

## LIVING THE WORD—Week 2 (Feb. 1-7)

### *The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God's Relentless Love*

#### Creation (Part 1)--The God Who Created the Universe

*Key Verse: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)*

So begins the great story of God and his people. The opening words of Scripture tell of the God who made the universe. Genesis 1 is not a science lesson or a chapter in a textbook on prehistoric times. This is a defining statement about God that would shape the faith of his people.

Throughout the ages, from Genesis to Jonah (1:9) to Acts (4:24; 14:15; 17:19) to Revelation (4:11; 14:7) and through all the creeds of the church, God's people have declared God to be the maker of heaven and earth. Creation is also part of the Christian confession of faith in Christ—"through him all things were made" (John 1:1-5; Colossians 1:15-17).

In the Old Testament world, people believed the world was made in the chaos of selfish, hostile gods. But Genesis rejects that view, teaching that God created the world in an orderly way that provided for his creatures, and that his creation was good.

The mighty act of creating the world was a common part of Israel's praise and worship (Psalms 33:6-9; 96:4-5; 136:1-9) and a basis for trusting in God (Psalms 121:1-2; 124:8; 146:5-6).

The story of creation also says something vitally important about who we are: we are not God. He is the creator; we are the creatures (Psalm 95:3-7). But human beings are not merely another part of the animal kingdom. We are made in God's image and given dominion over all his creation (Psalm 8).

The creation story was not only part of Israel's praise, it was part of their preaching. It shaped their sense of justice (Genesis 9:5-6), demanded concern for the poor (Proverbs 14:31; 17:5; 22:2), and called the people to repentance (Amos 4:1-5:15; Isaiah 45:1-25). And in the New Testament, the language of creation describes our renewal in God's image (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10).

The creation is the first of the *God-revealing, faith-shaping, life-changing mighty acts of God*.

**Next Week: Creation—Part 2** (Genesis 3; 6:5-22; 9:1-17; Romans 1:18-2:11; 3:9-26)

**Memory Verse** (for Weeks 1-4): Exodus 34:6-7

**On the Mountain** ("*Love God*")—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a morning when you be up at dawn to watch the sunrise, or an evening when you can watch the sunset and the stars come out.
2. Read Amos 4:13 & 5:8 several times as you watch God turn night to day or day to night.
3. Meditate for a few minutes on one line that stands out to you. Picture God actually doing what this line says.
4. Acknowledge that God is your maker and that he should be obeyed. Confess any failures you have had this past week.
5. Pray that God will renew you in his image and thank him for his faithful love.

**In the Gathering** (“*Love Each Other*”—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. Share a time when you were especially moved by the beauty or power of God’s creation.
2. When we declare that God is the maker of the universe, and praise him for his creation, what impact should it have on us? How should it affect our hearts, attitudes, and lives?
3. How is believing that there is no god and the world evolved by random chance just as much a matter of faith as believing that the world was in some way brought into existence by a Creator?
4. Read Proverbs 14:31. What does the way we treat the poor have to do with God as creator? How is this proverb like Jesus’ parable in Matthew 25:31-46?
5. Read Psalm 146. How does seeing God as creator help you trust in him?
6. Do you have anything to share from your time with God or with your family last week?
7. Pray together, praising God for his creation (perhaps each person in the group could offer a single sentence praising God for something he has made). Pray that we will treat everyone we meet as someone made in God’s image and show them God’s merciful love.

**Around the Table** (“*Love Your Family*”—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. Select a clear night, take some chairs or a blanket into the yard, and look up at the stars (you might consider taking a drive away from the city lights for a clearer view).
2. Pick a section of sky and see how many stars you can count (you’ll probably lose count!).
3. Bring a flashlight and read Psalm 8 as you look at the stars.
4. Talk about how incredibly vast God’s creation is, and how insignificant we seem—but God still loves us more than anything in all the universe because we are his children.
5. Read Psalm 103:10 and thank God for his steadfast love that never ends.

**Into the World** (“*Love the World*”—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. As you drive around town this week, whenever you notice litter and pollution, remind yourself, “this is God’s creation.” Be careful yourself not to litter, and maybe pick up someone else’s trash and throw it away.
2. Consider recycling as a way to help take care of God’s creation (you might collect your cans and bring them to church for Donny).

3. Remind yourself that everyone around you is made in God's image (even that person you don't like!). Try to treat them all with dignity and respect.