, I am also obligated to realise and remember that everyone else and everything else are also God's creation.'

– Maya Angelou

Ask:

- What are the implications of recognising that everyone we meet is made in the image of God?
- How could it change the way we see people?

Say:

For our Selah, we're going to listen to a song that reminds us that we are all made in the image of God. As you watch the clip, pick out a lyric that resonates with you. Jot it down to share with the rest of the group when the song has finished.

Watch:

We Are Messengers – 'Image of God' (Official Lyric Video) (3:21)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yVOpu6OUqs

Leader's notes:

After the group has shared their lyric, spend time in prayer together.

Coda

Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from today's Bassline? How does the knowledge that each one of us is made in the image of God change how you see yourself and others?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.



Creation Story

Genesis 1-2:3 *The Voice* paraphrase

Allocate the parts within the group and read Genesis 1 together.

- One:** Out of nowhere, time, space, and all the living whirl forth as God speaks the universe into existence. With the utterance of his voice, creation takes form, chaos yields to order, light eclipses darkness, and emptiness fills with life. Not long after God creates the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, the story takes a tragic turn when the first couple disobeys the clear instruction from God not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result, humanity falls from God's intended perfection. The disastrous consequences of this decisive act are demonstrated in Cain's murder of Abel, Noah's flood, and the Tower of Babel.
- Two:** ¹ In the beginning, God created everything: the heavens above and the earth below. Here's what happened: ² At first the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark fog draped over the deep while God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters. Then there was the voice of God.
- God:** ³ Let there be light.
- Three:** And light flashed into being. ⁴ God saw that the light was beautiful and good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God named the light 'day' and the darkness 'night'. Evening gave way to morning. That was day one.
- God:** ⁶ Let there be a vast expanse in the middle of the waters. Let the waters above part from the waters below.
- Four:** ⁷ So God parted the waters and formed this expanse, separating the waters above from the waters below. It happened just as God said. ⁸ And God called the vast expanse 'sky'. Evening gave way to morning. That was day two.
- God:** ⁹ Let the waters below the heavens be collected into one place and congregate into one vast sea, so that dry land may appear.
- Two:** It happened just as God said. ¹⁰ God called the dry land 'earth' and the waters congregated below 'seas'. And God saw that his new creation was beautiful and good.
- God:** ¹¹ Earth, sprout green vegetation! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants and all sorts of fruit-bearing trees!

- Three:** It happened just as God said. ¹² The earth produced vegetation – seed-bearing plants of all varieties and fruit-bearing trees of all sorts. And God saw that his new creation was beautiful and good. ¹³ Evening gave way to morning. That was day three.
- God:** ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Lights, come out! Shine in the vast expanse of heaven’s sky dividing day from night to mark the seasons, days, and years! Lights, warm the earth with your light!
- Four:** It happened just as God said. ¹⁶ God fashioned the two great lights – the brighter to mark the course of day, the dimmer to mark the course of night – and the Divine needled night with the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in heaven’s sky to cast warm light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that his new creation was beautiful and good. ¹⁹ Evening gave way to morning. That was day four.
- God:** ²⁰ Waters, swarm with fish and sea creatures! Let birds soar high above the earth in the broad expanse of sky.
- One:** ²¹ So God created huge sea creatures, all the swarm of life in the waters, and every kind and species of flying birds – each able to reproduce its own kind. And God saw that his new creation was beautiful and good. ²² And God spoke this blessing over them:
- God:** Be fruitful and multiply. Let creatures fill the seas. Let birds reproduce and cover the earth.
- Two:** ²³ Evening gave way to morning. That was day five.
- God:** ²⁴ Earth, generate life! Produce a vast variety of living creatures – domesticated animals, small creeping creatures, and wild animals that roam the earth!
- Three:** It happened just as God said. ²⁵ God made earth-creatures in a vast variety of species: wild animals, domesticated animals of all sizes, and small creeping creatures, each able to reproduce its own kind. God saw that his new creation was beautiful and good. And God paused.
- God:** ²⁶ Now let us conceive a new creation – humanity – made in our image, fashioned according to our likeness. And let us grant them authority over all the earth – the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, the domesticated animals and the small creeping creatures on the earth.

- Four:** ²⁷ So God did just that. He created humanity in his image, created them male and female. ²⁸ Then God blessed them and gave them this directive: ‘Be fruitful and multiply. Populate the earth. I make you trustees of my estate, so care for my creation and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that roams across the earth.’
- One:** The crown of God’s creation is a new creature, a creature that can sound the heartbeat of its Creator. That creature, made male and female, reflects God’s own relational richness. The human family is to join God in the ongoing work of creation. The earth below and the sky above with all their inhabitants are too beautiful and too good to be left alone. They need the tender care and close attention that only God’s favoured creature can give.
- God:** (to humanity) ²⁹ Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant that grows on the earth and every fruit-bearing tree. They will be your food and nourishment. ³⁰ As for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and every small creeping creature – everything that breathes the breath of life – I have given them every green plant for food.
- Two:** And it happened just as God said. ³¹ Then God surveyed everything he had made, savouring its beauty and appreciating its goodness. Evening gave way to morning. That was day six.
- Three:** So now you see how the Creator swept into being the spangled heavens, the earth, and all their hosts in six days. On the seventh day – with the canvas of the cosmos completed – God paused from his labour and rested. Thus God blessed day seven and made it special – an open time for pause and restoration, a sacred zone of Sabbath-keeping, because God rested from all the work he had done in creation that day.
- Four:** God’s rest on the seventh day is a model for the kind of Sabbath rest he wants for his people.