

I have a friend who is in the initial stages of building a house. The contractors have done the site work and the excavations, and they are beginning the process of laying the foundation. It's taking much longer than my friend was expecting. He voiced his mild frustration to the builder about the delay. The builder simply responded by saying, "If we don't get the foundation right, one day your house will collapse." My friend said, "Good point. Take all the time you need." You cannot over emphasize the foundation of a building.

Or think about a movie. How disoriented would you feel if you walked into a theater forty minutes into a film? You wouldn't know who the characters are, how they got where they are, what problem they are trying to fix, or what conflict they are trying to resolve. You'd be lost in the story if you didn't know the beginning. What's true for homes and movies is all the more true in life and history. That is why the book of Genesis, which we are going to be studying for the rest of the year, is so essential and valuable to us. Genesis tells us about the foundation of the world, who God is, who we are, where we are, why we are here, what's wrong with the world, and God's plan for solving it. So many of the core questions about life and faith, value and purpose, gender, identity, sexuality, marriage, family, sin, judgement, suffering, are all spelled out for us in Genesis—the book that started it all.

Last week we looked at the opening words of Genesis: "In the beginning, God" (Genesis 1:1). Emerson taught us about God, the uncaused cause, the God who simply is, the God who is infinitely beyond yet also radically close. Today, we add a few more words as we continue, still in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The story of creation spans two chapters. We are going to focus today on how God's creation reveals God's glory and how we are invited to respond. God's glory. Our response. It's going to be a lot! Take notes!

Creation—God's Glory

The Scriptures tell us repeatedly that creation reflects God's glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-1). Creation is constantly declaring God's glory, revealing his greatness, displaying splendor. I love the way Eugene Peterson put it: "Mountains are not just geological forms. Trees are not merely botanical specimens. They are witnesses, proclaimers, participants in the reality of God." Louie Giglio said, "Creation is in a constant posture of praise. Stars are singing. The earth is vibrating. Whales are harmonizing. And we're invited to join the symphony."

Creation declares God's glory in several ways.

1. Infinitude

To help us understand what we mean by the word "infinitude," here's another way of saying it: the vastness of creation is a signpost to the limitlessness of God.

The distance between the earth and the sun is 93 million miles. If you were traveling to the sun in your car, going 70 miles an hour, it would take you 151 years to get there—two entire life spans! If you wanted to travel to the next closest star in our galaxy, Proxima Centauri, 25 trillion miles away, traveling at a continuous speed of 70 miles an hour would take you 40.7 million years. That's 62,000 life spans. That is the closest star to us! There are over 100 billion stars in our galaxy, and over two trillion galaxies in our universe. There are more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on our planet, yet Psalm 147:4 tells us, "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name."

Some of these stars are of nearly unimaginable size. Our sun is 10,000 degrees at the surface, and enormously larger than the earth. If the earth were a golf ball, the sun would be the size of a school bus. Four hundred twenty-seven light years away from our planet—that's light traveling at 186,000 miles per second, 671 million miles per hour, every hour for 427 years—is a star called Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse is three times the size, not of our sun, but of the earth's orbit around the sun. If the earth were a golf ball, Betelgeuse would be a building three times the size of Lucas Oil Stadium, dwarfing us beyond imagination. But Betelgeuse is dwarfed by a star called Canus Majoris. If the earth were a golf ball, Canus Majoris would be the size of Mt. Everest. It could fit 7 quadrillion earths inside of it—that's enough golf balls to cover the surface of the entire United States.

The universe is unbelievably vast. God spoke it into existence and it reveals God's glory. That sort of God isn't a person you casually invite into your life to be your personal assistant! This is a God you fall before in reverence and awe!

2. Power

God's infinitude reflects his glory, and so does his power. There is nothing he cannot do. He can part the Red Sea for his people to walk through, he can cause the sun to stand still in the sky, he can make the walls of Jericho fall like a compromised Jenga set, he can open prison doors, he can roll tomb stones away, and he can bring the dead back to life. There is nothing God cannot do.

There was a time when a man in the Old Testament was speaking with God, accusing God of not running the world very well. God spoke to him and said,

“Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place? Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons? Do you send the lightning bolts on their way?” (Job 38:4, 12, 14, 32, 35)

When Job was reminded of God's power, he said, “I spoke out of turn! From now on, in your presence I will put my hand over my mouth, instead of speaking. I will sit in reverence and awe.” When you look at creation, you see God's immense power. You also see his creativity.

3. Creativity

God's glory is displayed through his creativity. There are more than 1.5 million known animal species on the planet and zoologists continue to discover, on average, 20,000 more every year. Most estimate that the actual number of species is closer to 10 million. There are 10,000 species of birds, with pollinating hummingbirds and flightless ostriches and everything in between. Every zebra has a unique set of stripes. God doesn't mass-produce; he hand-crafts. Think about snowflakes. Every year, 133,000 times more snowflakes fall than there are grains of sand on our planet, yet every one of those snowflakes is a unique, never duplicated, intricate, microscopic ice sculpture—beauty for beauty's sake. A caterpillar turns into a butterfly. Its body liquifies inside the chrysalis and reorganizes into an entirely different creature. The corpse flower takes ten years to amass enough energy to bloom. Its flower opens for twenty-four hours, then the plant collapses and lies dormant for another decade. The creativity of creation displays God's glory.

4. *Beauty*

God didn't just make the heavens and the earth; he filled them with awe-inspiring beauty. He made the Swiss Alps, with waterfalls cascading down every rock face. He made autumn and filled the forest with every shade of red, orange, yellow, and green. He made sunrises and sunsets and rainbows. He made fields filled with wildflowers. He made the Great Barrier Reef with so many colors that they are literally impossible to count. NT Wrights says, "Our ordinary experiences of beauty are given to us to provide a starting point from which to glimpse, to be overwhelmed by, to adore the beauty of God himself."

5. *Benevolence*

Not only did God create a vast, diverse, beautiful world, but he also gave it to us as a gift!

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (Genesis 1:28-29)

After he made the world, he said, "Here you go; enjoy it! Subdue creation. Rule over the animals. Enjoy the trees and the fruit—they are all yours." When I lived in Kentucky, I had a friend who owned a family fun zone—pizza buffet, fifty large screen TVs, and a massive arcade center with a hundred games. Once or twice a year he would invite all his friends to his building after hours, and we had the place to ourselves. We could make all the pizzas we wanted; we had cards with endless credits for every arcade game imaginable. He said, "It's all yours. Have fun!" It was a dream come true. It was so generous.

That's what God has done for all of us, but it's not a 30,000 square foot arcade center for two hours. It's the entire world for our entire lives. God gave it to us for our enjoyment and stewardship. His generosity and benevolence reveal his glory.

6. *Trinity*

The Scriptures teach us that each member of the Trinity was an active participant in creation. Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.'" We see on the first page of the Bible that God is communal. "There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live" (1 Corinthians 8:6). We also see in Genesis 1:2, once God made the earth, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. All three members of the Triune God are involved and active.

Creation as Cathedral	Creation as a symphony
The Father is the Architect	The Father writes the score
The Son is the Builder	The Son plays the music
The Spirit is the Personal Presence	The Spirit amplifies the sound

Everywhere you look in creation, you see the fingerprints of the Triune God, personalized signatures of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

7. *Presence*

Think with me about the difference between a construction worker who builds a home for someone else and a person who builds a home for himself so he can live in it. God didn't do all this work and then walk away! He made this world and then he filled it. "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested" (Genesis 2:2). God is not resting because he's tired. He doesn't get fatigued. He's resting because he's finished the construction and he's ready to move in and take up residency. He's filling the world with his presence, making creation his temple! "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Creation becomes a temple, a beautiful and sacred dwelling place where God meets with humanity.

Creation—Our Response

Creation constantly declares God's glory! Because of that, it solicits a response. There are thousands of appropriate ways to respond to God's glory in creation. I want to highlight a few.

1. *Faith*

When you look at creation, it solicits belief in a creator, confidence that there is an all-powerful God who brought this into being. I lived in Colorado as a teenager. There was a time when I was uncertain about the existence of God. I ended up on a camping trip in the mountains. I was at high elevation and miles away from any light pollution. When I looked up at the stars, it was like I could see every one of them. And it just hit me—there is no way this just happened by accident. There must be a God! Romans 1:20 says, "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 people are without excuse." Creation solicits faith in a creator. All things that have a beginning have a beginner. This universe had a beginning. Logic points to a beginner. All things that show design and intricacy have a master designer and a purpose. This planet and the life on it show design and intricacy, so logic points to a designer and a purpose. Nearly 70% of all the Nobel Prize-winning laureates in chemistry and physics are self-identified Christians. The more they know, the higher the likelihood that they believe. A.W. Tozer said, "God is trying to get our attention every day. The sky is declaring it. The stars are shouting it. The birds sing it. The trees clap it. Creation is God's billboard." The deeper you look at creation, the more your faith grows! But creation leads not only to faith, but also to worship!

2. *Worship*

If faith is believing that there is a God, worship is responding to that belief with praise, wonder, and awe. No one looks at a Van Gogh painting and says, "Isn't that amazing—look at what the paint did, organizing itself into such delightful combinations!" Instead, you say, "That's so beautiful. Look at what Van Gogh did. What a mind. What skill!" You hold the artist in esteem. If they are still around, you tell them what an incredible job they did! Two months ago, Keren and I went with some friends for an overnigher in Chicago where we saw famous European composer Max Richter perform. When he was done, everyone stood and gave a round of applause that lasted for three minutes. It was a great concert. Three minutes was long, but it felt about right. How much more should we stand and applaud for this world? "The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12). Creation is part of God's magnum opus, and worship is our standing ovation!

3. *Joy*

God wants us to enjoy creation. He gave us tastebuds so we can enjoy over a hundred thousand different and unique flavors. God gave us strawberries and watermelon and peaches and fresh picked corn on the

cob to enjoy summer. He gave turkey and fresh baked pie to enjoy at Thanksgiving. He gave us rib roasts and decorated cookies to enjoy at Christmas. He gave us bacon to enjoy every day! We must be thankful! Two weeks ago, the Hamel family went on a hike at Turkey Run with another family from our church. We had six kids running through the forest! There was a rock formation called the Punchbowl that had fresh water pooled up in it. The kids instinctively threw off their shirts, jumped right in, and splashed around with uncontrollable laughter. Joy. Delight. Wonder. That's how God wants us to respond to creation. Do you remember when you were a kid, how excited you got for the first snow of the year, the anticipation of putting on all your gear and going out to find a hill with your sled? The focus of our excitement may change over the years, but getting older shouldn't mean we get duller. God never wants us to outgrow our joy in this world!

4. Creativity

God created a vast, expansive, beautiful world, then he made us in his image, in his likeness, and placed us in this world. Part of being made in the image of God is being made to create beautiful things.

The Lord has filled Bezalel (and Oholiab) with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze...He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen. (Exodus 35:30-35)

God loves creativity and beauty, and we honor him when we create beautiful things! When you write a book, when you design or decorate a house, when you plant a garden, when you prepare a meal from scratch, when you compose a song, you are reflecting the creative heart of God. His image as a creator is on display in your life!

5. Stewardship

Most of us who have a house or car or other nice things enjoy sharing them with others, and we hope that if other people use them, they treat our things with respect. The same is true for God and sharing this world with us. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15). Creation is a work of art. It's a temple where God dwells. We are supposed to work and take care of it. We are to take care of creation, not exploit it. We are to use our power and position responsibly, not recklessly. Caring for creation is not about partisan politics, it's about honoring our creator, and respecting the world he made and entrusted to our care.

6. Rest

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Genesis 2:2-3). After God created, he rested. He made the seventh day holy, which means he set the day apart, not to be like the other days. He made it different—not for productivity, but for rest and enjoyment.

As you plan your week and plan your life, set apart time to be non-productive, for rest and enjoyment. Don't live on the treadmill of work and output; live in the rhythms of work and rest. As you rest, remember that God created the world, not you. God is God, not you. The world doesn't need you to spin. He has it in complete control.

7. *Hope*

The reason we respond to creation with hope is that God promises one day to come and remake the world. Like Genesis (the beginning of the Bible) tells us about the creation of the heavens and the earth, Revelation 21:1-5 (the end of the Bible) tells us about the re-creation of the heavens and the earth. “Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” In eternity, there will no longer be any separation between heaven and earth. The two will be one in perfect unity! “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” We have hope, because one day, God will come and take all that is broken in this world and make it right.

Creation reveals God’s glory and invites our response.