

In the Beginning, God...

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God created everything good through His Son.

I love beginnings. A good beginning sets the tone, gives the context, draws you in, and makes you want to know more. Take these beginnings, for example, from some of the most enduring works of literature:

- “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” –Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*
- “There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it.”
–C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*
- “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” –Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*



What is your favorite opening line or scene from a book or movie that captured your attention and didn't let go?

Voices from the Church

“Man does not have to wander around in darkness wondering what kind of God he serves or owes allegiance to; Yahweh has communicated, and the traits He communicates are worthy of worship.”¹

–Timothy M. Pierce

But what if a book exists that hasn't just endured the test of a hundred years but of thousands? Countless are the books written by men and women, but what if we had a book authored by God Himself? What would be the beginning line of this book? Well, let me tell you: “In the beginning, God...”

As we dive into God’s story revealed through Scripture, we recognize that the beginning of the story does what beginnings should—it sets the stage for all that follows. In the beginning, God created everything, and He created everything good. And vitally important for grasping the scope of the gospel, we will see that God created everything through His Son.

1. God created everything (Gen. 1:1-2).

How else could you describe the creation of everything unless you’re first introduced to Someone who preceded everything? That’s the whole point of Genesis 1:1. The God who simply is, who preceded everything and is not dependent on anything, He created everything.

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

When you’re studying the Bible, one of the most basic and fundamental rules you have to follow to interpret Scripture properly is *remember the context*: Who was the intended audience? What was the purpose of the author? This is vital information to know so that when we come to the text, we are able to ask the questions it was intended to answer.

The original audience of the Book of Genesis was the ancient Israelites on their way to the promised land (a story for a later time). They likely would not have been asking some of the questions that pique our interest, such as the age of the earth or the science behind the creation. So what, then, was the original purpose for the creation account in Genesis?

Why did the Israelites need to know God created everything?

The Israelites would have wrestled with questions such as “Is our God the real God?” “Is He the best God?” “Is He the most powerful God?” Having lived so long among the gods of the Egyptians and being introduced to the gods of the foreign nations that surrounded them, the Israelites struggled to believe that their God was *the* God.

To remedy such wandering hearts, God wrote Genesis 1:1 to help His people understand that the God of their bedtime stories—the God of their fathers—was the very same God who created the world. The God of Israel, not the gods of the Canaanites or the Philistines, was the Creator of everything (Ps. 96:4-5).

Why do we need to know God created everything?

We are no different than the original audience of the Book of Genesis. Though perhaps not tempted to bow down to wooden statues, our hearts are just as prone to wander.

Obedience, at times, seems too costly, and our hearts wonder, *Is God real? Does He love me? Is He worth it?* When we have these questions and struggle to believe in the realness and goodness of God, He wants us to recount Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God...” When there was nothing but nothing, God was, and that ought to create in us a sense of wonder about Him that trumps all our other wonderings.

? In what ways should knowing that God created everything affect our thoughts and our emotions regarding God?

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

26. Creation out of Nothing


The Bible teaches that God created the universe—everything both visible and invisible—out of nothing (sometimes expressed in the Latin phrase, “creation *ex nihilo*”). This means that before God created anything, nothing else existed except God Himself. God alone is eternal; every created thing has a beginning. Therefore, the eternal God rules over all of His creation and He alone is worthy of worship. Denial of this doctrine has implications for God’s sovereignty over and providence in creation. Because God created out of nothing, creation has meaning and purpose and points us to the Creator.

2. God created everything good (Gen. 1:3-25).

The next critical thing we need to see from the creation account is that not only did God create everything, but God created everything *good*. What does that mean? Why does God call each step of His creation good?

- *Is it morally good?* Yes. When God created everything, certainly there was no sin in it.
- *Is it beautiful and pleasant to the eyes?* Yes. You don’t have to stare at the Grand Canyon or a sunset for long to realize that the work of creation is beautiful.
- *Is it usable?* Yes. It does well at performing its intended purpose and design.

So what is the purpose and design of creation? To declare God’s glory and proclaim the work of His hands (Ps. 19:1). To reveal things about God that are invisible to us (Rom. 1:20). Creation reveals God’s eternal power and divine nature in a way that we can clearly see and understand them.

 In what ways have you experienced the goodness of God’s creation even today?

Voices from the Church

“God is the Ruler of His mighty creation. There is no reason to despair, because He holds in His hands the whole world, while His Spirit is able to fill the void in man’s heart.”²

—Billy Graham

 What do these experiences tell you about God?

Now, theologically speaking, there are two types of revelation from God—*general revelation* and *special revelation*. Let’s first look at God’s general revelation.

General Revelation

General revelation is the revealing of God that is general both in terms of its content and its scope. In content, it offers broad and common knowledge of God. General revelation can reveal truths such as “God is powerful,” but it can’t reveal specific information such as “God sent His Son, Jesus, to save the world.” And it is also general in scope, that is, it addresses *all* people. Its focus is not revealing something to a specific group of people but revealing something to everyone. *Creation is one of the main avenues of general revelation.*

The creation account in Genesis 1 is divided into two sets of three days. Before God speaks in verse 3, we see that the earth was formless, empty, and dark (v. 2). The first set of days (Gen. 1:3-13) addresses the creation’s *darkness* and *formlessness*.

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Do you see God bringing light, form, and order to the chaos? And keep in mind why He’s doing it—He created day and night, sky, land, and sea to reveal Himself.



Why do you think these created spheres are good (moral, beautiful, usable)? What do these created spheres reveal about God?

In the second set of days (Gen. 1:14-25), God addresses creation’s *emptiness*.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.”²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.²² And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

All the spheres that God created by bringing form to His creation He now fills. And again, all of these things He’s creating to display who He is to the world.



How are these created things good (moral, beautiful, usable)? What do these created things reveal about God?

Ever since these first six days, creation has been fulfilling its purpose such that *everyone* knows God (Rom. 1:20-21). But even though everyone knows the truth about God, fallen humankind suppresses that truth in unrighteousness (v. 18). (We’ll speak more about the fall of humankind soon.)

Still, we can see the hope of evangelism and missions—we’re just trying to help people stop suppressing what they already know. God accomplishes this work through us with something greater than general revelation—special revelation through God’s Son, Jesus.

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

27. The Goodness of Creation

In Genesis 1, God repeatedly affirmed that all of His creation was good, even “very good” (1:31). It is good, in God’s judgment, because He created it for a purpose that it fulfilled—to reflect and display the good character of the Creator. Therefore, sin and evil should not be seen as a foundational part of the creation but rather as a corruption of it. While the creation has been marred and distorted as a result of sin, it is still good in the hands of God and serves His purpose of proclaiming His glory in the world. God’s people should affirm and seek to preserve the goodness of God’s creation (2:15).

3. God created everything through His Son (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

In light of this passage, you might reread the creation account and say, “I see the Holy Spirit hovering and God the Father speaking, but where is the Son?” Every time we see God speak things into existence, the Son is there (John 1:1-3). All things are because of Him.



In what ways should knowing that God created everything through His Son affect our thoughts and our emotions regarding Jesus?

Special Revelation

Why is it so important that God created everything through the Son? Because through the Son, God gives us special revelation. Special revelation is specific in content and scope. In content, it reveals not just general things about God’s power and nature but specifically reveals the God of the gospel with words. It reveals the redemption plan of God to save people through the cross and resurrection of His Son. In scope, it is given to specific people at specific times in specific places.

You see, the light of God’s general revelation, beginning in Genesis 1:3, as good as it is, it is suppressible (Rom. 1:18). We need a display of God’s light that is insuppressible—the light of God’s special revelation. And this insuppressible light isn’t merely electromagnetic radiation; this light is a person and His name is Jesus. “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

There is a place in which these two revelations, these two lights, collide and converge, a place God can reveal Himself not only generally but also specially—within the believer.

First, as a human being, a believer represents humanity, the apex of all of God’s creation (day 6 holds one more creation of God—the focus of session 2). We carry the greatest light of God’s general revelation, but even greater than that, we as believers also bear the light of God’s special revelation—the light of Jesus Christ. This is why the Bible not only says that Jesus is the light but that we are light (Matt. 5:14-16).



Voices from Church History

“Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature, O Thou of God and man the Son; Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor, Thou my soul’s glory, joy, and crown.”

—Anonymous German hymn



What are some ways we can be the light of the world and point people to the Light of the world—Jesus?

Conclusion

If we have been created by God and He has commanded the light of Jesus to shine in our hearts, then we are doubly His. Therefore, we must now seek to discover our role in the overarching plan and purpose of God to manifest His glory and love to the world. We have to be a light to this world, and by nature, we are a light to this world. But we can’t just shine with our actions; we have to shine the light of God’s special revelation with words. No matter how much “good” we do in this world with our actions, simply by observing our actions, people will never come to a saving knowledge of God.

This is what God is telling us from the beginning. *God created everything*, so don’t worry about anything. It’s in His hands. *God also created everything good*. Everything surrounding you—the sun, moon, stars, and everything else in creation—is God saying He wants to know you and be known by you. And *God created everything through His Son*. Because God has revealed all that He is to us through His Son, we now live to reveal Jesus to the world.

CHRIST CONNECTION: By the Son and for the Son and through the Son, all things exist and hold together.

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Because we exist by God and for God, we must seek to discover our role in the overarching plan and purpose of God to manifest His glory and love to the world.

1. What are some implications for our lives because of the truth that God made everything?

2. How should our perspective of God's creation and our actions in His creation change since we know God made everything good?

3. Identify one person (write name below), and pray for God to give you boldness to reveal Jesus—the One through whom all things exist and hold together—to this person and for the Holy Spirit to open his or her eyes to the light of Christ.
