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Answers to Common Questions about Creation

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Today a debate rages about the question of origins and where creation and humanity came from. Much of the passion that surrounds this question is because the question of origins has implications for everything else. For example, Genesis says that there was a beginning to history which means there will be an end. Genesis says that creation comes from God which means it belongs to God. Genesis says that people come from God which means that people will stand before God in the end.

Within Christianity there had not been a widespread debate on the nature of creation until the sixteenth century. Nor was there much of a debate about the length of the six days of creation until the nineteenth century. This is because if someone simply read the account in Genesis 1-2 and the primary summary accounts throughout the rest of their Bible (e.g., [Exodus 20:11](#); [Psalm 136:1-9](#)), they would likely believe that God made creation out of nothing in six literal twenty-four hour days.

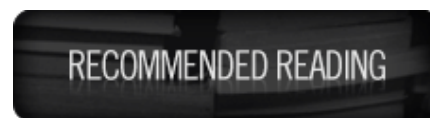
But with the rise of modern science and evolutionary theory, the Biblical account of creation came under continual attack, which caused some Christians to seek to reconcile science and Scripture. When done rightly, science simply operates by the order God placed in creation and therefore points back to Him so there is no need to bifurcate science and Scripture. But in an effort to accommodate bad scientific hypothesis that had gained credence, some relatively new interpretations of Genesis 1-2 and views of creation emerged. Today there is a mountain of books written on these issues, some of which I have included in the appendix for

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further study in addition to some helpful websites on the matter. In this brief book I will seek to briefly address only a handful of the more common questions regarding creation.

Lastly, I would like to stress that Genesis was not written with the intention of being a scientific textbook. Rather, it is a theological narrative written to reveal the God of creation which means its emphasis is on God and not creation. Because of this, **Hebrews 11:3** says "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."

Genesis is far more concerned with the questions of who made creation, how He made creation, and why He made creation than when He did. Therefore, as Galileo said, the "Holy Ghost intended to teach us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

At Mars Hill we want to be clear that there is a distinction between debates within Christian theology and debates that are not Christian. For example, godly Bible-believing and Jesus-loving people can and should graciously debate and discuss what Genesis 1-2 means without viewing one another in the same light as non-Christians who hold to atheistic evolution. This is because there is an enormous difference between discussing what the Bible says and ignoring it altogether. It is in this spirit of loving dialogue about Scripture that I will seek to answer the most common questions about the Genesis creation account.

What does the creation account in Genesis 1-2 reveal about God?

While the facts of creation in Genesis 1-2 are important, at least as important is what those facts reveal about God. As **Psalms 19:1** and **Romans 1:20** declare, creation is a sermon preached by God to us about His attributes and nature. As we read the opening pages of Genesis we see the following aspects of God:

- God is eternal and exists before all of creation, which He made.
- God is independent while the rest of creation is dependent upon Him.
- God is living and life comes solely from Him.
- God is so powerful that He could make creation out of nothing by Himself.
- God is transcendent and separate from His creation.
- God is beautiful and creation reflects His beauty.
- God is orderly and His creation reflects His order and remains orderly until sin brings chaos.
- God is the Creator and all else that exists is His creation.

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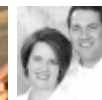
Real Men Are Bridesmaids

"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not

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Simon



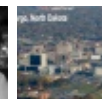
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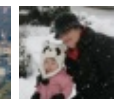
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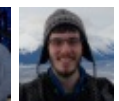
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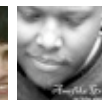
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- God is sovereign and can do exactly as He pleases.
- God is a prophet who brings creation into existence by the sheer power of His word, and perhaps a poet who sings creation into existence.
- God is good as everything He makes He declares good.
- God is personal and because we are made by Him we have personhood, which would not otherwise be possible had we evolved from impersonal matter.
- God is gracious as He blesses His creation, including the man and woman.
- God is a King who rules in dominion over all creation.

What are some of the primary non-Christian views of God's relationship to creation?

In addition to the biblical account of creation, there are innumerable other attempts to answer how creation and mankind came into being. I will briefly chart and explain the five most popular non-Christian hypothesis and their shortcomings.

Thought	Central Idea	Emphasis
Deism	God creates but is not present in the workings of His creation	God's transcendence
Pantheism	God is part of His creation	God's personal immanence
Panentheism or Monism	All in God. All is one.	God's transcendent nature
Process Theology or Open Theism	God is in process, growing in knowledge with His creation	God's personal nature
Naturalism	Matter comes forth from natural processes, without aid from any supernatural entity. In this worldview, matter and life are created by chance	Matter is either eternally existent or it comes into effect <i>ex nihilo</i>

by chance

("out of
nothing").

The above views of creation fail both philosophically and biblically. Pantheism and panentheism both have a god that is part of the creation, making it impossible for him to be the creator. Their god remains either transcendent (other) or immanent (personal), but not both. He is unable to rule the creation he is part of. Matter is usually an illusion; matters of evil and good are seen as relative, and part of the same god nature.

Other systems of belief struggle with how the universe is created. Naturalism and/or materialism leave us with an infinite regress of cause and effect, or the incredulous doctrine that everything we see came out of nothing with no causal force or purpose.

Evolutionary theory recognizes that man came from matter already existent on the earth, but it is unable to determine how that process took place. Biblically, we realize that God's power was able to do what is naturalistically impossible: bring forth life from lifeless matter. God created the substance (matter) of the universe *ex nihilo*, or "out of nothing."

The biblical creation story tells us that an eternal, necessary first cause (God), created the universe and all that is in it. The law of causality demands that all effects (matter) need a cause, and that these changes take place in the current space dimension in which we live. God is eternal ([Psalm 90:2](#)) and is subsequently apart from His creation as the necessary first cause.

What are some of the problems with atheistic evolution?

Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1892) was an English naturalist who founded the modern theory of evolution. He published this proposal in 1859 in the book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. His lengthy original title is often shortened to *The Origin of Species* both because of its length and its racist overtones. Evolution seeks to explain the origin of life apart from God. As Christians we are free to accept the seemingly self-evident fact of micro-evolution that species can and do adapt to their environments. However, as Christians we are not free to accept the yet unproven and highly suspect thesis of macro-evolution that one species can evolve into another species entirely.

And, though it reigned as the dominant paradigm for over one hundred years, Darwin's theory of evolution has recently come under intense criticism by both Christian and non-Christian scientists who prefer what has come to be known as "intelligent design." The reasons for the decline of confidence in macro-evolution are many, but the following are some of the most implausible faith-leaps of macro-evolution, which seemingly requires at least as much faith as believing in an eternal God:

- It postulates that the world sprang into existence from nothing for no reason, or that matter is basically eternal and has no origin but

cannot explain how or why this occurred.

- It postulates that impersonal matter created personal people.
- It postulates that species evolved over long periods of time from one kind of animal to another yet does not have the transitional forms between species that would demonstrate this has actually occurred.
- It has been unable to replicate evolution after over one hundred years of attempts to do so.

Because of these reasons, as well as the clear conflict with Scripture, Christians should reject macro-evolution as both flawed science and aberrant theology.

What are the various Christian views of creation?

Among Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christians there are at least six primary interpretations of the creation account in Genesis 1-2. Among the elders at Mars Hill we find the first two positions to be the most persuasive biblically. But we would like to stress that our Christian brothers and sisters who hold the other views listed below are welcome at our church. Our only request is that the Christians in our church would not become divisive over this matter and seek to make their view the litmus test for Christian orthodoxy. As Paul says, we only see in part now but one day in Jesus' presence we will know in full and we will all be in complete agreement on this and other matters.

View #1 - Historic Creationism

In this view, **Genesis 1:1** records the making of all of creation by God out of nothing (or *ex nihilo*) through a merism of "heavens and earth," which means the sky above and land below, or the totality of creation. Since the word used for "beginning" in **Genesis 1:1** is *reshit* in Hebrew, which means an indefinite period of time, it is likely that all of creation was completed over an extended period of time (anywhere from days to billions of years). Then **Genesis 1:2** begins the description of God preparing the uninhabitable land for the creation of mankind. The preparation of the uncultivated land for and creation of Adam and Eve occurred in six literal twenty-four hour days. This view leaves open the possibility of both an old earth and six literal days of creation.

View #2 - Creationism

In this view, God created the entire universe, including Adam and Eve, in six literal twenty-four hour days. This view is almost always accompanied with a belief in a young earth as it seeks to be faithful to the Biblical text while not giving much credence to the scientific claims of such things as an old earth.

View #3 - Gap Theory

In this view, **Genesis 1:1** explains a first creation that happened perhaps billions of years ago. Then, a catastrophic event, likely the fall of Satan

from Heaven, left the earth in the destroyed condition of [Genesis 1:2](#). God responded to this disaster by recreating the earth again a few thousand years ago in six literal days and repopulating the earth as is recorded in [Genesis 1:3-27](#). According to this view the earth is old from the first creation, and mankind is young because of the recent creation. The problems with this view include the fact that nothing in the Bible speaks of two creations, and at the end of the six days of creation God declared all that He had made "very good," which does not correlate with the claim that the earth had been destroyed and made "very bad."

View #4 - Literary Framework View

In this view, Genesis 1-2 is intended to be read as a figurative framework explaining creation in a topical and not sequential order. In this view the six days of creation listed in Genesis 1 are also to be interpreted metaphorically as not literal twenty-four hour days. The Literary Framework view is outlined as follows:

Forming	Filling
Day 1 - light and darkness separated	Day 4 - sun, moon, stars (lights separated in Heaven)
Day 2 - sky and waters separated	Day 5 - fish and birds
Day 3 - dry land and waters separated, plants and trees	Day 6 - animals and man

But there are some problems with this view. Most obviously, [Exodus 20:11](#) clearly states that the six days of creation are literal, saying, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

View #5 - Day-Age View

In this view, God created the universe, including Adam and Eve, in six sequential periods of time that are not literal twenty-four hour days. The problem with this view is that the six days of creation are seemingly clearly literal days as will be further explored in the next section. Also, [Exodus 20:11](#) clearly states that the six days of creation are literally, saying, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

View #6 - Theistic Evolution

In this view, God essentially began creation and then pulled back from working directly in creation to instead work through the process of evolution. The only exception would be God involving Himself again directly in the making of human life. For the most part, this view accepts the hypothesis of evolution but seeks to insert God as the creator of

matter and overseer of the evolutionary process. This view also believes that species evolved over a long period of time, which requires an old earth.

The biblical problems with theistic evolution are many. First, Genesis 1 repeatedly states that creation and its species came into existence because "God said" and not because of evolutionary process. Additionally, Genesis 1 continually states that after God commanded creation to come into existence, "it was so," which shows that God's commands brought about the instantaneous response of creation coming into being and not through a long evolutionary process detached from God. Second, evolution teaches that one species evolves into other species while Genesis 1 says that each species had offspring "according to its kind" (e.g., 1:21, 1:24, 1:25) and not another kind as evolution postulates. Third, the rest of Scripture portrays God as continually involved in the details of creation, including making the grass grow ([Psalm 104:14](#); [Matthew 6:30](#)), feeding the birds ([Matthew 6:26](#)), and feeding the other creatures ([Psalm 104:21, 25-30](#)). This portrait of God from Scripture clearly does not paint Him as remote and involved in creation only indirectly.

What is Intelligent Design?

Unlike creation science which begins with the Bible and then seeks to connect the teachings of Scripture with science, intelligent design seeks to primarily deal with matters of science. But their findings point to the fact of an intelligent designer, or Intelligent Designer, who has purposefully arranged creation. Therefore, in many ways intelligent design is compatible with Christian faith and a bridge between the disciplines of theology and science.

As its name would indicate, intelligent design studies the signs of intelligence. By examining creation, intelligent design postulates that the only reasonable explanation for biological origins and development is to recognize that life on our planet was designed in a purposeful manner by an external designer. Their findings directly refute the teachings of Darwinism, which attribute the organized complexity of life to time and chance. Intelligent design is in many ways helpful to and compatible with the Christian belief in creation by God, though not all intelligent design theorists are Christians.

Are the six days of creation literal twenty-four hour days?

While the six Christian views of creation listed above are possible, the question remains, which is probable? To answer that question we have to deal with the very important issue of whether or not the six days of creation listed in Genesis 1 are in fact literal twenty-four hour days or not. If someone believes that the six days of creation are literal twenty-four hour days then they must accept one of the first three views of creation (Historic Creationism, Creationism, or Gap Theory), and if they do not believe that the six days of creation are literal twenty-four hour days then they can accept one of the last three views of creation (Literary

Framework View, Day-Age View, or Theistic Evolution).

Those Christians who argue for a metaphorical view of the six days of creation rightly point out that the word used for day in Hebrew, *yom*, often refers to an extended period of time that is more than a literal twenty-four hour day (e.g., [Psalm 20:1](#); [Proverbs 11:4](#); [21:31](#); [24:10](#); [25:13](#); [Ecclesiastes 7:14](#)). But, if we set science aside for a moment and simply read the Scriptures it is apparent that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 are literal twenty-four hour days for the following reasons:

- Each day is numbered so that there is a succession of days, making it clear that these are literal days. Each day has a "morning and evening," which is the common vernacular for a day ([Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31](#)).
- In [Exodus 20:8-11](#), God says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." Simply, God says that He made creation in six days and on the seventh day He rested. Additionally, His work and rest is to be the precedent for us and explains why we have a seven-day week with a Sabbath day.

Should science or Scripture hold priority?

The great theologians of the Protestant Reformation coined the Latin phrase *Sola Scriptura*, which means that Scripture is the sole locus of our final authority. Simply put, there is nothing we are to believe above the Bible.

This, however, does not mean that as Christians we should practice "solo Scriptura," which means that we only read the Bible and reject any information that is not directly from the Bible. If we held to "solo Scriptura" then we could not study anything but the Bible and I would have to, for example, put down my Chilton's manual when tuning up my old truck and try and take my auto repair cues from Deuteronomy.

Therefore, as Christians we are free to explore all areas of study, including science. But when the findings of any discipline stand in contradiction to the clear teachings of Scripture, we must side with Scripture because it is our source of highest authority.

How old is the Earth?

The general scientific consensus based upon radiometric dating is that

the earth is very old, perhaps even 4.5 billion years old. Some Christians have sought to refute this finding by declaring that the universal flood in Genesis 6-9 altered the earth's geology so greatly that the earth now appears old. But non-Christian scientists have countered by arguing that they have also tested rocks and meteors that have come from the moon and landed on the earth which also date to the same age as the earth, roughly 4.5 billion years old. Many Christians have disregarded radiometric dating as flawed and inaccurate.

The apparent old age of the earth causes many Christians concern since Genesis seems to indicate that the earth is comparatively young, perhaps 6,000 to 20,000 years old. For example, the year 2004 is actually year 5,764 of creation according to traditional Judaism. In the seventeenth century, Archbishop James Ussher dated creation at 4004 B.C. which would make the earth roughly 6,000 years old.

This date of a young earth was arrived at by starting with the genealogies in such places as Genesis 5 and 10 and adding the number of years between Adam, Noah, and Abraham to arrive at the total number of years creation had been in existence. But, there are at least three assumptions that may make their findings faulty. First, they assumed that the genealogies in Genesis were strict chronologies and assumed that there were no other generations that existed, an assumption that even conservative Bible scholars such as former Princeton professor B. B. Warfield doubted. Second, they assumed that creation began in **Genesis 1:2** and overlooked the fact that **Genesis 1:1** could be a brief summary of a number of additional years (perhaps even billions since the word for "beginning" in Hebrew is a very broad word referring to various periods of time) that preceded the six days of creation in which the already made earth was prepared for the creation of mankind. Third, they assumed that **Genesis 1:5** speaks of the first day of creation, when it is best translated "one day" and not day one of history. If this is the case, which **Exodus 20:11** seems to indicate, then their counting from the first day forward is off because they wrongly assumed a first day that may have been preceded by many other days.

In the end, it must be admitted that the age of the earth is simply not stated in the Bible and it may be young or old. Furthermore, both young and old earth advocates are inferring from the Bible a position that the Bible simply does not clearly state. It must also be admitted that the age of the earth is not a great concern in the Bible; as Augustine rightly said, it is not a scientific textbook seeking to answer the ever-changing inquiries of science, but rather a theological textbook seeking to reveal God and the means by which He saves us.

Why does the earth appear old?

The question persists as to why the earth appears to be old and many solutions have been offered, including the following.

1. Though the earth appears old to most scientists it is in fact young and the scientists are simply mistaken.

2. The earth appears old because it was made mature like Adam was and did not evolve over time but gives the appearance of being aged. For example, if Adam had chopped down either the tree of life, or the tree of good and evil spoken of in Genesis 2, he would have likely found tree rings as the tree was made mature.
3. The flood in Genesis 6-9 universally covered the earth which compressed the geological layers and rearranged the topography so greatly that the earth appears to be old and to have developed over a long period of time.
4. The earth is in fact old and the days mentioned in Genesis 1-2 are not literally twenty-four hour days but extended periods of time.
5. The earth may be or likely is old, as [Genesis 1:1](#) explains an indeterminate period of time during which God made creation out of nothing. This is supported by the Hebrew word for "beginning" (*reshit*), which can mean anything from days to billions of years as it is a general word (e.g., [Genesis 10:10](#); [Job 8:7](#); [Jeremiah 28:1](#)). [Genesis 1:2](#) begins the account of the preparation of the land for human history on the earth in six literal days. The strength of this argument is that in [Genesis 1:1](#) Moses used the Hebrew word *bara* for creation, which means that God made creation from nothing. Moses then uses the Hebrew word *asah* for the six days of creation, which means to prepare and form the earth that He had already made but was not yet habitable for mankind. This is because the language used for the state of creation in [Genesis 1:2](#) does not mean that there was unformed matter that God made creation out of, but rather that the earth was not yet in a state that could accommodate human life. When this same phraseology is used in other Scriptures (e.g., [Deuteronomy 32:10](#); [Isaiah 45:18](#)) it refers to a barren wasteland unfit for sustaining human life. This may mean that God created the earth over an indefinite period of time that could in fact have been billions of years ago. This would explain the apparent old age of the earth. Then, in six literal days God prepared the earth for the creation of mankind and on the sixth day made the first man and woman. While our elders are split on this view, I personally find it quite compelling for two reasons. First, it permits an old earth while maintaining a literal six-day interpretation of Genesis 1. Second, it was the most common view of early Christians like Augustine and it did not fall out of favor until the rise of modern science.

What is *ex nihilo*?

Ex nihilo is Latin for "out of nothing" and is commonly used to explain how God made creation out of nothing. The Bible teaches that God made creation *ex nihilo* in **Hebrews 11:3**, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen *was not made out of what was visible*" (emphasis added). This doctrine is important because it negates the possibility of evolution and an eternal universe, or some form of matter out of which creation was made. Also, it means that the state of creation as "formless and empty" in **Genesis 1:2** cannot refer to some matter that God used to make creation out of, but rather that "formless and empty" simply means that the earth was created from nothing but was not yet formed in such a way that it could sustain human life and was therefore empty of human life as Augustine taught.

Where did creation come from?

Genesis 1:1 portrays God creating all of creation from nothing. Therefore, creation came not from pre-existing matter but rather out of nothing.

What God had made from nothing was then prepared for human habitation by the powerful word of God. Genesis 1 paints God as a prophet with the continual statement, "And God said" (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26).

The rest of Scripture echoes the fact of creation being prepared for us by God's powerful word as the following examples prove:

- **Psalm 33:6** *By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.*
- **Psalm 33:9** *For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*
- **Psalm 148:5** *Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.*
- **2 Peter 3:7** *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

Indeed, Genesis 1 portrays God's word as the most powerful force in all of creation. Therein, God's word brings order, makes things good, creates an environment in which life can exist, separates things, comes with unparalleled authority, and accomplishes exactly what God intended it to. Therefore, we are to not to dismiss or distort God's Word as the Serpent sought to entice our first parents to.

In summary, God brought creation out of nothing and prepared it for us because He cares for us. Because of this in **Jeremiah 10:16** we read, "He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for *he is the Maker of all things*, including Israel, the tribe of his inheritance-the LORD Almighty is his name" (emphasis added). As Francis Schaeffer has pointed out regarding this verse, we are made by a loving and personal "He," not an

impersonal, unloving "it."

The final act of creation in Genesis 1-2 is the making of our first parents, Adam and Eve ([Genesis 2:7, 22](#)). Genesis artfully paints the creation of the man and woman who are God's image-bearers on the earth as a very special and personal event done by God's metaphorical hands as He was intimately and delicately involved in the knitting together of human life. [Psalm 139:13](#) echoes the sanctity of human life made by God's hand, saying, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb."

Was the entire Trinity involved in making creation?

[Genesis 1:1](#) teaches that God made creation, saying, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." [Genesis 1:26](#) reveals that this God is the Trinity saying, "Then God said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness" (emphasis added).

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God ([2 Chronicles 15:3](#); [Jeremiah 10:10](#); [John 17:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 John 5:20-21](#)). This one God is three equal persons: Father, Son, and Spirit (e.g., [Isaiah 48:16](#); [Matthew 3:16-17](#); [28:18-20](#)).

Therefore, when Genesis says that God is the creator, it speaks of the entire Trinity. Likewise, the rest of Scripture also teaches that each member of the Trinity was involved in creation: the Father created ([Psalm 19:1](#); [Acts 17:28](#); [1 Corinthians 8:6](#)); the Son created ([John 1:1-3](#), [10](#), [14](#); [Colossians 1:16-17](#)); and the Spirit created ([Genesis 1:2](#); [Job 26:13](#)).

Why did God make creation?

The Bible lists a number of reasons for God's making of creation. Included among them are the following:

- God made creation to glorify Himself ([Psalm 19:1](#)).
- God made creation to show forth His love (Psalm 136).
- God made creation for Himself ([Colossians 1:16](#)).
- God made creation to show us His attributes ([Romans 1:20](#)).
- God made creation to worship Him ([Revelation 4:11](#)).

How are men and women different than the rest of creation?

In our day, a pagan environmentalism that essentially worships creation as divine often fails to distinguish between human life and animal life. But the Bible clearly distinguishes between the two without dishonoring creation and the animals, which the man and woman were made with dominion over to steward.

In [Genesis 1:26-28](#) (cf. [James 3:9](#)), we see the reason for human dignity

is simply because we were made by God in His image. Additionally, we see that both men and women have equality and dignity because they are both image-bearers of God. This image of God that mankind bears makes us distinct from and superior to the rest of creation, including animals.

As we read the opening chapters of Genesis we also discover that men and women were created for four relationships. First, we were made to have a spiritual relationship with God. Second, we were made to have a psychological relationship with ourselves. Third, we were made to have social relationships with other people. Fourth, we were made to have an environmental relationship with nature.

As a result of our sin, the image and likeness that we bear persists but is marred by sin. Subsequently, as we read the effects of the Fall, we see theological problems, psychological problems, social problems, and environmental problems that follow in our wake.

The great theologian Helmut Thielicke once said that history is in many ways like a good play. When going to a play one generally asks certain questions such as who wrote the play, who is the hero, who is the villain, and what is the plot? Upon answering these questions we are able to make sense of and enter into the story in a meaningful way. Likewise, each day people are born onto the stage of history where they will say their lines and act out their part without any concept of who the Author of life is, what great cosmic struggle they find themselves in, who the Hero and Villain are, or how they relate to the plot of which they are a part. And, apart from revelation we are left with meaningless lives in which we seek to either do something significant to be a hero, or lose hope and simply accept that we are villains and live amidst that brutally despairing truth.

Yet, as we read the Bible we uncover the source of both our dignity and depravity. As the mystic Thomas Merton rightly said, we are all angels and demons wrapped up in meat. Indeed, we were made in the dignified image of God. But we have descended into the depraved pattern of Satan. Therefore, we are simultaneously both great and wretched, which is the perplexing dilemma of human nature. Those who do not read the Bible and take it to heart are prone to ignoring the complex dilemma of our dignity and depravity by favoring one aspect of our nature at the expense of the other.

Genesis 1-2 clearly states that we were made between God and the animals-lower than God but higher than animals. Genesis also states that our position between these two is indeed closer to God than the animals because we bear His image and were handcrafted by Him. Yet there is a propensity for those who do not heed the insights of Genesis to elevate us to god-like greatness as the highest and greatest being capable of living well and doing good completely in and of our good and glorious selves. Conversely, others are prone to describe us as nothing more than yet another animal, incapable of self-control, beauty, truth, or goodness. An example would include Freud, who reduced us to essentially slaves to

our animalistic urges for such things as sex and food.

Genesis alone untangles the great puzzle of our dignity in creation and depravity in sin by pointing us to Jesus who, in dignity, died for our depravity and rose to redeem us as new creations with our dignity restored.

What is the cultural mandate?

The cultural mandate was originally given before the Fall ([Genesis 1:26-28](#); [2:15](#)) and later repeated to Noah after the Fall and the Flood since it was still in effect ([Genesis 9:7](#)). In the cultural mandate we see that the first ruling unit was a family, which later became the foundational ruling unit for the governments of church and state. The cultural mandate was given to the man and the woman and included the command to have children, expand across the earth, and represent God by ruling and serving so that a culture that glorified God would be cultivated.

Because of this cultural mandate, men and women continue to build societies and cultures today. But because of sin and the marring of God's image, non-Christian societies and cultures show forth both the greatness and the wretchedness of mankind. However, Christians are supposed to carry forth the cultural mandate as the church, building a kingdom counter-culture that honors God, obeys His Word, and expands His fame.

Was anything made not good?

In Genesis 1 God declared what He made "good" except the making of the man and woman, which He declared to be "very good." The only thing that we are told was not good before sin and the Fall is Adam being alone ([Genesis 2:18](#)). While this does not infer that there was sin in God's original creation, it does state that even in a sinless state we were made with the need for human contact, friendship, and love. Although Adam had God above him and creation beneath him, he lacked an equal to be in community with that would enable him to function like the Trinity, in partnership as "one."

God's answer to Adam's lack was the making of Eve as Adam's wife and helper ([Genesis 2:19-25](#)). It is important to note that Eve is not denigrated as a "helper" since God is also referred to as our helper (e.g., [Psalm 10:14](#); [118:6-7](#); [Hebrews 13:6](#)). The first woman was taken from the side of the man, which beautifully illustrates that she belongs alongside him in partnership, not behind him in denigration or in front of him in domination. It may also explain why cuddling alongside her man is the favorite pastime of many a bride as it is a sort of homecoming for her. And, though the woman was taken from the man, in the sexual consummation of the marriage the two again become one.

Importantly, it was God who created the covenant of marriage, thus He alone defines what it is. His definition of one man and one woman eliminates any alternatives such as bestiality, homosexuality, and polygamy. At the first wedding, God in His sovereignty brought the

woman to the man, gave her away as her Father, and officiated the ceremony as their Pastor. Upon seeing his bride for the first time, Adam responded to her beauty by singing her a beautiful song. Poetically, the words of Adam singing to his bride on their wedding day are the first recorded words of any human being, and have caused some theologians to speculate that perhaps we all sang until sin entered the world and we descended from poetry to prose.

Genesis 2:24 then explains how a man can overcome this state of being single that is not good. First, a man should leave home and be his own man. Second, a man should marry a woman he loves who loves him and loves the Lord. Third, their marriage should be consummated by sexual intimacy as they spend the rest of their life becoming "one" as the Trinitarian God is "one" (see **Deuteronomy 6:4**). This process is repeated by both Jesus and Paul throughout the New Testament as the pattern God intends for prospective marriage and sexuality to follow (**Matthew 19:5**; **Mark 10:7-8**; **Ephesians 5:31**).

What is the Fall?

Genesis 3 records the fall of mankind from a sinless to a sinful state. The scene opens with Adam and Eve living in a perfect environment that was made for them by God to meet their every need. However, the serpent (or Satan in **Revelation 12:9**; **20:2**) tempted Adam and Eve by twisting God's Word.

Eve spoke with Satan, but she was deceived by his clever arguments (**Genesis 3:13**; **2 Corinthians 11:1-4**; **1 Timothy 2: 13-14**). Even though Satan is a liar (**John 8:42-47**), he accused God of being the liar.

Satan then tempted the couple according to a pattern he continues to use in our day (**Genesis 3:6**; cf. **John 2:16**; **Matthew 4:3, 5, 9**):

1. He tempted the lust of bodily desire ("good for food").
2. He tempted the lust of visible sight ("saw the fruit").
3. He tempted the lust of pride ("desirable for gaining wisdom").

Adam and Eve sinned by partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the one and only tree they were forbidden to partake of (**Genesis 2:16-17**). In doing so they were seeking wisdom apart from God and proudly setting themselves up to function as their own gods without need for the real God. In this way, Moses is showing that in a sense we have killed ourselves by disobeying God in a way that is not entirely unlike suicide.

The account also shows that Eve sinned first as Adam stood passively by and watched his wife commit the first sin against God. Their sin immediately separated them, bringing shame, distrust, and separation. Adam was the representative and father of all mankind, and when he sinned and fell out of favor with God, so did every person who would ever live (**Romans 5:12**; **1 Corinthians 15:21-22**). Every person since Adam and Eve is a sinner, both by nature and by choice (**Psalms 53:3**; **Isaiah 53:6**; **64:6**; **Romans 3:23**; **1 John 1:18**).

Graciously, God immediately began pursuing the sinners, calling out for the man by name and holding him accountable for the sin in his family. But rather than repenting, the man and woman sought to excuse and blame their sin. Adam sought to blame both God and Eve for the sin, while Eve went with the perennially popular argument that "the devil made me do it."

In the Fall we see the reversal of the male-female roles and the genesis of the chauvinism and feminism that have plagued us ever since. Adam failed to lead and so, with what were likely good intentions, Eve stepped up to fill the void in well-intended naïveté. But, although Eve sinned first, God held Adam responsible as the head of his family. He called out Adam to give an account for the sin in his family, chastised Adam for listening to his wife when he should have listened to God, and pronounced a death sentence on Adam and all of his descendants for the original sin.

God then justly punished sin. First, God punished the serpent and promised that one day Jesus would crush him on the cross, and ultimately defeat him at the Second Coming ([Colossians 2:13-15](#); [Revelation 20:10](#)). Second, God punished the woman by increasing her pain in childbirth and noting that she will desire to rule over her husband as she had in the original sin, but that he would ultimately be the dominant head as God intended. Third, God punished the man by cursing the ground under him, which makes the man's job incredibly more difficult. And, though the man came from the ground, it is the ground that will defeat him in the end, as men now die and return to the earth.

Did animals die before the Fall?

In [Genesis 2:17](#) God told the man that if he sinned he would die. But nothing is said of the possible death of animals before the Fall so we do not know if animals died before the Fall, though it is possible. The command for the man to work the ground may infer that at least plant life may have died before the Fall, thereby accounting for man's work. The man, however, was kept alive by eating from the tree of life in the garden ([Genesis 2:9](#)) and once he sinned was cast away from the garden and therefore eventually died. But at the end of history we see that the new creation again has the tree of life so that God's people may partake of it and live forever ([Revelation 22:1-2](#)).

What about dinosaurs?

When it comes to explaining the apparent existence and now extinction of dinosaurs there are generally two answers. Those who believe in a young earth believe that the dinosaurs were among the animals Adam named in [Genesis 2:19-20](#) and that they were wiped out in the Flood of Genesis 6-9. Those who hold an old earth position generally believe that the dinosaurs lived and became extinct before Adam was ever born.

Who did Cain marry?

Adam and Eve were the first people in human history and their son Cain married somebody but nobody is certain who she was or where she came from. Some have postulated that maybe God made her as He did Eve. But the Bible simply does not say this and if this were true then she would have been a sinless woman not descended from Adam and therefore she would have never died and would be alive and well today to tell us exactly what happened. So, it seems most likely that Cain simply married his sister which would make them a sort of type for hillbilly rednecks.

Why are sex and sexual sin so prevalent in Genesis?

In his very insightful book, *The Genesis of Sex: Sexual Relationships in the First Book of the Bible*, O. Palmer Robertson does a wonderful thematic study on such topics as marriage, parenting, and sexual sin. Genesis is indeed replete with many real-life examples of such issues because it is an honest book; it speaks of the beauties and tragedies of human intimacy.

Marriage

- The first marriage with Adam and Eve is in [Genesis 2:18-25](#).
- God prearranging marriages is found with Adam and Eve ([Genesis 2:18-25](#)) and Isaac and Rebekah ([Genesis 24:1-67](#)).
- Romance in marriage is found between Isaac and Rebekah ([Genesis 24:67](#)) and Jacob and Rachel ([Genesis 29:20](#)).
- The disaster of polygamy is found with Lamech and Adah and Zillah ([Genesis 4:18-24](#)), Esau and Mahalath and other wives ([Genesis 28:6-9](#)), and Jacob and Leah and Rachel ([Genesis 29:14-30](#)).
- Tragic love triangles are seen with Abram and Sarai and Hagar ([Genesis 16:1-16](#)) and Jacob and Rachel and Leah and maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah ([Genesis 29:31-30:24](#)).
- Examples of disobedient marriages between believers and unbelievers is found to be widespread in the days of Noah ([Genesis 6:1-2](#)).
- A mismatched marriage that caused his parents Isaac and Rebekah much grief was the union between Esau and Judith and Basemath ([Genesis 26:34-35](#)).
- The sad account of a loveless marriage is noted in [Genesis 29:31](#), where Jacob loved his wife Rachel and not his other wife Leah.
- The pain of divorce is told when Abraham sent off Hagar and

Ishmael ([Genesis 21:8-14](#)).

- The occurrence of a second marriage is explained in [Genesis 23:1-2](#) and [25:1](#) when Abraham married Keturah after Sarah died.

Parenting

- The tragedy of sibling rivalry is recorded in Genesis 4 where Cain killed his brother Abel.
- The grief of barrenness is common throughout the patriarchs, including Sarai ([Genesis 11:30](#); [16:1-2](#)), Rebekah ([Genesis 25:21](#)), and Rachel ([Genesis 29:31](#)), though God eventually answered each of their prayers and enabled them to conceive.
- The hardship of single parenting is told in the story of Ishmael being raised by Hagar and God without the involvement of his father Abraham ([Genesis 21:8-21](#)).

Sexual Sins

- Lust is described in [Genesis 35:22](#) where Israel's son Reuben slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah.
- Adultery appears in [Genesis 39:1-23](#) where Potiphar's wife seeks to seduce Joseph, who resists her advances.
- Rape occurs in [Genesis 34:1-2](#) where Shechem raped Dinah.
- A false accusation of rape is recorded in [Genesis 39:1-23](#) where Potiphar's wife wrongfully accused Joseph of raping her, which leads to his imprisonment.
- Incest occurs with Lot and his daughters ([Genesis 19:30-38](#)) and Judah with his daughter-in-law, Tamar ([Genesis 38](#)).
- Homosexuality is culturally embraced and widespread in Sodom and Gomorrah ([Genesis 19:1-92](#)).

Appendix - Resources for Further Study

After surveying the mountain of books on Genesis and the issues raised therein, one theologian rightly said that the interpretive trends are as faddish and changing as women's fashion. Trying to keep up with all of the commentary and speculation that surrounds Genesis is simply overwhelming. So, in an effort to be of assistance to those who aspire to study more deeply, I have compiled the following list of resources that is no way exhaustive. Each of these books is in my personal library and something I have read, or at least referenced, and can attest that they are insightful. However, I do not agree with each of these books, but find

them helpful in at least explaining the various positions that emerge from issues found in Genesis.

Books on the Pentateuch

- *From Paradise to Promised Land* by T. D. Alexander
- *The Pentateuch as Narrative* by John Sailhamer
- *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* by Gordon Wenham

Books Providing an Overview of Genesis

- *Genesis in Space and Time* by Francis Schaeffer
- *Encountering the Book of Genesis* by Bill T. Arnold
- *Old Testament Theology* by Paul R. House

Detailed Studies of Genesis 1-2

- *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* by Henri Blocher
- *Genesis Unbound* by John Sailhamer

Commentaries on Genesis

- *Genesis* by Bruce Waltke
- *Genesis* by John Sailhamer (Expositor's Bible Commentary Series)
- *The Beginning of Wisdom* by Leon R. Kass
- *Genesis* by Walter Brueggemann
- *Creation and Blessing* by Allen P. Ross
- *Genesis* by John Calvin
- *Genesis* edited by Bill Moyers

Commentaries on Genesis 1-2

- *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* by Henri Blocher
- *Genesis Unbound* by John Sailhamer

Books Debating Views of Creation

- *The Genesis Debate* edited by David Hagopian
- *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* edited by Stanley Gundry

Books on Creation & Intelligent Design

- *The Case for a Creator* by Lee Strobel
- *Intelligent Design* by William A. Dembski
- *The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions about Intelligent Design* by William A. Dembski
- *Doubts about Darwin: A History of Intelligent Design* by Thomas Woodward

- *By Design: Science and the Search for God* by Larry Witham
- *Scientific Creationism* by Henry M. Morris

Books Critiquing Evolution

- *Where Darwin Meets the Bible: Creationists and Evolutionists in America* by Larry Witham
- *Answers Book: The Twenty Most-Asked Questions About Creation, Evolution, and the Book of Genesis, Answered* by Ken Ham
- *Darwin on Trial* by Philip Johnson
- *The Lie: Evolution* by Ken Ham
- *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* by Michael Denton
- *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth* by Jonathan Wells
- *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* by Phillip E. Johnson
- *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* by Michael J. Behe

Books on Particular Issues Related to Genesis

- *One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism* by Ken Ham
- *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* by John C. Whitcomb
- *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of the Human Fossils* by Marvin L. Lubenow
- *Primeval Saints: Studies in the Patriarchs of Genesis* by James B. Jordan
- *The Land of Promise* edited by Philip Johnson
- *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thoughts* by Moyer V. Hubbard
- *From Creation to New Creation* by Bernhard W. Anderson
- *The Genesis of Sex* by O. Palmer Robertson
- *The Christ of the Covenants* by O. Palmer Robertson

Books Seeking to Reconcile Science & Scripture

- *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis* by Hugh Ross
- *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Latest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God* by Hugh Ross
- *Beyond the Cosmos* by Hugh Ross
- *Big Bang and the Bible* by Gerald Schroeder
- *Science and Evolution: Developing a Christian Worldview of Science and Evolution* by Charles W. Colson
- *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* by Kenneth R. Miller

Books Examining the Foundations of Science

- *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science,*

Law, and Education by Phillip E. Johnson

- **Christianity and the Nature of Science** by J. P. Moreland
- **The Biblical Basis for Modern Science** by Henry M. Morris
- **The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism** by Phillip E. Johnson

Books on the Age of the Earth

- **Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy** by Hugh Ross
- **A New Look An Old Earth** by Don Stoner
- **The Young Earth** by John D. Morris
- **Creation In Six Days: A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One** by James B. Jordan

Websites on Creation

- www.answersingenesis.org/
- www.icr.org/
- www.christiananswers.net/creation/
- www.discovery.org/csc/
- www.iscid.org/
- www.ideacenter.org/
- www.origins.org/
- www.reasons.org/index.shtml

Videos on Intelligent Design

- **Icons of Evolution** by Philip Johnson
- **Unlocking the Mystery of Life** by Philip Johnson
- **The Privileged Planet** by Guillermo Gonzalez

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 Apologetics Creation/Evolution Young Earth Old Earth Intelligent Design

SOCIAL MEDIA

Mark Driscoll

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Twitter

Rick Melson

- Facebook
- Twitter

PARTNERS

- Acts 29 Network
- Mars Hill Church
- Relit
- Resound
- Retrain

FRIENDS

- Desiring God
- The Gospel Coalition
- Crossway Books
- The Hub

Mike Anderson

Facebook

Twitter

Flickr

Tim Smith

Vimeo

Facebook