

Prayer

Thank You Lord Jesus, for Your inspiration:
I could not do the things I do without Your Word;
I could not treat my friends as I ought without Your love;
I could not run the race of life without Your energy;
I could not defeat sin without Your salvation;
In You, Lord Jesus, all is possible!
AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Wildlife

Pray for those who work to preserve the life of 'big game' animals at a time when people will pay great sums to kill them. Pray for an end to the insult of killing purely for sport.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for those on trial at the Hague for crimes against humanity*
- *Give thanks to God for the joy of travelling and visiting friends*
- *Pray about the strife in Israel and Gaza, and for the peace of God*

Meditation

Aspire to the greatest achievements,

For the Lord Your God has given you power
Beyond your understanding.

Reach out to the highest goals,

For the Lord your God has specific tasks for you
That only you can do.

Believe that the impossible can be done,

For the faith to grow the Kingdom of God
Is yours to use, not loose.

Take hold of your covenant heritage now,

For Your God has portioned out His blessings
They are there for you, right now!

Bible Study - Genesis 1:1,2(a)

¹ *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,*

² *the earth was meaningless and empty, and darkness covered the surface of the abyss, while the spirit of God swept over the waters.*

Review

The Bible begins with an amazing description of the creative acts of God, which takes up all of Genesis 1:1 to 2:3. Today, we will read the first two verses, but focus generally on the first verse, which contains some of the most well known words of the Bible: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth'. Both of the first two verses have defied explanations by language experts and theologians for as long as they have been

written down; and yet their power and beauty cannot be ignored, because they begin the story of God's creative acts. There is so much to say about them, we will use two study days to begin to look at them in order to avoid simplifying important issues. It is important to take time over these verses because they form the starting point for our understanding of God, and are therefore central to Christian faith.

The mystery of Creation The words of verse 1 are majestic, and to say they are extraordinary is an understatement, and despite extensive debate and analysis over thousands of years, even sceptics find it hard to avoid the sense of mystery and wonder they evoke. However, you will be aware as well as I that many people today have discarded what the Bible says about the creation of the world believing that what science says is more accurate and logical. This is most unfortunate because both Genesis and science give us important but different information about the beginning of everything, and where science and the Bible say different things, we can all too easily fail to understand the truth because of erroneous presumptions about either theology or science.

Our minds cannot fully grasp what it means for the world we know to come into existence. We are part of creation both physically and spiritually, so we find it extremely hard to understand the idea that what we experience as our reality could somehow come into being either at some moment of time or over a long period of time. Indeed, a large number of the questions we naturally ask about creation relate to time; 'what was made when?' 'What does the existence of 'chaos' (1:2) before creation mean?' However, even time itself is part of creation and was brought into being by God, so 'beginning' is itself an essential part of God's creative deeds!

Science and Creation The more we think about the Bible's description of Creation, the more we realise that no science can ever describe what happened before the world came into existence. Science is itself part of creation, and it analyses the world as it is; it can neither describe what happened before the known Universe began, nor describe God. People love to try and compare Genesis 1 with various scientific theories of the origins of the Universe, the 'big bang' theory, 'evolution', or analyses from archaeology or geology, for example; but the history of such debates is one of cantankerous disagreement and division, which do no favours to humanity's quest either for truth or for knowledge of God.

Studying Genesis As we study Genesis, I will focus on what this scripture is primarily about, which is the nature and character of the God who made the world and His relationship with people. 'Genesis' means 'beginnings', and it sets out what is essential for us to 'begin' to understand God and have a relationship with Him. Along the way, it tells us many things in many different ways, but if we become too interested in these other issues to the extent that we lose sight of this, we will find ourselves side-tracked from the essential purpose of scripture. This passage tells us that before anything existed, there was God; and the picture of His spirit 'brooding' over the face of the waters tells us that he is about to act with stupendous power and majesty to bring all things into being. In the coming days we will see how this happens and how God holds all things in existence even now. The whole created world reflects God's glory!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Have you known people tell you they don't believe in God because of science? How did you respond?
2. In groups, discuss what it means for you to believe that God made the world and everything in it.
3. What parts of Genesis 1:1,2 do you not understand and why? (discussing this will lead into tomorrow's study)

Discipleship

Personal comment:

It can be helpful for any disciple to take the opportunity to revisit what they believe about God. The starting place for faith is belief in God as the Creator of all, before faith moves on to consider God in Christ as Saviour and Lord. How can we begin to know God's saving work in Jesus unless we believe in a God who made us and loves us so much that He wants to save us from our sins? Many people call themselves Christians today and yet openly say they are uncertain about what they believe about God because of science and its apparent conflict with what is said in Genesis. Yet the scriptures will help us if we approach what is said with an open mind, and if we look for spiritual, not scientific, reality.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Look up 'creation' on the internet and read what some people are saying in the debate between religion and science about how the world was created. What do you think of what you have read? Share this with others and discuss it if you can.*
- *Pray for those who find it hard to accept that the Bible has anything positive and helpful to say about creation. Pray that God will move to help people discover the truth within His Word.*

Final Prayer

We praise You, O God, for the wonder of Your Creation. Although we can never understand everything about Your great creative work, we know about Your love for us through Your Son Jesus. May we never turn away from Your love or exchange mere ideas for Your truth; O God, our Creator. AMEN