

Prayer

All praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ; You have given us hope when we could find no other, You have saved us when we had wandered far away, You have blessed us when we were undeserving, and You have loved us when we had done nothing to deserve Your attention. We praise You because You are our Lord and God; may we not be ashamed to declare this to the world. Alleluia!

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Prayer Ministry

When we are concerned for people with difficulties, we often say that we will pray for them. Ask the Lord to help us take the additional step of praying with others for their needs.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for the disabled, who contribute greatly to our lives
- Pray for all those attempting to create peace in Gaza and Israel
- Pray for all who seek to establish justice for the poor

Meditation

See the marks of faith in the lives of others;
The saints of God who live by the Spirit.

A smile on the face of one who suffers
For their God sustains them, despite all trials.

A truthful word spoken with honesty and wisdom
Going straight to the heart and moving the spirit.

A life lived in tune with God and with others;
The faithful heart of a man or woman of God.

An offer of help, by one who cares to notice,
Serving wherever possible, at whatever the cost.

See the marks of faith in the lives of others;
Join the saints of God who live by the Spirit.

Bible Study - Genesis 1:6-13

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a dome set up between the waters, to make a space between the two waters.' ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from those that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. Evening came and morning came; day two.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together to one place, and let dry land appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land 'Earth', and He called the gathered waters 'Seas'. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, 'Let the earth produce vegetation: seed bearing plants and every kind of fruit tree on earth that has fruit with the seed within it.' And it

was so. ¹² *The earth produced vegetation: seed bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind having fruit with the seed within it. And God saw that it was good.* ¹³ *Evening came and morning came: day three.*

Review

The story of Creation continues in Genesis 1 with the description of God's work on days two and three. After God spoke light into being and named it 'day' (1:5) on day one, we must think of all the following days as an expression of God's creative light, and each day, like the light, is a powerful force for good and a reminder that God is good. However, from now on, things become a little more complicated! In today's reading we can clearly see the difference between the 'days' of creation and God's commands, for these two days contain three 'commands' of Creation, which are obvious from the words 'and God said' (1:6,9,11). If we keep an eye not just on the well known days but also on the commands of God, we will get a clearer picture of creation.

Day two The two days in our reading describe the creation of the earth and the heavens, and also the vegetation which is in the earth. All this is the 'structure' of the world that would eventually be filled with people. On day two, this took practical form as the 'waters' were separated to make the earth and the sky, with the sky forming a vast 'dome' over the earth. It was an essential step in structuring human surroundings (see also Psalm 24:2).

Day three (first command) Then, on day three, two further commands of God were given. The first of these was the separating out of land and sea (1:6-10). The ancients thought that everything was created out of 'waters', so the earth under their feet and the sky above them appeared to be like a dome or cavern filled with air, and this kept the waters 'above' separate from the waters 'below'. They also thought that water permeated up from below to make the seas and rivers, and broke through the skies when it rained. It does not take much imagination to see how and why people thought like this and wrote as they did about the world they observed.

Day three (second command) The second command of God on day three was for the creation of plants and trees (1:11-13). We find it hard to imagine today, but ancient Israelites thought of vegetation as little more than a 'structural' part of the earth. They did not think of it as a form of life in the same way we define life today, largely because although they knew perfectly well that vegetation grew, it did not appear to them to breathe, and they believed everything living 'breathed' (e.g. see Psalm 150:6). Looking closely at these verses, two different types of vegetation were described; firstly, seed bearing plants and secondly fruit bearing trees whose seeds were contained within fruit. The differences are easy for us to understand; the first type of plant was food that could potentially be eaten with its seed, whereas the second was not edible (the tree!) except for its fruit, which could be picked.

The perspective of Creation in the Bible It may seem somewhat simple to describe Creation in such primitive terms, but there is much more to it than this. From the beginning of Genesis 1, the narrative gradually focuses in from the initial view of the whole universe down to the earth, then what is on the earth and finally to people, made in the image of God (1:27,28). It is an incredibly powerful beginning to the Bible, because Genesis gradually brings the perspective of Creation down to a personal level. There is a genuine dysfunction in our world today, because science insists that people are not the 'centre of the universe', and it has used its objective methodology to achieve much good and considerable progress. However, each of us can only live and experience things from our own perspective, and this is the Bible's perspective on creation.

It would be so wrong for us to ditch what the Bible says about creation because it does not tally with what science says. Each has a totally different perspective, and this means that we can learn a great deal about creation and its meaning, especially spiritually, from this account within scripture. The Israelites believed completely that everything they experienced and observed came from God, and although other nations around them did not have such beliefs, they maintained their faith in God within this scripture.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Which part of days two and three do you find most difficult to understand, and why?
2. If ancient people described the world as they did simply from their personal experience, why do people not think of it in the same way now?
3. Why are vegetables important for creation, and why does God give them an important place on day three?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Some Christians find it hard to engage with Genesis and texts in the Old Testament like it because it requires them to think hard about what they believe or make choices between 'faith' and 'science'. It is important for our discipleship that we engage with Genesis for two reasons. Firstly, because reading and thinking about these things helps sharpen our minds, and secondly this is the Word of God, from which we find truth. Whatever opinions people have about 'creationism' and 'evolution', in is undoubtedly true that over many centuries, people have found that God speaks to them of the wonder of the world they live in through reading Genesis, and through it they have found out more about the God who both made them and saved them.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Google the internet and look up the debate between creationism and evolutionism. Look carefully at the arguments presented, but beware of those that do not accept the grounds upon which the other works. Let God help you make up your mind about any issues that may arise for you, and they may not be what everyone else is interested in!*
- *Pray for God's people today to hold on to the value of Genesis 1 and what it says about the world and about God.*

Final Prayer

Jesus Christ, we build our hopes on You. Save us from the sands of doubt and liberate us from the quicksands of despair. Lead us through life on the solid rocks and the stones of faith left for us to walk on by saints who have gone before. Thank You Lord. AMEN