



First Baptist Church Selmer

FIRM FOUNDATION • CREATION • GENESIS 1:1-28 • 9/3/2023

MAIN POINT

God's plan for the redemption of humanity through Jesus was known even before the creation of the world.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are a few of your favorite food combinations? Why do you think these pairs work so well together?

Where else do you see complementary relationships in the world around us?

Peanut butter and jelly, Oreos and milk, macaroni and cheese—there are some relationships that work so well they seem like they were always supposed to exist. These well-loved combinations highlight something basic about life under God's rule: complementary pairs are essential to God's good design. Because God created the world, He has a say in everything that happens in the world. And within His control, God created boundaries, structures, and order for everything that He made. God created boundaries for the flourishing of His creation generally, and the flourishing of humanity specifically. This is most obvious in the complementary relationships we see in God's design even to the redemption of humanity through His own Son, Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 1:1-10.

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.

6 And God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' 7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good." (ESV)

Where do we see His boundaries beginning to take shape in these verses?

How can failure to recognize God-created boundaries only create pain and confusion?

How difficult can it be to fight the desires of our hearts that tempt us to cross God-created boundaries?

God, as the master of all He has made, created the world to function in a certain way. This is most obvious in the complementary relationship we find in the created order. These are all boundaries that are meant to promote order and clarity. Yet as the story progresses, it becomes clear that whenever we violate God's good design and the boundaries He has established for the flourishing of His own, chaos always ensues. One thing we know about sin is that it is a violation of a boundary God has created. On the other hand, all that God created is good and this goodness is seen in how things complement one another.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 1:11-25.

11 "And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.' And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights - the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night - and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the 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 waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.' 21 So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds - livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.' And it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good." (ESV)

Looking through these verses, what complementary relationships do you see God starting to form? What order and structure do these relationships give us?

What would we lack if we did not have these basic relationships that God created guiding our experience?

Several times in this passage, the word "separate" is used. Day was separated from night, giving us a sense of time that corresponds with our circadian rhythms. Separating the land from the sea made the earth inhabitable. Beyond these relationships, we have discovered that complementary relationships exist between plants, the sun, the sky, and the rain that falls on the earth. We have a picture of a beautiful complementary world, working exactly the way God intended for it to work.

Why should looking at the obvious order of the world lead us to worship God for His design?

When was the last time creation caused you to pause and worship?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 1:26-28.

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.'" (ESV)

Where do we see the complementary relationship between man and woman?

If we throw the complementary relationship between man and woman away, what happens to the order God created? How have we done this as a society?

When we disregard God's order, pain, fear, and brokenness follow. When the complementary relationship between man and woman breaks down, we find confusion on even the most basic biological and relational truths about humanity. God's design creates beauty and order that is seen in all aspects of creation itself.

What responsibilities did God give to man and woman? Why can these responsibilities not be divorced from their complementary relationship?

What happens to dominion without complementarity?

What do the concepts of subduing the earth and ruling over its creatures mean?

God gave humans the responsibility of having dominion over all creation. However, that responsibility does not provide humans with the authority or freedom to exploit His creation. Today, we subdue and rule under God's authority, maintaining His creation to glorify Him rather than merely satisfy our selfish desires. Thus, we are to care for God's

creation, maintain its beauty, and exercise responsible stewardship of its resources. But the complementary relationship between man and woman allows them to take dominion over the earth together. They are meant to complement and support one another in this task. We are the pinnacle of God's creative work, and the pinnacle of creation reflects a complementary purpose throughout all of creation.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

If God can order a world in such a way that everything works together, what should that teach us about His ability to order our lives in such a way that we flourish and reflect His glory?

What complementary relationships exist between the members of this group and the gifts of the Spirit that God has given us?

When the world is disordered, we have an opportunity to point back to God and show how these events deviate from His purpose. How might you use one such situation to share the gospel?

PRAYER

Think about some people, animals, or sceneries in creation for which you can praise God. Thank Him for making a world that works exactly the way it's supposed to. Worship Him for His creativity, and for His ability to bring order out of chaos.

COMMENTARY

| GENESIS 1:1-28

The opening statement about creation in Genesis 1:1 is not only a heading or summary of everything that is unfolded in the subsequent verses but also a declaration of God's first actions by which He called the universe into existence. The verse's sheer simplicity yields a dramatic impact. The when, who, and what of creation are identified in Genesis 1:1.

God established for absolutely everything a beginning of its succeeding existence. This concept is reflective of the biblical writer's attempt to communicate the wealth of knowledge regarding the origin of the world that had been worked out and taught among

God's people. The reference to God in Genesis 1:1 is an effort to make a general statement about God's creative work. The biblical writer provided the opportunity to integrate faith and natural science in such a way as to make it possible to talk about God and his activity in the known world. Regarding the universe, the heavens and the earth, there could have been only one beginning, with God being its Source.

A foundational teaching of the Bible is that God speaks and does so with universe-changing authority. Another basic truth of the Bible is that God "saw;" this means He is fully aware of His creation. Later writers directly declared that God is aware of events occurring throughout the earth (see 2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10). The term "good," used here for the first of seven times in this chapter to evaluate God's creative work, can be used to express both high quality and moral excellence. The physical universe is a good place because God made it. God found satisfaction in His labor. This first instance where God separated created the twin realms of light and darkness, day and night. God's activity in the material world parallels the role He also performs in the moral universe, that of the righteous Judge distinguishing between those who live in moral light and those who do not (see 1 Thess. 5:5).

God's second act of separation was to divide atmospheric water from terrestrial water. Thus He began the process of giving form to the material world. The clause "it was so," found six times in this chapter, emphasizes God's absolute power over creation. "Sky" can refer to the earth's atmospheric envelope (v. 20), outer space (v. 15), or "heaven," the spiritual realm where God lives (Ps. 11:4). God's third and final act of separation created oceans and continents (v. 9).

In His third and final act of naming, God demonstrated His authority over all of the earth (v. 10). This contrasts with what Israel's polytheistic neighbors believed about the range of divine powers. Their gods were not all-powerful, but instead exercised authority over a limited territory. The God of Genesis 1 holds dominion over everything at all times and in all places. In preparation for the rise of animal and human life, God provided an abundant supply of food. The consistent biblical teaching is that "like begets like" (Luke 6:44; James 3:12); Genesis 1:11-12 establish that principle for plant life. While five of the six days contain at least one act of creation evaluated as good, only the third and sixth days have this statement more than once.

The events of day four complement those of day one, filling the day and night with finished forms of light. The various lights, or "light-giving objects," were worshiped as gods in the cultures that surrounded ancient Israel. In Genesis, however, the sun, moon, and

stars are portrayed as servants of God that would fulfill three roles: separating the newly created realms of day and night; marking time so that those who worshiped the Creator could keep their appointed festivals ; and providing light on the earth. The fifth day's events complement those of day two, filling the newly formed heavenly domains above and the watery regions below.

The crown of God's handiwork is human life. The narrative marks the prominence of this creative act in several ways: (1) the creation account shows an ascending order of significance with human life as the final, thus pinnacle, creative act; (2) of the creative acts, this is the only one preceded by divine deliberation ("Let us make" in v. 26); (3) this expression replaces the impersonal words spoken in the previous creation acts (e.g., "Let there be," "Let the earth"); (4) human life alone is created in the "image" of God and has the special assignment to rule over the created order (vv. 26-28); (5) the verb *bārā* occurs three times in v. 27; (6) the event is given a longer description than previous ones; (7) in v. 27 the chiasmic arrangement highlights the emphasis on "image"; and (8) unlike the animals, who are said to have come from the land in v. 24 (though v. 25 makes clear that God created them), mankind is referred to only as a direct creation of God.

The two Hebrew words translated as "image" and "likeness" are often understood as having the same meaning. But some interpreters suggest that "image" refers to the ability to reason, with "likeness" referring to the spiritual dimension. What exactly is the "image" of God? Since the Bible teaches that God is Spirit (see John 4:24), many commentators believe it refers to the non-material aspects of a person—our moral sensibilities, intellectual abilities, will, and emotions. Based on God's commands in Genesis 1:28, others have suggested that it consists of the role humans are to play on earth—their rulership over the planet and its resources, and secondarily the physical, mental, and spiritual abilities that enable them to fulfill that role. The New Testament teaches that Christians will someday bear the image of Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2).

The creation of humanity is the crowning event of chapter 1, as shown by the fact that created is repeated three times. The verb "created" is the same one used in 1:1, referring to a kind of creative activity that only God can do. The term "man" is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to humanity in general, not just males ; all people, both male and female, are created in the image of God. People are the only beings that are created in the image of God. The Bible never lumps people into the category of animals. Instead, it separates the creation of people from all other beings and attributes the most privileged roles in creation to humans alone.

God's summary evaluation of creation concludes the six days: "it was very good." "All" that God had made was worthy of commendation. His highest acclaim is withheld until the completed creation because only after the six creation days has the lifeless earth been fully changed (1:2). Now the earth as a result of God's "Spirit" and animated word is well-ordered, complete, and abounding in life-forms under the watch care of royal humanity. If God had chosen to be mute, encroaching darkness, unrestricted waters, and the hollow sounds of the empty wastelands would be the earth's state, but God has transformed and filled the earth by a matchless wisdom (Ps. 104:24; Prov. 8:22-31).