

Genesis 1 (NIV)

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he 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.

6 And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.

25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kind, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

*27 So God created mankind in his image,
in the image of God, he created them;
male and female he created them.*

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

A Year In The Story

We kick off a journey together this morning that I have been so excited about for a long time. We're spending almost a year in the Bible together through our series and reading plan called "Into The Story". The reading plan starts tomorrow and will take us up through the week before Advent begins in November.

One of the catalysts for my coming to faith and growing in my love for God as a young man was how I eventually learned to approach the Bible. When I was a kid I thought it was an important religious book that I knew I should read, but found confusing and boring, as I got older I thought it was a rule book that I had to follow (Best Instructions Before Leaving Earth), and it always seemed to be this puzzle that I needed to have a decoder to figure out, and some people had that code and I didn't.

That all changed when I started to read the Bible as a story, with an Author, who had a purpose, and a structure, and like any story, I was being invited to not just read it, but somehow live it out.

The Bible became a collection of poems, narratives, instructions, histories, eyewitness accounts, and visions that may have been written "back then", but became incredibly real and able to be experienced "here now", and it was all leading to Jesus.

I couldn't explain how it was affecting me other than there was some out-of-this-world, divine nature to what I was encountering when I read it.

I would read the Bible, but it felt like it was more reading me.

I tried to figure it out, and by reading, praying, and living it... I figured life out.

I remember sitting in the sanctuary when I was 20-21, and I had just finished reading the whole Bible in one Summer, I read the last chapter, Revelation 22, and I was so overwhelmed by The Story that I was living, it changed my whole life.

Creation → Intro To Evil → People of God (Israel) → JESUS → Renewed People of God (The Church) → Defeat of Evil → New Creation

And so what you invited us to do, what we're engaging in as a church family this year is to walk through that story from beginning to end. We're not reading the whole Bible cover to cover, but instead dropping into moments and stories that will give a picture of the larger story.

The Reading Plan is not a **firehose** of the Bible, but **refreshing drinks**, multiple days a week, and their thematically structured to the sermons I'll be preaching, and where we are in the Story.

Are you ready? Let's go!

[Start Here](#)

Any journey you go on has a starting place. It doesn't matter where you're going if you don't know where to start.

It's been said that life is like a race, and if that's true then there's a starting line
Life feels like a story, and every story has a first chapter.

And if you try to start the race somewhere other than the starting line, **you'll be called a cheater.**
And if you begin engaging in a story halfway through **you'll be confused.**

I took my daughter to see Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, a Tony Award-winning play, and she needed to watch or read most of the books and movies before she saw the play. She wouldn't have a clue what was going on without starting somewhere, so we crammed in some movie night before we went.

So, we need to start at the beginning.

When it comes to your journey, your race, and your story, you may be under the impression that it all started when you were conceived or born, but the story we're looking at today takes a different view.

The truth is, your story doesn't start with your birth, you don't start with you, or your parents and their story, or their parent's story before that, and so on... because none of us are in "our story", we're in God's story, and that begins with the birth of the world. Everything starts with the Creation story.

We are not going to waste our time talking about when the earth was created or how old the earth is because Genesis doesn't focus on that, Genesis is much more concerned with the who, the why, and the what. Obsessing over "the when", has caused a lot of problems throughout our history, so let's not even go there.

Genesis, which means "beginnings", starts with this:

Genesis 1 (NIV)

1 In the beginning God...

Those first four words are central "In the beginning God", in my Bible, I boxed it in, underlined it, and highlighted it because of how crucial those words are to everything. In Hebrew, it's literally "First, God".

The argument could be made that in all of human history, these are the most important words ever written.

Those words have shaped human history.

Those words should be shaping your everything.

It is a paradigm-shifting and life-reorienting declaration.

Jesus taught that you have a choice to build your life on sand or The Rock (Matthew 7), this is a foundational truth, and friends we're only 4 words in, and everything else after this, and everything in all of life starts here!

What Difference Does It Make?

I guess I want to ask if you feel those words are important in your own life.

We could all sit here and agree that there is a God, some may doubt, and others may fully deny it, but most of us here I think would say that we believe in God.

But what difference does that make?

What difference does God make in your life, your family, your work, your hobbies, your community, your issues, your past, present, future, your fear and anxieties, your joys and triumphs, ... **what difference does God make in all that?**

If we're being honest, this is a really important question for us to reflect on because what you claim to believe isn't always reflected in the way we live.

Pastor James in his letter in the New Testament says that even the demons believe in God, but also he says that because they believe in God they tremble (James 2).

I believe that many people claim to believe in God, claim Christ as their Savior, and call themselves Christians, but their lives don't reflect that reality at all.

I'm not talking about people who "behave badly", I'm talking about when people claim something so powerful, but it doesn't inform, guide, or transform major aspects of their lives.

It's possible to come to church, sing the songs, and have devotionals, but live with anger, anxiety, and avoidance of hard things.

For many of us, we would consider being an atheist or an agnostic to be the worst thing that can happen to a person.

I'm pretty convinced there's something more dangerous than that, and that's being a Christian atheist or agnostic, having all the right beliefs, and doctrines, but living like they mean nothing.

To hold powerful truths at a distance and not let them shape and mold your life.

Years ago I was driving to the store at night, and out of nowhere this question to my mind. **"What if all this stuff that I believe isn't real? What if when I die, that's it, the screen cuts to black and it's over, no heaven, nothing? Was all this Christian stuff just a waste?"**

It was a very intense trip to the store.

But by the time I got home and pulled into the driveway, I had my answer, and my life was radically changed after that. Later I want you to go back in time with me and get in the car and take a drive, and I want to walk you through my thought process and faith process, I think it may be helpful.

God, The Mighty One

Let's dive in! Who is this God, what is God up to, and why does it matter?

Genesis 1 (NIV)

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

Let's be very clear up front.. when we say God, we are not talking about some vague being out there, and we're not talking about the god that a host of other religions follow.

Some when very well-meaning people say things like “Well all religions worship the same god, just different names and paths”... that’s not this God. When we say God, we’re talking about the God of the Christian Scriptures.

This is of course a Hebrew story that we’re reading here, written by or attributed to Moses, and so it’s got Jewish roots, but we read the whole Bible from a Christian perspective and lens, which we’ll do today as well.

When the accounts and stories that make up the Torah were collected and written down, many creation stories were floating around.

Egyptian creation stories, Babylonian creation stories, it was like was cosmic creation Oprah “You get a creation story, and you get one, you get another...”, so this is not the only one... but this story is very different from all the others, and this God is very different from all the other gods that people told stories about.

This is an important thing for us to wrestle with because we too live in a world of different religions, different stories of origin, and stories that shape us deeply.

But look here, when we read these opening words the word for God here is **Elohim** in Hebrew and it means “**The Might One**”, it’s not just a name, it’s a title!

This creation story claims that this God is the one true and mighty God.

And so no matter what other little g gods or stories you’re surrounded by, this story is saying they’re not the real God, the Mighty One.

So what is the first thing we encounter this God doing?

God creates, and more importantly, **he creates from nothing.**

He created the heavens and the earth (or the sky and land in Hebrew) from nothing.

Creatio ex nihilo “creation from nothing”. God created everything from nothing.

Let that sink in. This Creator took nothing and created everything.

A painter has to have a brush, and they can’t do anything without a brush or tools, and without being given an idea, they can’t create something from nothing... **God can!**

Everything is dependent on God.

You’re dependent on God.

Your kids and grandkids are dependent on God.

The snowflake that came down this week and was one of billions of others is dependent on and created by The Mighty One.

Thomas Aquinas calls the God “The First Mover”, the one to whom motion, creation, change, all of it finds its origin.

You and I have things in our life that we think are impossible, unchanging, stuck, “there’s nothing there”... but this story tells us that God can do anything from nothing. That’s some Creator, and he’s still doing it now.

Bonus opportunity for you... Kids may ask you one day, “**Who created God**”, you have the unbelievably powerful opportunity to say, “**Nothing created God, God always was and always has been.**”

This is so amazing because that truth means, there is something that lasts, that’s eternal! There’s someone who is always there, never dies, never abandons... it’s God!

The story continues...

Genesis 1:2 (NIV)

2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

The earth was formless and empty, literal Hebrew is “wild and waste”. So there’s this desert, empty, wild, and wasted earth.

There have been times in my life when things felt like that. Chaotic, wild, and wasteful.

So where’s God here? Where’s Elohim in the midst of wild and waste?

Elohim’s Spirit, some translate as wind or breath is hovering over the chaos.

God the Creator, is also a Spirit? We just learned a new person in this God.

And what is the Spirit doing? Watching? Observing? Judging? Ready to strike and kill the chaos? No...

God’s hovering over the chaos is best described as a bird that flaps its wings protecting its young, or one who is ready to do something, or better yet ready to announce something!

Genesis 1:3

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

He doesn’t destroy, dominate, or exploit, he creates and brings light to shine in the dark chaotic wild, and waste. **He creates with his spoken Word.**

God is not only a Creator from whom everything is made, God is not only a Spirit who is present and ready to act in the chaos, but God is also the Word that manifests and creates it all, and who's first is creating an inextinguishable light that shines in the darkness.

Like I said earlier, we read this story from a Christian perspective, with the lens of God being triune. So now, within the first three verses, we've encountered God as Creator, Spirit, and Word. Who is the Word? Jesus!

The Apostle John would later write in his gospel account:

John 1:1-5 (NIV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

That's who this God is Father, Spirit, Son.

And look, that's not just a story for then, it's meant to be ours now, you're today and every day!

The Apostle Paul would write to the Colossian Church:

Colossians 1:13-17 (NIV)

13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together.

God's been working and holding your life together since the beginning friends!

And what we see in the rest of the Genesis 1 story is just that, God separated that light and darkness, he created, loved, and gave purpose to the sky, the land, the birds in the sky, and the creatures on the land, and it all culminated when he creates humans. **These humans are image bearers of this Mighty Triune God.**

He gives purpose, value, identity, and belonging to humans, **and he's still doing that today.** Every time someone is born, it's like the creation story is being told all over again, every time!

And although we find ourselves born into a broken, dark, wild, and wasted world, **every time someone puts their faith in Christ and is born again, the creation story is being retold over again!**

The difference that God makes in our lives is everything! Your very life is a retelling of the greatest story ever told.

[You Were Made By God And For God](#)

[The Car Ride](#)

Back to the car ride on the way home.

I'm thinking that if there is no God, and we're all just biology and chemistry governed by physics, then.

There is no real me.

There is no real free will and choice

There's no real inherent value to me or anyone for that matter

There's real justice, no sense of right and wrong

There's no purpose to anything!

Christopher Hitchens, a famous atheist was at a doctor's office where he was looking at scans for cancer that would later kill him, and he was frustrated because the Doctor kept saying "Christopher your body is reacting to this", your body is responding to this or that, your body is trying to..., your body is fighting this", and he said in his book that he told his Doctor:

"I don't have a body, I am a body."

- Christopher Hitchens, *Morality*

I thought about that quote, I thought about my life, my kids, Lelsie, my journey, my struggles, all of it... and I said **"Nope, I am more than just a body more than just biology, there's far too much purpose in my life, and if even if am just a body, just biology, I refuse to live like it."**

And then it brought to another thought. **I also don't want to be agnostic in my faith, I don't want to see things as undefinable.** Because Jesus was the greatest person who ever lived, even nonbelievers agree that he taught and lived the best life, so I want to go after him with everything I've got. I want to be like those disciples who he saw on the seashore and said:

[Matthew 4:19-20 \(NIV\)](#)

19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

[Reflection](#)

I'm asking you to ask that question... **"What difference does it make that God is in my life?"**

Amen.

Questions For Personal Reflection Or Group Discussion:

1. What have your relationship and habits been with the Bible throughout your life?
2. Do you think reading the Bible each week will change things for you? Has it been formative if you have done it in the past?
3. Have you ever started where from the wrong place, or taken the wrong direction?
4. When you read Genesis 1:1, what comes to mind?
5. Is the creation story one that informs your faith and understanding of God regularly?
6. Have you wrestled with doubts about God's existence?
7. How do faith and purpose play a role in working with God in the season you're in now?

Readings For This Week

Mon | Genesis 1:-31

Tue | Genesis 2:1-25

Wed | Matthew 4:17, Colossians 1:3-23

Thu | Psalm 1

Fri: Reflection

Work Cited

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