

gospel  
MEDITATIONS  
*on*  
CREATION

“Full of biblical wisdom, these short meditations offer both challenge and comfort. More, they lift your daily perspective by putting all things in the light of the gospel. They will help you enjoy creation and our glorious Creator in a richly Christian way.”

—**Michael Reeves**, president and professor of theology at Union School of Theology in Oxford, England, and author of several books, including *Delighting in the Trinity*

“Jeff Williams is a uniquely gifted human being whom God has put in extraordinary places. What is equally remarkable is how the wonder he finds in our Creator spills into all the ordinariness of the common day. I’d like to be more like that. In this devotional he and his fellow writers encourage us to just be amazed at the beauty and greatness of our Maker and Savior.”

—**Keith Getty**, musician and co-author of dozens of modern hymns, including “In Christ Alone,” as well as the book *Sing!*—written with his wife Kristyn

“Chris and his team have done it again. These substantive devotional reflections are marked by careful exposition, robust theological reflection, genuine gospel passion, and heartfelt worship. If considering the doctrine of creation does not typically drive you to your knees in worship, pick up this little book—your life will not be the same.”

—**Sam Horn**, president of The Master’s University and Seminary

“Creation is not just an important doctrine. It is an inspiring and uplifting truth that should be part of our daily spiritual life. The authors of this little book explain the Bible’s teaching on creation with clarity, appeal, and relevance.”

—**Alexey Kolomiytsev**, pastor of Word of Grace Bible Church, Battle Ground, Washington, president of Word of Grace International Ministries, and author of several Russian books on discipleship

“Thinking about a single theme of Scripture is fruitful, for it immerses us in the whole of God’s Word. The theme of creation is particularly profitable, for it spans the entire Bible from beginning to end. This work not only helps us meditate on so many passages that tell us what God has uniquely done, but it also suggests how we should respond to it. Rich indeed!”

—**Abner Chou**, John F. MacArthur Endowed Fellow at The Master’s University and Seminary, and author of several books, including *The Hermeneutic of the Biblical Writers*

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## Introduction

I loved school as a kid. I was a good student, and I genuinely enjoyed learning. Mostly. The one subject I dreaded and endured was science. I've earned one C in my entire life. It was a C- in chemistry, and it didn't even bother me. I took it to the bank, relieved to have passed. That was the last science class I ever took. Sadly.

Looking back, part of my aversion to science was that my teachers weren't especially inspiring. In contrast, my friend John Allan teaches science at Killian Hill Christian School, and over fifty percent of our graduates go into STEM fields. Our students (including my daughters) love science. I'm thrilled to dedicate this devotional to John in appreciation for his exceptional work.

But a deeper reason why science gave me a rash was that I considered it "sub-Christian." I went to public school, and my parents prepared me not to buy into all the evolution I would inevitably hear. The good news is that I didn't. The bad news is that I approached science with a skepticism that bordered on scoffing. "I'm a Christian. I don't need *science*."

What a foolish notion. What hypocrisy! I rolled my eyes at science even as I microwaved my food, was kept alive by immunizations and antibiotics, and basically lived a life more comfortable than the royals of previous generations—all because of science. I didn't understand that the Dominion Mandate makes discovery an act of worship. Mixed with a little humility, lessons from biology, geology, astronomy—and yes, even chemistry—would have moved me to praise. Creation inspires our worship of God and explains our accountability to God. But it also sheds light on some of the most challenging questions of modern life. How should we think about gender, or male leadership, or divorce, or abortion, or capital punishment? The answers all trace back to creation.

I'm deeply grateful, then, for Christian scientists who are also creationists. I've been privileged to pastor CDC employees, doctors, pharmaceutical lab techs, entrepreneurial engineers, and so on. And now I'm privileged to write this devotional with my friend Jeff Williams, a devout Christian who also happens to be a NASA astronaut. Jeff has spent 534 days aboard the International Space Station—an American record when he accomplished it. Astronauts are nothing if not rare. Professional athletes, brain surgeons, and lottery winners are all commonplace by comparison. Jeff lives at the edge of discovery. And yet, to the surprise of many, Jeff believes that the Bible is inerrant, and he takes the creation record literally. Joe Tyrpak and I share Jeff's convictions about the Bible. Together, we hope that these meditations will build up Christians in the faith, exalt the universe's Maker, and perhaps nudge atheists to reconsider their conclusions. We write with a definite sense of wonder, marveling that a God great enough to *make* us is also good enough to *save* us through the sacrifice of Christ. That's why these are *gospel* meditations on creation. May our Creator and Redeemer be glorified! Grace!

—CHRIS ANDERSON, EDITOR

# Creation, Cover to Cover

READ MARK 10:1–12

*“My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”* PSALM 121:2

The boundaries for the debate about creation vs. evolution appear to be Genesis 1 and 2. Some suggest that only two of 1,189 chapters of the Bible are at stake—maybe eleven if you mythologize the flood and tower of Babel, as well. But the rest of Scripture is unaffected. No big deal. But that’s not true. The entire Bible is lost to those who deny creation. Why? Because creation isn’t an isolated doctrine at the beginning of Genesis. It’s pervasive throughout the entire Bible. Here’s a small sampling:

***The Pentateuch teaches creation.*** This begins, of course, in Genesis 1. But it is seen throughout the first five books of the Bible. For example, when God calls Moses to lead the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt, Jehovah asks the reluctant prophet, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (Exodus 4:11).

***The historical books teach creation.*** Israel’s leaders, generation after generation, lifted their prayers to the God Who made the universe. David thanked the Lord Who “made the heavens” (1 Chronicles 16:26), Hezekiah fueled his faith by looking to the Lord Who “made heaven and earth” (2 Kings 19:15), and Nehemiah praised the Lord Who “made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them” (Nehemiah 9:6).

***The poetry books teach creation.*** God’s power in creation is a major motif in His argument against Job (ch. 38–41). The Psalms speak of creation with vivid imagery (chs. 8, 19, 104); they urge us to “kneel before the LORD, our Maker” (95:6). Proverbs shows ethical implications of creation: “Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker” (17:5). Ecclesiastes’ summary is a charge to “remember also your Creator in the days of your youth” (12:1).

***The Prophets teach creation.*** The prophets magnified God’s majestic authority, so it was natural for them to appeal consistently to God as the Creator. Isaiah 40:28 offers one typical example: “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”

***The Gospels teach creation.*** John 1:1 echoes Genesis 1:1’s “In the beginning.” John insists, “All things were made through [Jesus], and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). Jesus Himself affirms the Genesis record, saying, “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female’” (Mark 10:6, citing Genesis 1:27).

***The New Testament letters teach creation.*** There are too many texts to list, but Colossians 1:16 is a high-water mark: “For by [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth. . . . All things were created through him and for him.”

***The book of Revelation teaches creation.*** One of the Bible’s most majestic descriptions of God’s creative work is the scene of worshippers around His heavenly throne, praising Him: “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (4:11). And the final two chapters of the entire Bible describe a new creation—“a new heaven and a new earth” (21:2).

Creation isn’t limited to a few early chapters that can be safely jettisoned. No, creation fills the Scriptures. Deny it and you have nothing left.

Let the gospel of our Creator and Redeemer embolden you.—CHRIS

# The Doctrine of Creation

DAY

2

READ GENESIS 1

“There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” I CORINTHIANS 8:6

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What’s your reaction when you hear the word *doctrine*? Many people immediately think *boring*. Others think *divisive*. But if you belong to Jesus, you, of all people, should realize that doctrine—that is, our belief system—is far from boring! It centers on our great God Whose “greatness is beyond discovery” (Psalm 145:3 NLT). And Christian doctrine, far from dividing us, is precisely the foundation of Christian *unity* (Ephesians 4:4–6). See if these crucial facets of the biblical doctrine of creation aren’t thrilling and unifying!

**God exists outside of creation.** The first statement of the Bible assumes the eternal existence of God. Only God is uncreated. Nothing in nature is eternal. That’s why it is so demeaning to God to try to worship anything alongside Him or to try to create some kind of object to represent Him (Exodus 20:1–4). Whether or not you accept it, the first sentence of the Bible is the watershed of human thinking. As Henry Morris, geologist and founder of Institute for Creation Research, taught, “[Genesis 1:1 alone] refutes atheism, pantheism, polytheism, materialism, dualism, [and] humanism” (*The Genesis Record*, p. 38).

**God created everything from nothing.** “Out of nothing” translates the Latin phrase *ex nihilo*. The Scriptures teach that “what is seen [throughout the entire universe] was not made out of things that are visible” (Hebrews 11:3). Christians understand that God created *ex nihilo*. Therefore, we do *not* have difficulty accepting the many other miracles recorded in Scripture, including the bodily resurrection of Jesus, for creation itself proves that God can “call into existence things that do not exist” (Romans 4:17).

**Creation was a trinitarian project.** Creation was the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit in the same way that the revelation of Scripture and the salvation of sinners were the works of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Creation was the work of God the Father (Revelation 4:11) through God the Son (John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:1–3) by God the Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30). To use Wayne Grudem’s illustration, it’s as if the Father were the architect, the Son were the general contractor, and the Spirit were every subcontractor (*Systematic Theology*, pp. 266–67).

**God created with His word.** Each of the six days of creation opens with the same words, “And God said.” God created the universe with nothing but His speech, His divine *fiat*. Psalm 33:6 declares, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.” Psalm 29:4 proclaims, “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” No kidding! And no wonder the Scriptures—“breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16)—have the power to raise to life those who are spiritually dead!

**God created the universe for His glory.** We must never think that God created the world because He was getting bored or lonely! The Father created the universe to magnify His Son forever. He appointed His Son to be creation’s King—the One Who would justly judge and graciously redeem creation. In the end, Jesus will offer back to His Father the entire universe, completely rid of sin and death by His mighty grace (1 Corinthians 15:22–28). So, all creation—including you!—exists for God. You don’t exist for yourself. Every human’s life motto should be, “To live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). And, though we are not born with this heartbeat, the God of creation can change us through the gospel. Let the doctrine of creation accentuate the gospel’s extraordinary power.—JOE

# “I Scarce Can Take It In”

READ JOHN 19:1–30

“*There was darkness over all the land.*” MATTHEW 27:45

For some, the topic of creation is a call to arms—a war with atheism, evolution, humanism, or even science. That’s not my first response, though I’m willing to marshal arguments in defense of creation. In this devotional we aim to be more worshipful than apologetic. That’s intentional. The topic of creation should inspire awe not anger, devotion not debate.

Hymn writers know this. They “sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise.” They marvel at the beauty of “my Father’s world.” When they look at the vastness of space or the grandeur of lofty mountains, when they hear the rolling thunder or the sweet songs of birds, when they feel the gentleness of a breeze, they respond with awesome wonder: “My God, how great Thou art.” Creation prompts worship.

But there’s more. Far more. For the Christian, the most amazing thing about *creation* is that it led to a *cross*. More awe-inspiring than the power and wisdom of the Creator is the love and mercy that would inspire that Creator to be pinned to a cross to save His rebel creatures. Carl Boberg looked on the Creator-turned-Savior and confessed, “I scarce can take it in.”

***Jesus is the sovereign Creator.*** Nowhere is the stunning juxtaposition of Jesus as both the sovereign Creator and the suffering Savior more pronounced than in John’s Gospel. John’s first words unmistakably echo the creation narrative: “In the beginning . . .” (John 1:1; Genesis 1:1). John tells us that it is Jesus Who created all things (John 1:3). Jesus of Nazareth is the all-wise, all-powerful, all-benevolent Creator of everything that exists. John emphasizes this further—almost whimsically, I think—when he describes Jesus’ healing of a blind man by coating the man’s eyes with mud (9:1–6). It’s not random. Rather, it looks back to Jesus making Adam out of the dust of the ground in Genesis 2:7. The same Creator Who turned mud to man now used a little more mud to craft a man a new set of eyes. Brilliant! But there’s more.

***Jesus is the suffering Savior.*** Jesus is Creator-God. But John goes on to tell us that the eternal Son of God became a *man*: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The Creator became one of His creatures. So, while showing us evidence of Jesus’ deity, John also shows us evidence of Jesus’ humanity. He got weary and thirsty (4:6–7). He experienced hunger and needed nourishment (4:31). He wept (11:35). He experienced the pain of beatings (18:22), floggings (19:1), thorns (19:2), and ultimately, crucifixion (19:16–27). Finally, as Jesus had repeatedly predicted beforehand (John 10:11, 15, 17–18; 12:32), He even experienced death (19:28–30). The immortal Creator died. “I scarce can take it in.” Isaac Watts poignantly describes even the sun being aghast at its Maker’s death:

*Well might the sun in darkness hide, and shut His glories in,  
When Christ, the mighty Maker, died for man, the creature’s sin.*

The topic of creation stirs the imagination. It’s marvelous. But it is only the beginning of wonders. More marvelous yet is the Creator’s self-sacrifice to redeem sinners like us. Were there any other way for you to be forgiven of your sins, Jesus need not have suffered. But there is no other way; only Jesus can save (John 14:6). If you don’t yet know Jesus as your own Savior from sin, trust Him today. And if you do, adore your Creator-turned-Savior.

Let the gospel astound you at the willing sacrifice of the Creator.—CHRIS

# But the Outskirts of His Ways

DAY

4

READ JOB 26

*“Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear from him!  
But the thunder of his power who can understand?”* JOB 26:14

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Job is a tough and sobering book. It raises the hard questions—questions we can often relate to; questions of *why*? When life brings us suffering and loss—and it does—we usually will not know the *why* on this side of eternity. We’re prone to get angry with God. And that’s why we need Job 26. It humbles us. It reminds us that we aren’t in control after all. It also gives us a profound reminder of God’s unsearchable majesty. Job schools us in the proper response to what providence doles out to us in this life.

***Ultimately, we control very little.*** Verses 2–6 speak directly to the pride and arrogance we manifest as we deal with the realities of life. Job reminds us that, ultimately, our supposed strength is impotence. And our knowledge and wisdom are fleeting. You know this by experience. Life can reveal just how weak and simple we are. I often use the illustration of two imaginary, concentric rings that surround us. The closest ring contains those things that are *within our control*; the second includes things which we *can influence*; and outside of the circles is everything that is completely *beyond our ability to control or influence*. We usually overestimate how much of our lives fits within the first two rings. There is very little we actually control, and we influence far less than we think. When times get tough, that reality can silence us, bankrupt us, and even bring us to hopeless despair. But Job doesn’t stop there, and neither should we.

***God governs His works with absolute power and authority.*** I love verse seven! “[God] hangs the earth on nothing!” Having circled the earth well over eight thousand times, I can tell you that there are no strings attached! This verse perfectly describes the earth from the perspective of being *off the planet*. Job is looking at the world from the place where God governs: “He stretches out the north over the void.” God is so far beyond anything we can imagine. Job reminds us that God alone has true power and strength. God alone has perfect wisdom and complete knowledge. God alone has ultimate control and authority. To return to our circles, *nothing* is beyond God’s control, much less His influence. At this point, we are left silent—humbled, helpless, and dependent. Good! But Job goes on to give us a wondrous (albeit veiled) hope.

***God’s greatness extends beyond reach, and it is our ultimate hope.*** Even given the majesty of God on display in creation, Job reminds us that the wonders of our time and place are “but the outskirts of His ways.” Creation is *but a whisper*! There is so much more—a far deeper wisdom and an objective hope! But it all lies over the horizon of life. Job acknowledged this earlier in the book: “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. . . . In my flesh I shall see God!” (Job 19:25–27). Job looked forward to the coming of the Redeemer. We who are in Christ have the privilege of knowing the power and wisdom of the cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5). We can “hold fast to the *hope* set before us”—the “steadfast anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:18–19, italics added). God’s gracious gift of faith in Jesus Christ is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 1:1). Even in the midst of suffering and loss, our hope in Christ gives us an eternal perspective, and it brings us joy transcending our circumstances (2 Corinthians 4:16–18). So who really needs answers to life’s perplexing questions? Our ultimate answer is Christ, and He is enough.

Let the gospel humble you—then strengthen you—for God’s glory.—JEFF

# How Pleasure Displays God's Goodness

READ COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

*"Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."* ACTS 14:17

Perhaps you've heard contrasts like the following: "Christians live for duty; the lost live for pleasure." Or, "We want to *be* good; those in the world want to *feel* good." That'll preach! The problem is, it's all nonsense. Those statements are a caricature of Christianity and a slander of our Savior. Why? Because pleasure was *God's* idea, not man's or the devil's. God made humans with amazing capacities for pleasure, then put us in a paradise playground absolutely teeming with legitimate opportunities for sensory indulgence.

God's creation is a feast for the eyes, the ears, the taste buds, and so on. Yes, creation shows God's power and wisdom. It displays that He is a God of order. But it also screams that God is good—as in, *kind, generous, and benevolent*.

How else would you explain strawberries, pineapples, and peaches? Or sunsets, butterflies, and rainbows? Or seahorses, hummingbirds, and hippos? How else would you explain, well . . . *sex*? God's world is a pleasurable place. As Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:17, God "richly provides us with everything to enjoy."

Doesn't the variety of *food* pronounce God's creativity and kindness? He could have given us nourishment through tasteless means—say, like air or water.

But instead He created us with the capacity to enjoy things sweet, salty, sour, and bitter. And having crafted our taste buds, He filled the earth with an almost endless cornucopia of options to tease them: fruits, vegetables, meats, and herbs—all with their own unique tastes and textures, and each capable of being combined with others for an endless menu of options. Is He not *good*?

Or take the genius that God displayed in creating our *eyes*. They self-focus. They adjust for varying levels of light. They take in a dizzying variety of sizes, shapes, colors, and contours from the world around us, and our minds immediately process that data so we can savor a sunset, paint a masterpiece, or hit a curveball. God could have made the world black and white. Instead, He gave us the ability to enjoy color, then splashed it all over His world. Common trees are lovely—but flowering or towering trees are just God showing off. Then there are the colors of tropical birds, fish, and flowers. Why would God *do that*?! Because He can. Because it brings Him glory. But also because it brings us pleasure. Is He not *good*?

We could go on and on with various senses. God made us with the ability to smell and filled His world with flowers. God gave us the ability to hear and filled His world with thunder, waterfalls, songbirds, and symphonies. Why? Why all this variety? Why all this trouble? Because God is *good*.

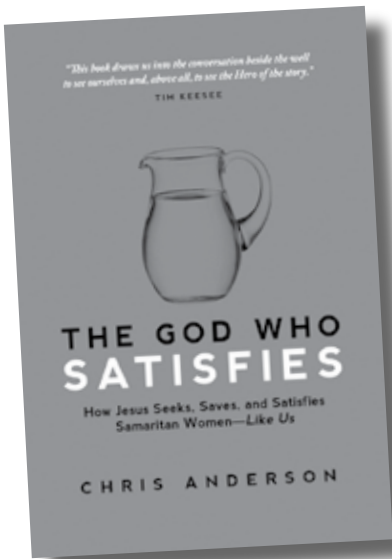
Yes, creation is God's playground for His people. There are rules, to be sure, and they must be obeyed. But it is a *vice*—not a virtue—to add to Scripture's rules our own ascetic prohibitions: "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch," and "Do not marry" (Colossians 2:21; 1 Timothy 4:3). Such rules may appear to be "super holy," but they are an offense to God, substituting legalism for the simplicity of the gospel. They deny the very pleasures God created us to enjoy.

Don't make a god of your belly (Philippians 3:19). Find satisfaction through faith in Christ (John 4:13). But with Christ as your Savior and Treasure, knock yourself out enjoying with thankfulness the tastes, scenes, and scents our good God surrounded us with—all for His glory!

Let the gospel liberate you to delight in God's good gifts.—CHRIS



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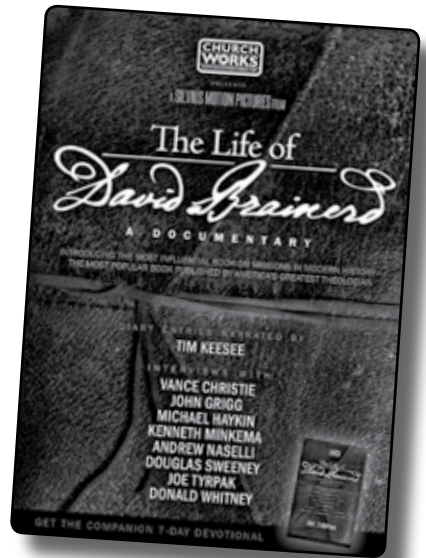


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