

## Session 2

### Why Did God Create Creation?

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**Session Goal:** To begin to appreciate how amazing God's world is and to understand some of the reasons why God made this world.

**Key Scriptures:** John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-20, Genesis 1:27, Psalm 19, II Chronicles 6

**Background Reading:** *Our Father's World, chapters 2 & 3 (p. 43-62)*

#### Warm Up

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Share any new thoughts you have had about last Session's discussions on Dominion. If you were able to do your outdoors assignment ("under the stars"), share for a few minutes what it was like and how God spoke to you during this time.

**Special Group Activity or Homework:** Before or after this session, or maybe both before and after, send members of the group outside for about 15 minutes. Try to look at big things (the sky, the stars) and little ones (leaves, a handful of soil, the beetles under a rock). Then come back together and talk about how you see the world and God differently because of this exercise.

#### Content

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In this session we want to begin to appreciate this world that we live in and to understand why God made it.

##### God made the world for himself...

A common misconception is that the world was made for us. No, it wasn't.

Both of the passages below discuss Jesus ("The Word" in John 1, "him" in Colossians 1) and a number of things he did or is doing in and for the world, God's creation. Read these verses carefully and underline or circle the different things we are told Jesus does.

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
<sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. John 1:1-3

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones

or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:15-17

What did you discover?

Here's part of my list:

- Jesus existed **before the world did** (John 1:2, Col 1:17)
- The world was made **by Jesus** (John 1:3, Col 1:16 (twice!))
- The world was made **for Jesus**, not for us. (Col 1:16)
- Jesus is actively working **to sustain the world** (Col 1:17)

[We are going to look at this passage again in greater depth in the second part of Session 3]

#### **Let's Discuss.**

- a. Does it make a difference to you that Jesus your Savior is also your Creator? Why?
- b. How about the fact that everything that was made, was made for Him, and not for us? Does that change how you think about the world?
- c. "Sustainability" is a popular buzz word today. It usually means living or conducting business in a way that can be sustained or continued indefinitely. We'll discuss this more fully in a future session. In light of the current popularity of this concept, it is interesting to see that Paul uses exactly this word to talk about how Jesus holds the world together: We could say that sustainability starts with Jesus (Col 1:17). Discuss what the implications of this fact might be for a Christian approach to caring for creation.

Thus, we know that God made the world through and for Jesus. But he also had some purposes related to us as human beings:

#### **God's World was made for REVELATION.**

When we study the world, we see God. Creation is a means of revelation – or **a way to see and understand who God is.**

One of the major themes of the Bible is the fact of revelation – God seeks to speak to and to communicate with human beings. Two of the ways in which he does this are spelled out in Hebrews 1: The **written word** of the Bible ("the prophets" in this passage) and through the **living Word**, Jesus ("his Son" in verse 2, see also John 1:1-4).

<sup>1</sup>In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. [Hebrews 1:1-2]

But God's creation – **his World** – is also a primary way in which God speaks to his people. This is becomes clear in Psalm 19. Read it below, and using two pen or marker colors, circle or draw lines to show how **God's World** and **God's Word** are both described:

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- <sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they display knowledge.
- <sup>3</sup> There is no speech or language  
where their voice is not heard.
- <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,
- <sup>5</sup> which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
- <sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is hidden from its heat.
- <sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul.  
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.
- <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.
- <sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The ordinances of the LORD are sure  
and altogether righteous.
- <sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;

they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the comb.

<sup>11</sup> By them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> Who can discern his errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.  
Then will I be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Now compare what the Psalmist says above with what Paul writes in Romans 1:20:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

**Let's Discuss.**

**a.** How does the two-book idea of revelation work for you? Share how you have perhaps experienced God sometimes through nature, sometimes through the Bible, and when you might have heard God through both at the same time. Tell each other some stories.

**b.** If these two books of Revelation both “speak truth” then they cannot be in conflict with each other, can they? What implications does this have for those who explore God’s world through science? [If you have any scientists in your group, ask them to share how they experience these truths in their labs or field trips.]

**c.** In a future session we will be learning about things like the rapid extinction of species of plants and animals in many parts of the world. Does the revelation principle affect how you think about this problem?

**God’s world was made for RELATIONSHIP:**

In the last section, we learned that creation is a way of seeing God. But creation is also **a place where we can know God.**

One of the great themes in the Bible is that God wants to have a relationship with us. His creation is the space on which or within which that relationship develops.

**Think about this:** Every relationship has to have a platform where the relationship can develop. Think about your relationships and the platforms that make them possible:

- Marriage and family: The platform is your home.
- People you work with: The platform is your office, workplace or company.
- Church: The platform is both your church building (where you meet) and your church's activities (events at which you see and interact with people).
- Facebook friends, Twitter contacts, online gaming partners: The platform is the internet application within which you connect to and interact with people. Even though you may never meet these people in person, you still have a relationship with them - the internet platform makes this possible.

***In the same way, Creation is the platform that makes relationship with God possible.***

This is what Solomon means in his prayer in I Kings 8:

"But will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! <sup>19</sup> Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, O LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence. <sup>20</sup> May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. <sup>21</sup> Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.

Solomon is praying at the dedication of his temple in Jerusalem. Think about what a temple is: A place that has been designed to help people have a relationship with God). It is space that is considered "sacred" or "holy" because of this purpose – worshipers meet God here. Even though a Christian's relationship with God is because of Jesus' work on the cross and is not dependent on sacrifices made in a temple, that relationship is still lived out in this physical world. As a demonstration of this principle, think of any of the important "spiritual" events of your life, whether the time you became a Christian, or when God met you in a very real way: All of these events have a place associated with them, because that is how God works – he meets us in this physical, created world.

In this way, God's creation is like a temple. We can meet and worship God here. When we think of God's creation in this way it helps us respect and care for creation without falling into a trap where we begin to worship it for itself. Worshipers in a beautiful church do not worship the building, but they use the building to help them worship God – and that is how we should think of God's creation.

**Let's Discuss.**

- a. Think of one of your own relationships – marriage, family, work, school – and share how the particular relational space (house, office, campus, etc) makes that relationship possible. Share some memories that connect a place with a relationship for you.
- b. Now think and share about your own relationship with God. Have there been times when being in creation – ie. outdoors in nature – has enhanced your relationship? Experiencing creation often seems to make prayer or worship deeper and more meaningful: Has this been the case for you? Share and discuss some examples and explore together why this is so.

**Prayer Time**

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Focus your group prayer time on worship and thanksgiving – thanking God for how he reveals himself through creation and for the very fact that creation makes relationship with him possible.

**Prepare Ahead**

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**Read** next week's material ahead of time, and try to incorporate some of the scripture passages in your devotional reading.

**Outdoor Time:** When you have your regular devotional or quiet time with God, spend half of these times outdoors in nature, and the other half inside. Try to compare the two experiences and make some notes to share with the group next week. How was talking with God different outdoors than it was in a building?

**Observation:** Next week's lesson is about what went wrong. Try to notice this week evidences of problems in God's creation – things you see in your own neighborhood, news reports, whatever. Make notes in your journal to share with the group.