

VIDEO-BASED
10-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

GOD OF CREATION

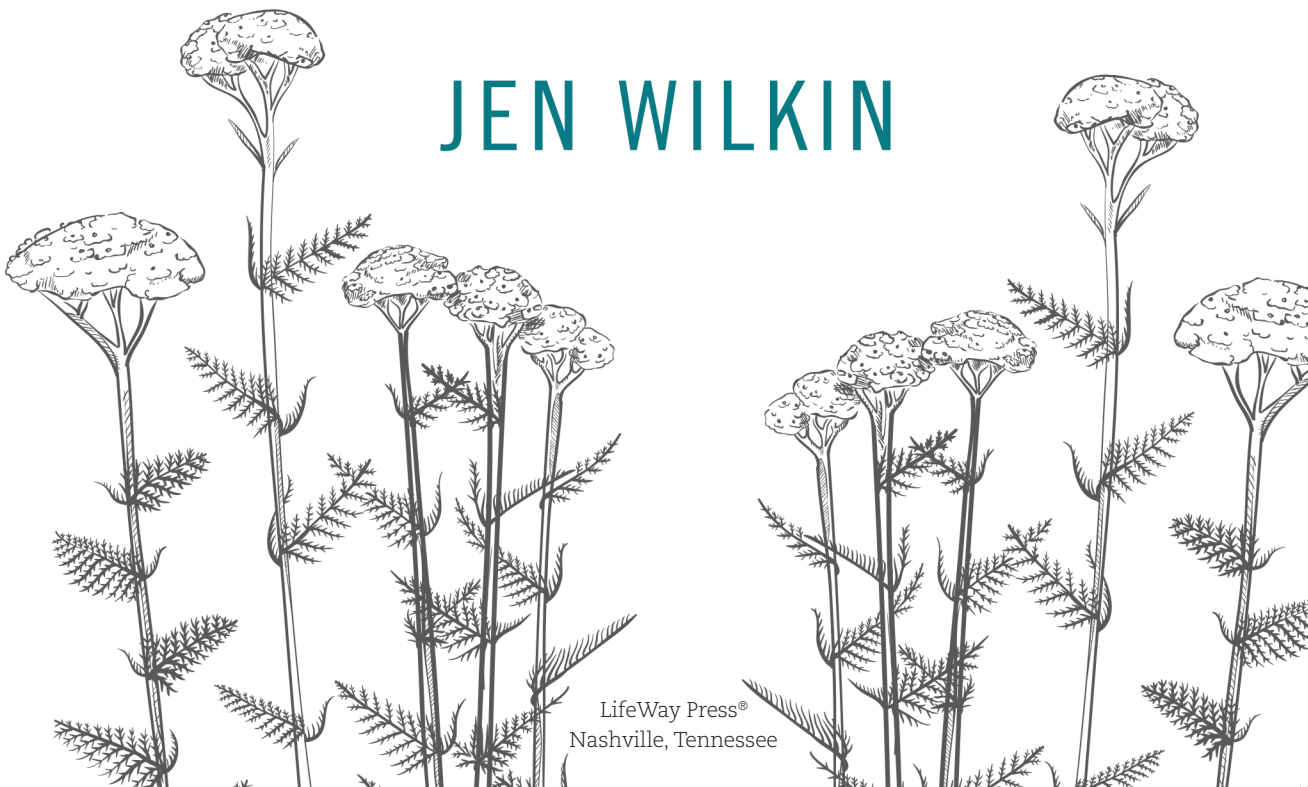
A STUDY OF GENESIS 1-11

JEN WILKIN

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LifeWay Press®
Nashville, Tennessee

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ISBN: 978-1-4627-4887-7

Item: 005794449

Dewey Decimal Classification: 231.765

Subject Headings: CREATION \ GOD \ BIBLICAL COSMOLOGY

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Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing

LifeWay Resources

One LifeWay Plaza

Nashville, TN 37234-0152

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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FOREWORD: HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH GOD'S WORD?

OUR PURPOSE

The Bible study you are about to begin will teach you an important passage of the Bible in a way that will stay with you for years to come. It will challenge you to move beyond loving God with just your heart to loving Him with your mind. It will focus on answering the question, “What does the Bible say about God?” It will aid you in the worthy task of God-discovery.

You see, the Bible is not a book about self-discovery; it is a book about God-discovery. The Bible is God's declared intent to make Himself known to us. In learning about the character of God in Scripture, we *will* experience self-discovery, but it must not be the object of our study. The object must be God Himself.

This focus changes the way we study. We look first for what a passage can teach us about the character of God, allowing self-discovery to be the by-product of God-discovery. This is a much better approach because there can be no true knowledge of self apart from knowledge of God. So when I read the account of Jonah, I see first that God is just and faithful to His Word—He is faithful to proclaim His message to Nineveh no matter what. I see second that I, by contrast (and much like Jonah), am unjust to my fellow man and unfaithful to God's Word. Thus, knowledge of God leads to true knowledge of self, which leads to repentance and transformation. So are confirmed Paul's words in Romans 12:2 that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Most of us are good at loving God with our hearts. We are good at employing our emotions in our pursuit of God. But the God who

commands us to love with the totality of our hearts, souls, and strength also commands us to love Him with all of our minds. Because He only commands what He also enables His children to do, it must be possible for us to love Him well with our minds or He would not command it. I know you will bring your emotions to your study of God's Word, and that is good and right. But it is your mind that I am jealous for. God intends for you to be a good student, renewing your mind and thus transforming your heart.

OUR PROCESS

Being a good student entails following good study habits. When we sit down to read, most of us like to read through a particular passage and then find a way to apply it to our everyday lives. We may read through an entire book of the Bible over a period of time, or we may jump around from place to place. I want to suggest a different approach, one that may not always yield immediate application, comfort, or peace, but one that builds over time a cumulative understanding of the message of Scripture.

READING IN CONTEXT AND REPETITIVELY

Imagine yourself receiving a letter in the mail. The envelope is handwritten, but you don't glance at the return address. Instead you tear open the envelope, flip to the second page, read two paragraphs near the bottom, and set the letter aside. Knowing that if someone bothered to send it to you, you should act on its contents in some way, you spend a few minutes trying to figure out how to respond to what the section you just read had to say. What are the odds you will be successful?

No one would read a letter this way. But this is precisely the way many of us read our Bibles. We skip past reading the "envelope"—Who wrote this? To whom is it written? When was it written? Where was it written?—and then try to determine the purpose of its contents from a portion of the whole. What if we took time to read the envelope? What if, after determining the context for its writing, we started at the beginning and read to the end? Wouldn't that make infinitely more sense?

In our study, we will take this approach to Scripture. We will begin by placing our text in its historical and cultural context. We will “read the envelope.” Then we will read through the entire text multiple times, so that we can better determine what it wants to say to us. We will read repetitively so that we might move through three critical stages of understanding: comprehension, interpretation, and application.

STAGE 1: COMPREHENSION

Remember the reading comprehension section on the SAT? Remember those long reading passages followed by questions to test your knowledge of what you had just read? The objective was to force you to read for detail. We are going to apply the same method to our study of God’s Word. When we read for comprehension we ask ourselves, “What does it say?” This is hard work. A person who *comprehends* the account of the six days of creation can tell you specifically what happened on each day. This is the first step toward being able to interpret and apply the story of creation to our lives.

STAGE 2: INTERPRETATION

While comprehension asks, “What does it say?,” interpretation asks, “What does it mean?” Once we have read a passage enough times to know what it says, we are ready to look into its meaning. A person who *interprets* the creation story can tell you why God created in a particular order or way. She is able to imply things from the text beyond what it says.

STAGE 3: APPLICATION

After doing the work to understand what the text says and what the text means, we are finally ready to ask, “How should it change me?” Here is where we draw on our God-centered perspective to ask three supporting questions:

- What does this passage teach me about God?
- How does this aspect of God's character change my view of self?
- What should I do in response?

A person who *applies* the creation story can tell us that because God creates in an orderly fashion, we too should live well-ordered lives. Knowledge of God gleaned through comprehension of the text and interpretation of its meaning can now be applied to my life in a way that challenges me to be different.

SOME GUIDELINES

It is vital to the learning process that you allow yourself to move through the three stages of understanding on your own, without the aid of commentaries or study notes. The first several times you read a passage, you will probably be confused. This is actually a good thing. Allow yourself to feel lost, to dwell in the "I don't know." It will make the moment of discovery stick.

Nobody likes to feel lost or confused, but it is an important step in the acquisition and retention of understanding. Because of this, I have a few guidelines to lay out for you as you go through this study:

1. **Avoid all commentaries** until *comprehension* and *interpretation* have been earnestly attempted on your own. In other words, wait to read commentaries until after you have done the homework, attended small-group time, and listened to the teaching. And then, consult commentaries you can trust. Ask a pastor or Bible teacher at your church for suggested authors. A list of commentaries used to create this study can be found on page 186.

2. For the purposes of this study, **get a Bible without study notes**. Come on, it's just too easy to look at them. You know I'm right.
3. Though commentaries are initially off-limits, here are some **tools you should use**:
 - **Cross-references.** These are the Scripture references in the margin or at the bottom of the page in your Bible. They point you to other passages that deal with the same topic or theme.
 - **An English dictionary** to look up unfamiliar words.
 - **Other translations of the Bible.** We will use the English Standard Version (ESV) as a starting point, but you can easily consult other versions online. I recommend the New International Version (NIV), New American Standard Version (NASB), or the New King James Version (NKJV). Reading more than one translation can expand your understanding of the meaning of a passage. Note: a paraphrase, such as The Message, can be useful but should be regarded as a commentary rather than a translation. They are best consulted after careful study of an actual translation.
 - **A printed copy of the text**, double-spaced, so you can mark repeated words, phrases, or ideas. This will be provided in your notebook as needed.

STORING UP TREASURE

Approaching God’s Word with a God-centered perspective, with context, and with care takes effort and commitment. It is study for the long-term. Some days your study may not move you emotionally or speak to an immediate need. You may not be able to apply a passage at all. But what if ten years from now, in a dark night of the soul, that passage suddenly opens up to you because of the work you have done today? Wouldn’t your long-term investment be worth it?

In Matthew 13, we see Jesus begin to teach in parables. He tells seven deceptively simple stories that leave His disciples struggling for understanding—dwelling in the “I don’t know,” if you will. After the last parable, He turns to them and asks, “Have you understood all these things?” (v. 51). Despite their apparent confusion, they answer out of their earnest desire with, “Yes” (v. 51). Jesus tells them that their newfound understanding makes them “like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old” (13:52, NIV).

A storeroom, as Jesus indicates, is a place for keeping valuables over a long period of time for use when needed. Faithful study of God’s Word is a means for filling our spiritual storerooms with truth, so that in our hour of need we can bring forth both the old and the new as a source of rich provision. I pray that this study would be for you a source of much treasure and that you would labor well to obtain it.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jen Wilkin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jen Wilkin

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible study book is designed to be used in a specific way. The homework in the Bible study book will start you down the process of comprehension, interpretation, and application. However, it was designed to dovetail with small group discussion time and the teaching sessions. You can use the Bible study book by itself, but you are likely to find yourself with some unresolved questions. The teaching sessions are intended to resolve most, if not all, of your unanswered questions from the homework and discussion time. With this in mind, consider using the materials as follows:

- If you are going through the study **on your own**, first work through the homework, and then watch or listen to the corresponding teaching for that week.
- If you are going through the study **in a group**, first do your homework, and then discuss the questions your group decides to cover. Then watch or listen to the teaching. Some groups watch or listen to the teaching before they meet, which can also work if that format fits best for everyone.

Note: For Week One, there is no homework. The study begins with an audio or video introduction. You will find a Viewer Guide on pages 14-15 that you can use as you watch or listen to the introductory material.

HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

At the end of each week's personal study you will find a Leader Guide intended to help facilitate discussion in small groups. Each guide begins with an introductory question to help group members get to know each other and feel comfortable contributing their voices to the discussion.

These questions may prove to be most helpful during the early weeks of the study, but as the group grows more familiar with one another, group leaders may decide to skip them to allow more time for the questions covering the lesson.

The remainder of the Leader Guide includes four questions to help group members compare what they have learned from their personal study on Days Two through Five. These questions are either pulled directly from the personal study, or they summarize a concept or theme that the personal study covered. Each two-part question covers content from a particular day of the personal study, first asking group members to reflect and then asking them to apply. The reflection questions typically ask group members to report a finding or flesh out an interpretation. The application questions challenge them to move beyond intellectual understanding to identify ways to live differently in light of what they have learned.

As a small group leader, you will want to review these questions before you meet with your group, thinking through your own answers, marking where they occur in the personal study, and noting if there are any additional questions that you might want to reference to help the flow of the discussion. These questions are suggestions only, intended to help you cover as much ground as you can in a 45-minute discussion time. They should not be seen as requirements or limitations, but as guidelines to help you prepare your group for the teaching time by allowing them to process collectively what they have learned during their personal study.

As a facilitator of discussion rather than a teacher, you are allowed and encouraged to be a co-learner with your group members. This means you yourself may not always feel confident of your answer to a given question, and that is perfectly OK. Because we are studying for the long-term, we are allowed to leave some questions partially answered or unresolved, trusting for clarity at a later time. In most cases, the teaching time should address any lingering questions that are not resolved in the personal study or the small-group discussion time.

WEEK ONE:

GENESIS INTRODUCTION

Who wrote the Book of Genesis?

When was it written?

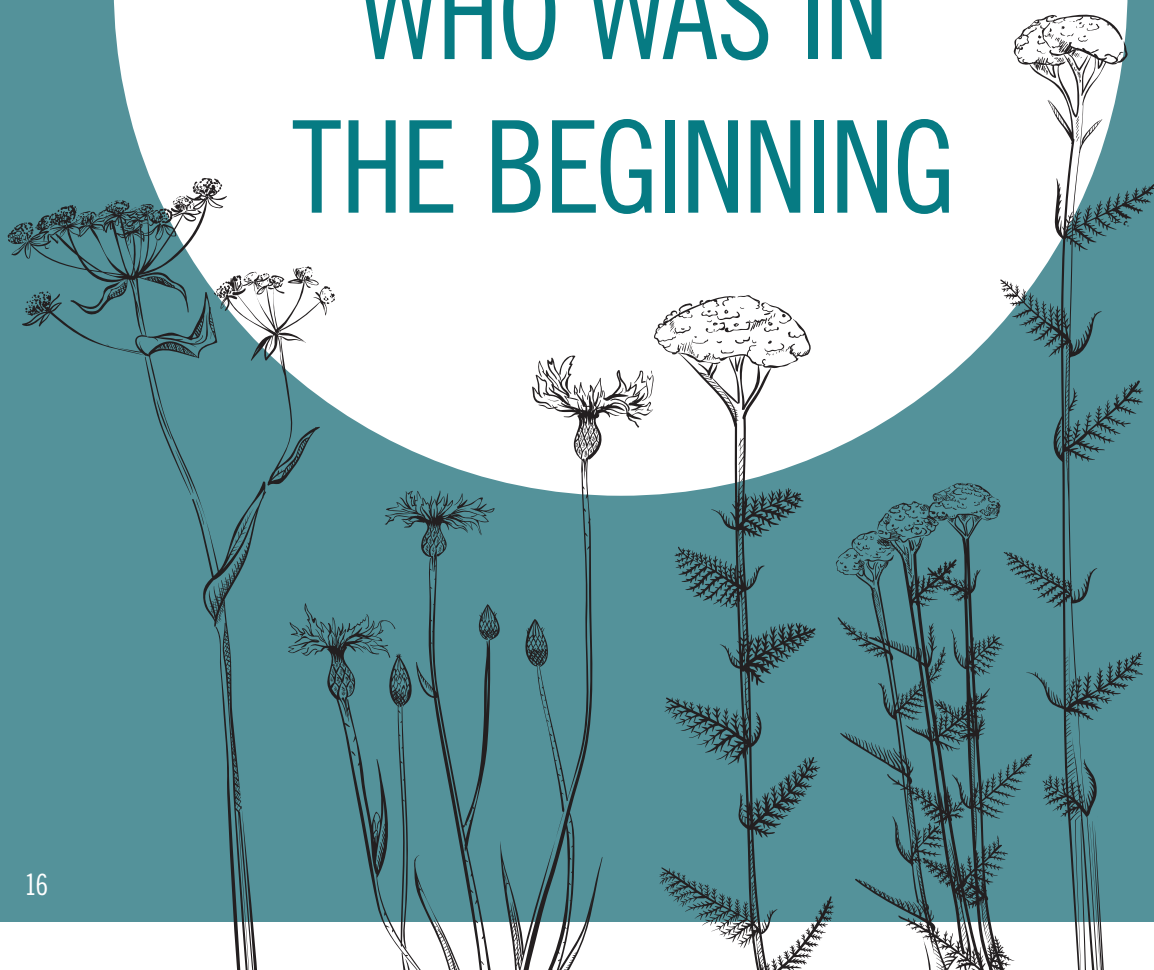
To whom was it written?

In what style was it written?

What is the central theme of the book?

WEEK TWO:

THE GOD WHO WAS IN THE BEGINNING



The opening lines of Genesis teach us some of the most foundational truths about God. In them, we find the answers to some very big questions. And we raise some pretty big questions too.

Romans 1:20 tells us that “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” (NIV, emphasis mine). The creation story of Genesis has truths to teach us about the character of God, and it begins teaching them in the very first sentence:

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

GENESIS 1:1

DAY ONE

WHO CREATED?

*In the beginning, **GOD** created the heavens and the earth.*

The first verse of Genesis makes clear that God is the Creator of heaven and earth. The Bible attributes all creation to God and God alone. This is a significant statement because it speaks definitively against other explanations of creation.

1. Think through what you know of history, other religions, and current scientific thought on the origins of the universe. How might someone with a non-biblical worldview fill in the statements below?

“In the beginning, _____ created the heavens and the earth.”

“In the beginning, _____ created the heavens and the earth.”

2. How is it significant that in Genesis God alone is given credit for the act of creation? Why do you think Moses, the leader of the nation of Israel, would choose to start his narrative by declaring that God alone created? (Hint: Read Exodus 20:1-3.)
3. Look up John 1:1-4. Compare it to Genesis 1:1-2. Sneak a peek at Genesis 1:3-4 as well. What similarities do you see between the two passages? In the space below, note any words, phrases, or ideas that the two passages share.

Look through both passages and note who was present at creation.

_____ (Gen. 1:1)

_____ (Gen. 1:2)

_____ (John 1:1)

READ ROMANS 1:18-25.

4. Note below specifically how Paul says humankind sinned against God (v. 21).
5. Paul lists at least five outcomes of this sin. Note them below:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
6. **APPLY:** Why do you think failure to acknowledge and worship God as Creator is a sin? What sinful behaviors might result from this sin?

In contrast, how does acknowledging and worshiping God as Creator cause us to live righteous lives? What godly behaviors might result from this belief?

DAY TWO

WHAT DID GOD CREATE?

In the beginning, God created
THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

7. What do you think is included in the phrase *the heavens and the earth*? Look up Colossians 1:16-17, and note what Paul says God created in the chart below.

THINGS GOD CREATED	THINGS GOD DID NOT CREATE

What do you think Paul is saying in verse 17? Rewrite it in your own words.

8. **APPLY:** How does the knowledge that God created all things—the earth, our solar system, the universe, the atom, the electron, all life, all matter—how does that knowledge change the way you think about God? (Look up Psalm 24:1-2 for a little help. David mentions the earth, but he could just as easily have said “the heavens” or “all creation.” Why?)

How should the knowledge that God created all things change the way you regard and treat His creation?

DAY THREE

HOW DID GOD CREATE?

*In the beginning, God **CREATED**
the heavens and the earth.*

9. How does Genesis 1:1 say that God created the heavens and the earth?

Note below all scientific data, timelines, materials, and equipment recorded.

10. Look up the following verses, and note what each says about how God created.

PSALM 33:6,9

REVELATION 4:11

While these verses shed some very important additional light on the *how* of creation, they don't offer us the nuts and bolts of what actually took place to bring it about. Christians have developed and hotly debated a number of explanations for the *how* of creation, among them:

THEISTIC EVOLUTION

- ☐ Evolution was the process that God used to bring about the Earth as we know it.¹

- The Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old, as evidenced in the fossil record and astronomical data.²
- The six days of creation refer to epochs of evolutionary development.³

YOUNG EARTH CREATIONISM

- The Earth is between six thousand and ten thousand years old.⁴
- The fossil strata were laid down in the flood of Noah, which was global in scope.⁵
- God created the world in six literal days.⁶

OLD EARTH CREATIONISM

- God created the universe through a combination of natural processes and direct intervention.⁷
- The Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old, as evidenced in the fossil record and astronomical data.⁸
- The six days of creation need not be taken literally as 24-hour periods.⁹

Put a check mark next to any of these explanations that you are familiar with.

Much has been written on the different views of creation. We will not be spending time exploring them, but I strongly encourage you to do so on your own, especially if only one of the views is familiar to you.

11. Obviously, if God had wanted to disclose the process of creation, He could have done so. Why do you think He chose not to? List some possible reasons below.

12. Look up the word *create* in the dictionary. Read through the various definitions and then write one below that best describes how God creates.

CREATE:

What is the key difference between the definition you chose and the ones you did not?

DAY FOUR

WHEN DID GOD CREATE?

IN THE BEGINNING, *God created the heavens and the earth.*

13. What do you think is meant by the phrase *in the beginning*?
What, exactly, is *beginning* in the beginning?

14. Glance back at Romans 1:20. What two examples of God's invisible qualities that we can learn from creation does Paul give?

Which of those two do we learn by reading that God created *in the beginning*?

15. Look up the word *eternal* in a dictionary or thesaurus. In your own words, write a definition for it that best fits the way it describes God.

ETERNAL:

16. Now look up the following verses, and note how each supports your definition of the *eternality* of God. (It may be helpful to copy them down.)

PSALM 90:1-2

PSALM 102:12,25-27

ISAIAH 48:12-13

17. If God is eternal and creation exists within time, what or who existed *before* the beginning? Make a complete list below:
18. **APPLY:** How does the understanding that God is eternal change the way you think about your life? How is His eternality a comfort?

DAY FIVE

WHY DID GOD CREATE?

19. Many theories have been put forth as to why God created the heavens and the earth and especially why He created humans. Below are a few commonly given reasons. Look up the reference next to each statement, and note how it confirms or denies what the statement claims.

God created the universe because He was lonely.

JOHN 1:1; 17:5

God created humans so He could have an object for His love.

JOHN 3:34-35

God created humans because He needed helpers to accomplish His will.

ACTS 17:24-25

God created because He was bored, unfulfilled, or any other human state of mind.

PSALM 50:21a

20. Now look up the following verses, and note why they say God created the heavens and the earth.

PSALM 19:1-4

PSALM 148:1-5

21. **APPLY:** It is much easier to rule out reasons why God created than it is to identify them. God created to display His glory. God created because it pleased Him to do so. Beyond that, we are left to marvel at the mystery. Looking back over questions 19 and 20, what false idea of why you exist do you sometimes walk in? How does rejecting that idea lead to healthier belief?

WRAP-UP

Note: Each week we will end our homework by focusing on what the text has revealed about God. A list of God's attributes can be found in the back of your Bible study book (p. 184) to help you think through your answer to the wrap-up questions.

What aspect of God's character has this week's passage of Genesis shown you more clearly?

Fill in the following statement:

Knowing that God is _____ shows me that I am _____.

What one step can you take this week to better live in light of this truth?

WEEK TWO | GROUP DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION: What part of God's creation causes you to marvel the most?

1. OBSERVE: (question 2, p. 18) How is it significant that in Genesis God alone is given credit for the act of creation? Why do you think Moses, the leader of the nation of Israel, would choose to start his narrative by declaring that God alone created? (Hint: read Exodus 20:1-3.)

APPLY: (question 6, p. 19) Why do you think failure to acknowledge and worship God as Creator is a sin? What sinful behaviors might result from this sin?

In contrast, how does acknowledging and worshiping God as Creator cause us to live righteous lives? What godly behaviors might result from this belief?

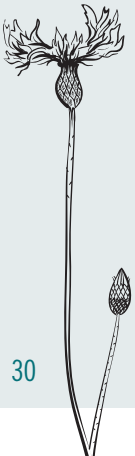
2. OBSERVE: (question 7, p. 20) What do you think is included in the phrase *the heavens and the earth*? Look up Colossians 1:16-17, and note what Paul says God created. What do you think Paul is saying in verse 17?

APPLY: (question 8, p. 21) How does the knowledge that God created all things change the way you think about God?

How should the knowledge that God created all things change the way you regard and treat His creation?

3. OBSERVE: (question 15, p. 25) Look up the word *eternal* in a dictionary or thesaurus. In your own words, write a definition for it that best fits the way it describes God.

APPLY: (question 18, p. 26) How does the understanding that God is eternal change the way you think about your life? How is His eternality a comfort?



4. OBSERVE: (question 19, p. 27) Many theories have been put forth as to why God created the heavens and the earth and especially why He created humans. Which of the theories noted in question 19 (p. 27) have you heard or been taught?

APPLY: (question 21, p. 28) It is much easier to rule out reasons why God created than it is to identify them. God created to display His glory. God created because it pleased Him to do so. What false idea of why you exist do you sometimes walk in? How does rejecting that idea lead to healthier belief?

5. WRAP-UP: What aspect of God's character has this week's passage of Genesis shown you more clearly?

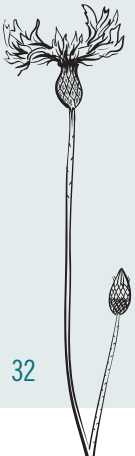
Fill in the following statement:

Knowing that God is _____ shows me that I am _____.

What one step can you take this week to better live in light of this truth?



WEEK TWO | VIEWER GUIDE NOTES



Teaching sessions available for purchase
at www.LifeWay.com/GodOfCreation

WEEK TWO: THE GOD WHO WAS IN THE BEGINNING

