



Part 2: *What a Wonderful World!*

Bible Reading: **Genesis 1:14-25**

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

We continue in our 6-part series, exploring the first three chapters of the Book of **Genesis**. Today we are thinking about God's provision and design, before the introduction of human beings. It is an opportunity to look afresh at the wonderful world God has made, without dwelling too much on the problems and pollution caused by human involvement. Please continue to pray for your group as we take this journey together.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

*Did you see the almost-total **eclipse** of the sun by the moon back in August (2026)?* It's a phenomenon that has been happening ever since the earth and moon were set together in their annual orbit of the sun. It will have been observed by every generation of humans since we first had the evolutionary ability to notice! The moon fits perfectly over the sun, so that (for a brief moment) it can block out the sun's light entirely. Because of this occasional (and monumental) event, scientists in recent centuries have been able to make leaps forward in our understanding of the universe.

And yet, the sun's diameter is actually about 400 times larger than that of the moon, so eclipses are only possibly because of the remarkable '**coincidence**' that the sun is also roughly 400 times further away from us (93 million miles) than the moon (240,000 miles). When you know where to look, 'coincidences' in the universe relating to the existence of life on Planet Earth are quite common! When these are noticed, it can lead us to feel rather specially blessed as a species. A greater understanding of the sciences has led increasingly to the appearance of design and order in the natural world, and even complex mathematics and coding in biological systems (like DNA). This is all the more remarkable when we consider that one of the fundamental laws of physics is that the **disorder** in a system (known as 'entropy') naturally tends to **increase**. *In a universe that naturally tends towards chaos, where does this apparent **order** come from?*

As you prepare for this session, think about the 'coincidences' in nature that we often take for granted.

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

Designer God,
your creative power amazes us; your ingenuity astounds us.
Whether we look into the furthest depths of space, or the inner workings of a tiny cell,
we discover that every detail works together in such perfect harmony.
With awe, we sense your hand at work, and we praise you.
You fill this world with life and light, with variety and colour, with purpose and love,
and our hearts sing with yours: that it is very good! By your Holy Spirit we worship you. **Amen.**

FINDING OUR ROOTS – some starter questions to explore in small groups

Have you ever been involved in designing something? (e.g. a house, a machine, a programme of work, a garment, a play, computer software...) How does it feel to see it finished and working?

READING THE SCRIPTURES – with background information and reflections

Read together the Bible passages: **Genesis 1:14-25**

According to this ancient (and monumental) Hebrew account of creation, by the end of the third day, God had brought into existence light and darkness, day and night, the sky, the earth and sea, and the earth was filled with every kind of vegetation (**Genesis 1:1-13**). There's a sense in which God creates the space or prepares the platform for life, and then fills it. In verses 14-25, we are told that in the next three days, God filled the sky, sea and earth with **light** (the sun, moon and stars) **and life** (the birds, fish and land animals), and all of this was done with purpose, diversity ("of every kind") and value ("God saw that it was good").

REFLECTION: Many modern readers are embarrassed by this chapter: they find the language strange, the scientific understanding limited, and the timeline naïve. BUT, *in a world of competing creation stories, many false gods, and threats to human existence (then and now), isn't there something vital, reassuring and compelling in proclaiming that the universe has been created with purpose and order, that the earth is held in the hands of the creator, and that all the good things of this world have been designed by the same God?*

DIGGING DEEPER – some questions for you to consider in your group:

What makes more sense to you: That life is a coincidence, brought about by chance, or that it is designed and brought into existence by the Living God? How do you engage in conversation with other world-views on the subject of creation and design (or not)?

Can science and evolutionary theory tell us anything useful about HOW life came to be? Or should we rely purely on the Bible for our understanding? If we look to the Bible for 'an explanation of everything', are we confusing its purposes? Do you find it possible to reconcile faith and science? Do you ever doubt the existence of a loving Creator? Or when do you cry out in anger or lament? Don't be afraid to share your honest feelings in the group. It is a safe space.

What does the sheer abundance, beauty and diversity of life suggest to us about our Creator? How has this creation story helped believers through many traumatic and dangerous times (from the Old Testament onwards)? How might it help to inspire us in the current threats we face?

The Bible tells us that there is connection between every living thing on earth and indeed the sun, moon and stars in the sky – because we were all made by the same designer! *How should this motivate our efforts to conserve and protect the natural world and every species God has made?*

PRAYING AND WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Find some time for a period of prayer together. Allow space for group members to offer their own prayers. Offer to God any issues or concerns that have been raised in the session. Perhaps take the opportunity to pray for greater understanding between atheists, people of faith, and scientists (who may be either), especially in important questions about looking after our planet. **Hymns** to sing or use as prayers include: *Singing the Faith* **43, 100, 107, 108, 113, 115** and **803** (**Psalms 19**). Share **The Lord's Prayer** together.

WHEN YOU'RE AT HOME...

We can turn our wonder of this world into praise and worship. Perhaps you could make a point this week of looking more closely at nature. You could then start a little 'creation journal': In a notebook or just some scrap paper, make a note this week of all the things in the natural world that amaze you, in their beauty or design, or the miraculous way they work. Remember who created them, and use your notes to help you praise God. If you're feeling extra-creative, write a song or a poem!

JUNIOR GOOD SOIL – ideas for children and young people

Explore the idea of 'design' and designers. *What is the most amazingly designed thing they can think of – both in the natural world, and human-made? How did it come about?* Continue to make a display of the **7 days of creation**. Read again the creation story (**Gen 1:1 – 2:3**), and continue to explore their questions.