

## Tim Keller on reading Genesis 1 & 2...

Oh, it's a little confusing, but actually I'm just in the same place where the Catholics are, as far as I can tell. The Catholic Church has always been able to hold on to a belief in a historical Fall - it really happened, it's not just representative of the fact that the human race has kind of gone bad in various ways.

The fact is, the one that most people consider the most conservative, which is the young-Earth, six-day creation, has all kinds of problems with the text, as we know. If it's really true, then you have problems of contradictions between Genesis 1 and 2... I don't like the theory that these are two somewhat contradictory creation stories that some editor stuck together - some pretty stupid editor stuck together. I think therefore you've got a problem with how long are the days before the sun shows up in the fourth day. You have problems really reading the Bible in a straightforward way with a young-Earth, six 24-hour day theory. You've got some problems with the theistic evolution, because then you have to ask yourself, "Was there no Adam and Eve? Was there no Fall?" So here's what I like - the messy approach, which is I think there was an Adam and Eve. I think there was a real Fall. I think that happened. I also think that there also was a very long process probably, you know, that the earth probably is very old, and there was some kind of process of natural selection that God guided and used, and maybe intervened in. And that's just the messy part. I'm not a scientist. I'm not going to go beyond that.

...Because the fact is that real orthodox believers with a high view of Scripture are all over the map on this. I can line up ten really smart people in all those different buckets, which I'll call "theistic evolution," "young-Earth creationism," and let's call it "progressive creationism" or "semi-theistic evolution." There are all these different views. And when you see a lot of smart people disagreeing on this stuff, well...

How could there have been death before Adam and Eve fell? The answer is, I don't know. But all I know is, didn't animals eat bugs? Didn't bugs eat plants? There must have been death. In other words, when you realize, "Oh wait, this is really complicated," then you realize, "I don't have to figure this out before I figure out is Jesus Christ raised from the dead."

Full interview at [www.uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/interview-with-timothy-keller](http://www.uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/interview-with-timothy-keller)

"Formed" - Hebrew:  
"Yatsar" - A technical potter's word often used with the potter at work. Frequently used to describe God's creative activity, whether literally or figuratively.

- Relates to both human activity and divine activity.

The book of Genesis opens with a majestic description of how God first created the heavens and earth and then how he ordered the earth so that it may become his dwelling place. Structured into seven sections, each marked by the use of set phrases, the entire episode conveys the picture of the all-powerful, transcendent God who sets everything in place with consummate skill in conformity to his grand design. The emphasis is mainly on how God orders or structures everything. Humanity is divinely commissioned to govern other creatures on God's behalf, the ultimate purpose being that the whole earth should become the temple of God, the place of his presence, and should display his glory.

Genesis Chapter 1, verses 1 - Chapter 2, verse 7

# Study 1: Our Identity in God

Welcome!

## An important note before you get started...

"But now, O Israel, the LORD who created you says: "Do not be afraid for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine."  
- Isaiah 43:1

OK, so this part of the bible is packed with tonnes of amazing truths about God and probably just as many questions! However, we urge you to look at God and His qualities and the role of man in that through this study - NOT THE CREATION STORY ITSELF! This is not a study into creationism or other theories surrounding Genesis 1, despite how tempting it will be to think along these lines.

If you have questions around these topics, we would encourage you to seek to do this with your group at another time. Your group leader will have a list of helpful resources on this topic. This is not so we just dodge a big issue, but so that we don't miss out on the amazing truths this opening part of God's Word reveals.

## Prayer

"O my soul, bless God! God, my God, how great you are! Beautifully, gloriously robed, dressed up in sunshine, and all heaven stretched out for your tent. You built your palace on the ocean deeps, made a chariot out of clouds and took off on wind-wings. You commandeered winds as messengers, appointed fire and flame as ambassadors. You set earth on a firm foundation so that nothing can shake it, ever."  
- Psalm 104:1-5

## Preparation for the study

Before you start your study as a group, spend 10 or so minutes (not masses of time), thinking about what grace is. Write it down and spend a few minutes in your group just simply reading out what you think it to be.

Our prayer is that as we go through these studies together, this statement you wrote will come more in line with God's truth and love for you. Now have a read through of the passage a few times and enjoy!

# Study 1: Our Identity in God

## In the beginning: Chapter 1 verses 1 & 2

Before creation, there was nothing. Try and imagine this. It's a bit of a mind twister! Yet from this, God created. Everything that is created around us – art, literature, music and designers - are created from something that already exists. In other words, they are inspired by what surrounds and affects them. God had nothing to go on.

- Looking at these 2 verses alone, what do you learn about who God is and His character?

## The Creation: Chapter 1 verses 3 - 25

God then begins to create...

- What words would you use to describe the creation process?
- Is there any pattern to this creation? Try splitting up the verses and group them where you think it's appropriate, like where there is a change in activity, purpose or pace.
  - Why is God creating all this? What is the purpose of this environment He is putting together?
    - ◉ What does this tell you about God and who He is?
    - ◉ Does this change your way of thinking about the way God views man or creation?

## God and Man I: Chapter 1 verses 26 - Chapter 2 verse 1

It's not just a world to live in, but a living world...

- What is the difference in the language used here in verses 26 and 27?
  - Suddenly it's gone from a good creation to "excellent" (NLT) or "very good". What has changed to make it better? Why would this be the case?
    - ◉ What does this tell you about who God is and how He views you and all mankind?

# Study 1: Our Identity in God

We move on to Chapter 2 where there is another account of creation. This is different, as the chapter 1 account is poetic, from the view of man, as though he were on top of a pyramid and chapter 2 is told as though man were at the centre of a circle looking out.

## Sabbath: Chapter 2 verses 2 & 3

- What is the first thing God does with His new creation?
  - Why does He do this?
    - ◉ Do you take time or see the importance in simply resting and reflecting on the beauty of creation and the fact that we are the pinnacles of it?

## God and Man II: Chapter 2 verse 4 - 7

- How would you describe the way God creates man?
  - What does it mean to have "the breath of life" (NLT) breathed into you by God?
    - ◉ Look over all this study has shown you about God, His character and His view of man – is there anything that has changed/new or you have been encouraged/challenged on how you see God or God sees you and all other people?

"And we human beings have been given something more than life. We are given the gift of understanding something of His majesty and His mysterious freedom. To our species is revealed something of His intimate yet commanding relationship with the world. We, alone among the creatures, are called to reflect His image – to share a history and a destiny with Him. We are invited to enjoy the fellowship of the Lord's Sabbath. And in the rhythm of our work and our worship we can give a voice to the silent order of the universe, that it too, with us, may sing the Creator's praise."  
- David Atkinson, "The Bible Speaks Today"