

B. What is Our Purpose

- i. We were made to be *image bearers ruling on God's behalf*.

Walton: "In the ancient Near East [accounts] people are created to serve the gods by supplying their needs. That is, the role of people is to bring all of creation to deity—the focus is from inside creation out to the gods. In Genesis people represent God to the rest of creation. So the focus moves from the divine realm, through people, to the world around them."

- a) God has revealed Himself as the Servant-God.
- b) Humans are made to likewise be servant rulers.

Chris Wright: "How does God exercise his kingship within creation? ... Psalm 104 says that God does so by caring and providing for all his creatures, wild, domestic, and human. Psalm 145... says that God rules by being gracious, good, faithful, generous, protective, and loving toward all he has made."

- ii. Humans and Humus

LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Explain Wright's statement, "It is not so much that God has a mission for his church... as that God has a church for his mission..."?
- What does it mean to say that Genesis 1 answers worldview questions? Why are the answers to such questions so important?
- What does Genesis 1 tell us about who God is and how He interacts with His creation? What was/is the impact of His word on creation?
- What does Genesis 1 tell us about the world and its purpose?
- In what sense are humans called to rule over the earth? Why is it crucial for us to get this right in the world?
- How does Genesis 1 speak to the current cultural discussion about gender identity?
- "Rule" and "authority" have a bad name in our culture. How might our obedience to God's purposes for humanity begin to set that right?

The Story of God's Mission

Key Biblical Texts to Know and Share in God's Mission

Jerry Cisar — April 11, 2021

Text: Genesis 1:1

Introduction

"It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God's mission." (Christ Wright, *The Mission of God*)

Francis Collins: "We may well discover from science many interesting answers to the question, 'How does life work?' What we cannot discover, through science alone, are the answers to the questions, 'Why is there life anyway?' and 'Why am I here?'" (The Language of God, 88)

I. Who is God and How Does He Interact with Creation?

- A. God is assumed.
- B. The God we worship is the Creator of all that is.
 - i. "The heavens and the earth"
 - ii. Genesis 1 counters other religious explanations of the world.
 - iii. To say that God created all things means that He is not a part of creation. He is transcendent.
 - a) The Incarnation
 - b) Romans 1:19, 22-23
- C. There is only one God.

Gordon Wenham: “For example, the sun and moon were seen [by the ANE culture] as gods in their own right, but in Genesis the words ‘sun’ and ‘moon’ are not used, lest they be understood to refer to the sun god and the moon god. Instead, Genesis speaks of ‘the greater light’ and ‘the lesser light.’”

D. God created and ordered everything through His Word.

- i. Hebrews 11:3
- ii. God’s word brought life where there was no life; transformed chaos into order; turned darkness to light.

II. What is the World and Why was It Created?

A. Creation is distinct from and dependent upon God.

B. The Earth is Owned by God

- i. Psalm 24:1-2
- ii. Deuteronomy 10:14

Chris Wright: “The earth is first and foremost owned by God, not by us. God is the supreme landlord. We are God’s tenants, living by God’s permission in God’s property. This generates huge ethical implications for our ecological and economic activity.... It reminds us that we are accountable to God for how we treat his property.”

C. Creation is Good!

D. Creation was made to be the Dwelling of God with Man

“The world is not merely designed for human habitation, but as God’s own dwelling place. God and man are intended to live together in total harmony.” (Gordon Wenham)

John Walton: “The most central truth to the creation account is that this world is a place for God’s presence. Though all of the functions are *anthropocentric*, meeting the needs of humanity, the cosmic temple is *theocentric*, with God’s presence serving as the defining element of existence.”

III. Who are We and What is Our Purpose? (Gen. 1:26-28)

A. Who are We?

i. Made in the Image of God

a) Vice-regents for God’s Kingship

b) Genesis 2:15 “work it and keep it”

➤ Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9

Humans were made to mediate God’s generosity to creation, not greed.

ii. Male and Female

a) In God’s image

b) The significance of gender in Genesis 1

Mary Vanden Berg: In “The account of creation in Genesis 1... God is presented as the God who brings order out of chaos, who orders the universe to make it habitable for human persons. *The goodness of creation is related to the orderliness of creation.* In a similar way, sin is related to disorder or the disruption of the orderliness of creation.”

➤ 1:4, 6-7, 9; 2:16-17

Vanden Berg: “The goodness depicted in the two scenes of Genesis 1 and 2 is related to the order God has established. This order is characterized by separations and boundaries. Without the separations of Genesis 1 and 2, no life will exist.”