



LESSON I

A Wonderful World — Created



BIBLE READING

Genesis 1:1 – 2:3



TEACHING POINT

God creates the world out of nothing and it is very good.



LEADER'S PREPARATION

Genesis means 'origins' or 'beginnings'. The creation account at the beginning of Genesis is foundational to our understanding of who God is, who we are and why our world is as it is. As Christians we sometimes avoid studying these chapters, because the science issue and disagreements as to whether the creation account should be understood literally or figuratively can make us nervous. However, this is God's revelation about himself and we must start where he starts. We do well to let these chapters speak for themselves and shape our thinking about God rather than try to make them answer our questions or support a particular point of view.





QUESTIONS



Who made what, and when was it made?

- 1:1 'In the beginning God' - God was there in the beginning. He was not himself created and he created everything out of nothing.
- 1:2 The earth was 'formless' and 'empty'.

What order can you see in creation?

- 1:3-13 These verses show how God created 'form' in our world out of formlessness, order out of chaos.
- 1:14-27 These verses tell us how God filled the 'emptiness'. The pattern seen in the first three days is repeated. The things God created in days 4-6 fill the structures created in days 1-3:
- day 4 filling day 1
 - day 5 filling day 2
 - day 6 filling day 3.

God is orderly and purposeful in his creating. He forms the world then fills it.

Days of Creation - see the information box on page 21 for the three main possibilities.

Sun, moon and stars are not gods and do not control us. They were created by God just like us. (This is less of a problem to us than to previous generations, but astrology is still an issue in our society.)

How did God create all this?

- 1:3-27 The world was brought into being by God's word. Each step required a creative act of God so each step begins with a word of God.





On the third day God speaks twice, indicating that there was no spontaneous 'evolution' of elements to living plants. The beginning of life was a creative act of God.

On the sixth day, as on the third day, God speaks twice. This indicates that there was no spontaneous 'evolution' of mankind from animals. The creating of mankind was a separate creative act of God and was the climax of creation.

God is more than one. We have God, the Spirit of God (v.2) and the Word of God (John 1:1-3) active in creation. Hence the plural pronouns 'we' and 'us'.
Evolution and the Origin of the Universe - see the information box on page 22.

What is the role of humanity in the creation?

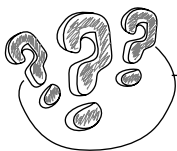
- 1:26 We are special; we are made in the image of God. We are like God in all kinds of ways. As we look at each other we see creativeness, management, relationships and speech which remind us of God.
- 1:27 Men and women are equally created in God's image.
- 1:28-30 We were made to take responsibility for our world and rule over it as God rules over the whole of Creation.

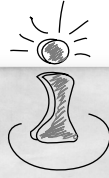
What did God think of his creation?

- 1:31 It was very good (1:10,12,18,21,25,31).

What happened on the final day?

- 2:2-3 God rested - the creation culminated in rest. God did not rest because he was worn out but because the creation was finished. The goal of creation had been achieved.





INFORMATION BOX

DAYS OF CREATION

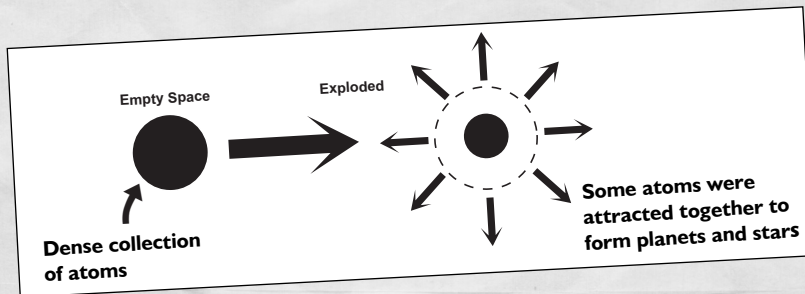
There are three main possibilities:

- literal days of 24 hours, (which may have had intervals between them?)
- long ages, (how long was the seventh day when God rested?)
- or days of revelation, (i.e. that God revealed the stages of creation to Adam over a period of six days).

There are evangelical Christians advocating each of these views and supporting them from Biblical evidence.

The main points to bear in mind are:

- whatever the answer, we should never lose sight of the central emphasis. God is creator; the universe did not create itself.
- we must allow God to be God - with him all things are possible
- we should adopt the most natural reading of the Bible within the constraints of context and common sense.





THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

The theory most children will have been taught at school is that the universe spontaneously came into being at a point in time. A very dense collection of atoms in empty space exploded and some of these atoms were attracted together to form planets and stars (see diagram). One piece of evidence cited for this is the expansion of the universe.

Increasingly, scientists studying this model of the universe are impressed by the fact that the universe appears to be exceedingly fine-tuned in the sense that its forces have to be balanced to an incredible degree of accuracy in order for life to be possible. The physicist Paul Davies stated that the accuracy required here is the same as that needed by a marksman in order to hit a target 1" square from the other end of the universe (twenty billion light years away). His conclusion is that 'the impression of design is overwhelming.' This squares with the biblical claim that the universe was designed.

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

The Urey-Miller experiment, carried out in 1953, passed an electrical charge simulating lightning through a pre-biotic soup, causing it to form some amino acids. Amino acids are the basic building blocks of DNA. The DNA in the cell nucleus contains the genetic information required for specifying the proteins and it is exceedingly complex in the sense that the amino acids have got to be in the right order. Getting the building blocks is one thing, getting them in the right order is totally different. This is why Sir Fred Hoyle stated that the probability of life arising by chance is about the same as that of a typhoon blowing through a junk yard and forming a Boeing 747. This can be demonstrated using the following aid.

Show the young people a collection of scrabble letters that form a word. Ask them to make the word, then take the letters and place them in your





hands or in a cup. Remind them that the amino acids in the DNA have to be in the right order, just like the letters needing to be in the right order to form the word. Tell the young people you are going to shake up the letters in order to reform the word. Shake up the letters and spill them onto the table 2 or 3 times to show how impossible this is.



EVOLUTION



Many of the children will be taught this theory as fact at school. When discussing evolution it is helpful to distinguish between micro- and macro-evolution. Micro-evolution consists of minor variations within limits through natural selection, e.g. the change in length of finch beaks which Darwin observed. This is not controversial. But the mechanism that explains how things vary does not explain how they came to exist in the first place. Macro-evolution, on the other hand, is about the development of the living cell from non-living materials, of multi-cellular from single-celled structures, of new body plans, new organs, etc., and this is much more controversial.

As science has progressed and appears to answer more and more questions about how the world functions, some people have concluded that God's role in it all is superfluous. But understanding how something works does not preclude the idea of someone having designed it. If we consider a Ford motor car we can see how flawed that logic is. Motor mechanics understand exactly how the car works, but this is not an argument about the existence of a Mr Ford who designed it. The more intricate we discover the universe to be, the more it should take us back to worship the designer who created it.





PLANNING THE SESSION

Welcome

- Introduce yourselves
- Start the meeting with prayer



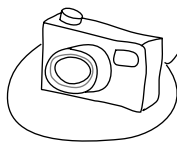
Getting to Know You

Before the session make a list of famous pairs and write them on sticky address labels, one name per label. (The names can be real people or cartoon characters etc. but must be pairs that your youth group will recognise). You need sufficient names for one per group member. Place a label on the forehead of each person and ask them to find their partners by asking each other questions, which can only be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. Once they have found their partners they need to find out each other's greatest achievement in the realms of art, music or design.



Talk Time

Interview a leader, preferably an artist or someone who creates things, about their greatest achievement. Ask the young people to tell the group about each other's greatest achievement. (Starting with a leader helps to put everyone else at ease).



Focus Time

Use an activity to test creativity, such as making newspaper animals or a lego model.

Lego model – show the group a lego model you have made. Provide each team with the lego bricks required to make a copy of the model. The winner is the first team to complete their model.





Newspaper animals – provide each team with a newspaper and ask them to create an animal. Judge the results.

At the end of the activity hold an award ceremony and present the winner with a prize.

Bible Time

See the worksheet on pages 52-53 for the Bible study questions and running order.



For each study group prepare 8 cards as follows:

- God said, "Let there be light"
- God said, "Let there be an expanse"
- God said, "Let the dry ground appear."
- God said, "Let the land produce vegetation"
- God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky"
- God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth"
- God said, "Let the land produce living creatures"
- God said, "Let us make man in our image"

Photocopy pages 52-53 for each group member for use during the Bible study.

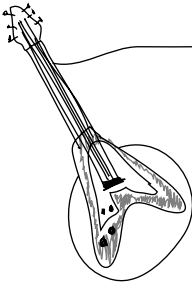
As the study progresses, use a flipchart or similar to record the answers to the questions. Keep the flipchart pages for future studies.

Remember to make the link between the introductory activity and the study.

Prayer Time

Divide into groups, depending on the numbers, and spend time thanking God for the world we live in.





Praise Time

Musical groups – songs that praise God the creator, such as 'Over all the earth', 'Praise Him you heavens', 'Indescribable' (see www.kingswaysongs.com or www.emumusic.com for words and music).

Non-musical groups – read Psalm 19 as an antiphonal reading (two groups reading the verses turn and turn about).



Extra Ideas

Divide into small groups and give each group a day of creation. The groups write a limerick about their day and read it out to the other groups.

