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## Day 1

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Genesis 1.1-25. “Genesis” means “beginning” or “source.” The book of Genesis is the beginning of the Bible; it depicts the beginning of time and the universe; it reveals the source of all creation and is the source of our foundational theology. This passage is the genesis of Genesis, with truths so important, God began his story with them! Story? Yes: the Bible is filled with prophecy and poetry, parables and proverbs, letters and covenants, theology, laws, and even songs, but the overall structure of the Bible is narrative. This is God’s story. Who is the first character introduced in the biblical narrative? who does all the action in the beginning? who is the source of all creation in the universe? So, if the Bible is one narrative, who would be the protagonist or hero of the story? God, right? In a literary sense, God is using this introductory passage to introduce himself as the protagonist.

In this passage, God revealed truth about himself and creation in an incredible poetic form, while also revealing truth to counter the religions around Israel when God inspired Moses to write the text. Pagan religions thought the sun and moon were sources of light, so they worshipped the sun and moon; but our text reveals God is the source for light and God created the sun and moon. Pagans thought the great sea creatures were gods or at least to be feared, but our text reveals they are something God created and can control. This passage has a sophisticated literary structure in Hebrew, designed to emphasize the power, majesty, and wisdom of God.

**Reflect:** The word translated as “God” [אֱלֹהִים = eh-lo-HEEM] is plural, which in Hebrew could emphasize majesty. There is one God, but he is called אֱלֹהִים to emphasize his majesty. What in this passage contributes to the concept of God’s majesty or glory? Is it more important to understand the characteristics of God and his identity as the hero of the story, or to answer questions about how much science the passage reveals? Why? Memorize Genesis 1.1.

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## Day 2

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Genesis 1.1 [memorize it]. The first thing we learn about God is that he is eternal; God has always existed. The whole Bible starts with, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth [a poetic way of saying, *everything*].” There was nothing but God; not God and others, not God and space or matter, only God. God created everything out of nothing. He is the only eternal one. That means God is greater than creation, for he is the creator, without limits or beginning. Also, God is transcendent. Unlike most gods in pagan religions, the real God is separate from, and greater than, creation; he is not a part of creation, he is not limited by creation, creation is not a part of him; creation did not emanate from God, God created it as an act of his will. God is transcendent.

**Reflect:** Think of all the different religions [and “Christian” cults] you encounter in life. Are you ever intimidated by them? Does it strengthen your faith to remember that God pre-dates all attempts by humans to construct religions? that God is transcendent, not limited in any way by the myths his creatures might invent?

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## Day 3

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Genesis 1.1-25. The seven day creation is controversial. Geologists believe the earth is older than described in the Old Testament. Those who believe in macro-evolution disagree with the depiction of God creating each species uniquely and quickly. While nobody disagrees with micro-evolution [that a species changes over time], macro-evolution [that one species can become another] suffers from scientific flaws, such that many biologists, bio-chemists, physicists, cosmologists, geneticists, and paleontologists are joining the alternative scientific movement called Intelligent Design. It is harder to argue with geologists. Some believers who agree with the geologists are among those who believe Genesis 1 is not historical narrative. Problems exist with that, particularly that if we give up a literal seven day creation, there is no apparent basis for the Sabbath commandment given to Israel [Exodus 20.9]. We must remember in these debates that Scripture is revelation which never lies; and creation is revelation which never lies; but we have problems interpreting both, so both theology and science sometimes err.

If God is the only eternal and transcendent one, then he is the only creator. The Hebrew verb in v.1 translated as “created” [בָּרָא = bah-RAH] is used in the Old Testament only of God. Nobody else can do what God did. God made us to be creative, but can we create out of nothing? We might start with nothing but ourselves, but even then –

once we have an idea – we need a blank page, a lump of clay, some supplies. Our creativity is a reflection of God's, but not the same. God created everything out of nothing! He is the only creator. Since God is so powerful that he could create everything in the universe simply by speaking, we know he is omnipotent, meaning all-powerful. We also discern that God is sovereign. That means God has ultimate authority. God created everything by choice, as he willed. God set boundaries on his creation, separating the light and the darkness, the clouds and the seas, the land from the sea, various types of organisms from others. These details are included to emphasize that God not only created everything, he remains sovereign over everything. He has all authority over what he has created. As the one who created the universe, he is greater than the universe and he owns the universe.

**Reflect:** How can knowing God is all-powerful [omnipotent] help you when your life is a mess or you are struggling with something? Suppose God does not answer your prayers to deliver you from your problems, but empowers you to endure your problems, how can it help you to remember that God is sovereign over his creation? How can God's omnipotence and sovereignty motivate you and encourage you to reach out to non-believers?

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#### **Day 4**

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Genesis 1.11-12, 20-25. It should go without saying that if God could create everything and is omnipotent, then God is capable to provide for all his diverse creativity. Think of God's design capabilities: all the variety in types of plants and animals; and how amazing each is structured: the elephant with its long trunk, which it uses to breathe, to eat, to bathe, and to play; hummingbirds, with wings that beat ten to eighty times per second. Scientists say without seed plants there could be no human life; if certain laws of physics were just slightly different, there could be no life at all. From nothing, God created the earth; from the earth God created form; within form God created life. God created light amidst the darkness, land amidst the sea, air amidst the waters. From nothing, God created the universe perfectly tuned to support life. God is capable.

Your body has different parts, all useful in themselves and miraculously coordinated to function together so you can live. Think how one part, like your hand, has sub-parts, like bone, muscle, tendon, ligament. Each of those is comprised of millions of cells. Those cells are comprised of even smaller parts, like ribosomes, cytoplasm, and a nucleus. Even these are comprised of molecules, like water, which in turn is comprised of atoms such as hydrogen and oxygen. Even the atoms are comprised of smaller units, protons, neutrons, and electrons; and we think protons have smaller elements like quarks. All these things have to work together perfectly, perfectly! In every part of your body, there are billions of these little miraculous machines, all miraculously doing their own thing, yet miraculously in perfect coordination with each other. God surely is capable to provide for his amazing and diverse creativity.

**Reflect:** What does all this tell you about the amazing creativity and engineering capability of God? about God's love and provision for his creation? What other impressions do you have of God from this study?

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#### **Day 5**

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Genesis 1.1-25. Everything God created was good, because God is good [טוב = TOVE]. Critics and some believers struggle with the text saying God created light three days before he created the sun and stars. Eventually God allowed the sun and stars to emit light, but *he* generated light even before he created the sun and stars. The text does not reflect scientific ignorance nor is it necessarily a poem which ignores scientific fact. Rather it makes a point about God as the source. Read 1 John 1.5; 2 Corinthians 4.6; Revelation 22.3-5: God is light! He is the source of all light, physical and spiritual. It is significant that when all was formless, God first created light. In all the Bible there is a contrast between spiritual darkness and spiritual light, and this contrast often is represented by physical darkness and physical light. Spiritual light empowers eternal life; physical light empowers temporal life. Some scholars worry that v.2 shows original creation as formless and empty, but this verse gives imagery about God's act of creation. What's important is that God did not leave the universe formless, nor did he allow darkness to reign; the result of God's work is order, not chaos. Read Isaiah 45.18-19. The Hebrew word translated as "waste place" [NASB] or "empty" [NIV; ESV] in Isaiah 45.18 is the same word translated as "formless" in Genesis 1.2 [תהו; TOE-hoo]; the same word is in Isaiah 45.19 for "waste place" [NASB] or "in vain" [NIV; ESV]. God finished his work and formed the world for his people who would know him. Read Isaiah 45.22-25!

**Reflect:** How can knowing this passage help when you have doubts or hear deceptions about God?