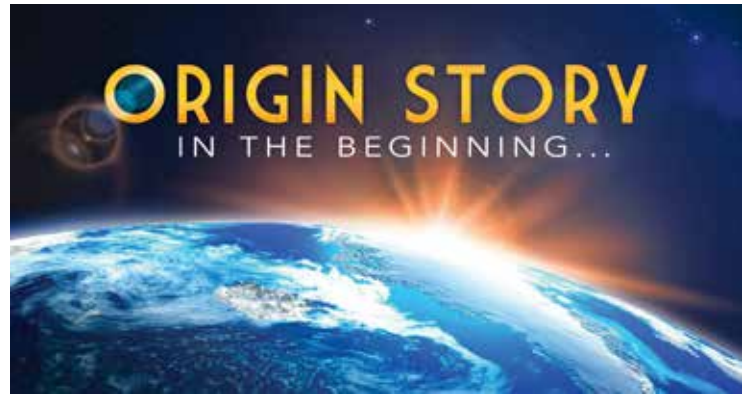


WEEK OF JUNE 25



DAY

1

A Flourishing Creation **Genesis 1:4-31**

In the Genesis 1 creation account, God looks over everything he has made each day and calls it good. But on the day when God creates people, he declares them “very good.” We were designed to be a good part of his creation, the very pinnacle of everything that God had made. What is the difference between humans and the rest of creation? Only humanity is created in the image of God. (In July we’ll dive deeper into what it means to be created in the image of God.)

When God looked over everything he had made, he declared it good. It was designed for flourishing. God takes pleasure in the creation he has made. In fact, he follows up by resting, to model for us how to relax and enjoy creation.

Psalm 104 reminds us that God rejoices in the works he has made. Psalm 19 reminds us that God’s creation declares his glory. Have you ever been overwhelmed at the sight of the ocean as it curls in waves toward the shore? Or a beautiful sunset slipping below the horizon? Or a mountain range that reminds you of how small you are? These things and so many more declare the glory of the God who made us.

As a challenge for today, find a way to worship God and reflect on the beauty of his creation. Maybe for you that means going outside to look around your yard or garden. Maybe that means taking a hike in the woods. Maybe it means reflecting on a trip where you were overcome by the beauty of God’s creation. However you reflect, make time to pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the goodness of creation.

DAY

2

A Finely Tuned Universe, a Well-Designed World **Psalm 65; 89:1–15; 95**

The more you study science, the more amazing creation becomes. Everything is designed, ordered, arranged, and structured.

The Intelligent Design theorists reveal the carefully designed creation at all levels of the universe, the laws of physics, the chemical makeup of creation, and the biological functioning of every system of life. Whether it is gravity, electromagnetism and the strong and weak nuclear forces, DNA/RNA cellular processes, how neurons work, or anything else, it is all precisely ordered and consistent.

We live in a finely tuned universe. It is described as the Goldilocks Enigma. It is not too big or small, not too hot or cold, not “too” anything. It is JUST RIGHT. There are dozens of primary laws of the universe, and if any ONE of them were just a little bit different, life would not be possible in the universe.

The further we see into the universe (via telescope) and the smaller we see into life (via microscope) the more we discover amazing design. It gives a whole new meaning to the phrase “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

Most of the time we don’t think about the laws of nature, but the key word is LAW. It is a consistent way that the universe works, day after day, every day. One mathematician sees the universe as so complex, and yet so well designed, that God must be a genius mathematician with an IQ in the billions.

Materialistic (atheistic) science does not have any reasonable answer for how and why design is there. For them, it is an accident that just happened. Yet, the odds of it happening by accident are astronomically small. The universe

is simply not old enough for such an accident. Christians believe that the Creator God (the Intelligent Designer and Genius Mathematician) designed a universe of brilliant order and beautiful structure.

Adapting the old hymn “This is my Father’s Universe”—what a universe and world it is! Worship the Creator. Live with joy and gratitude in the midst of the beauty of creation.

DAY 3

Co-Creators with God Genesis 1:25-31; Psalm 104

For many Americans, a job is just a job. A recent Pew survey found that nearly 90% of those surveyed said their job is a way to pay the bills. But the survey went on to reveal that “Nearly seven-in-ten say they work to ‘feel like a useful person’ while nearly half work ‘to help improve society.’ About four-in-ten say they work to ‘give myself something to do’ while slightly fewer say they work to be with other people—a view most frequently expressed by older adults of both genders.” (<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2009/09/03/iii-attitudes-toward-work/>)

Work is something we do. We *hustle*. We *grind*. We save for the house or the vacation or the car and we put our nose to the grindstone. But we rarely think of work beyond earning a paycheck.

One very interesting note about the Genesis 1 creation account is that God created an unfinished creation. It needed rain to water the plants. It needed someone to tend the garden. It needed workers to cultivate and build. We are co-creators with God, made to do good works, made with creative potential, made to improve the world by the works we do, and made to create works of beauty. We are, as one theologian said, created co-creators, part of God’s creation that also joins with him in creation. God is a creative God, and we are made in his image.

For some of us, our vocation fulfills our need to be creative co-creators. For others, our roles of creativity and cultivation are outside of our 9–5 jobs.

This may be a new way of thinking for you. Perhaps you have lost that spark of being a co-creator. Perhaps you are caught in the rush of your job, your family, and the demands on your time. Ask God how he might be inviting you to join him in the work of creative co-creator.

DAY 4

God Rested and We Worship Genesis 1:31–2:3; Psalm 19

Genesis 1 is loaded with activity. God works for 6 days. Day after day, the conclusion of God’s work is the same: It is good. At the end of the sixth day God looks at everything he has made and says it is very good (v. 31). God was finished with the originating creative work. And on the seventh day God rests.

In one sense God never rests, because if God rests that means God is not working in the world or working in your life. However, the rest is crucial. It means the initial creative work of God was done. God created everything and God created the laws of existence that would function forever and advance the development of the world. In addition, Jesus Christ, every day, “sustains all things” (Hebrews 1:1–3; Colossians 1:15–17).

In the origin stories of the ancient near eastern religions of biblical times, their gods built temples on earth where they rested and where humans served them. In Genesis, the temple God created is not a building on the earth. God’s temple is the entire universe itself. Not only is the universe the temple of the Most High God (Acts 7:48–50; Isaiah 66:1–2), but the universe bears witness to the glory of God (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1–3). And the creation itself worships and exalts God (Psalm 148).

And the pinnacle of creation—women and men in God’s image—is above all others. We also rest from our work, and we worship our Creator (Exodus 20:8–10; Hebrews 4:1–13).

As we will see in Genesis 2, work is beautiful, vital, and a way for human beings to engage in meaningful, purposeful activity as God’s co-laborers. And resting from work is beautiful. Our rest celebrates the rhythm of God’s creative work and rest. And our rest gives us additional time for prayer, worship, relaxation, and enjoying the fruits of our own work. For the Israelites who had known only harsh conditions of slavery, this message of work–rest–worship was central to their life as the people of God.

What are some ways you can improve your day of rest and worship? What makes it difficult to actually have a day where this is the main priority?

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.

ONE: How do you feel about creation? Are you able to look around and declare it good? Why or why not? Does knowing about the carefully designed universe lead you to worship?

TWO: How do you feel about your work these days? What do you think about the idea of being a created co-creator? Is that language strange to you? Is it appealing? How might God be calling you to be a creative co-creator?

THREE: How are you doing at taking a sabbath? What demands of your time keep you from experiencing sabbath rest? What practical changes do you need to make this week to better align yourself for sabbath?