

~Lesson One~

God's Love in Creation

(God's love for you is seen in His creation)

In many instances in our society, love has become a buzz word that we use to sound loving. However, we fail to put that "love" into action. God's love, in contrast, is filled with action. In numerous scriptures we are told that the foundation of God's love is shown through the action of sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for us (1 John 4:9-10).

However, His love for us is also seen through His creation. His creation is His work of love for us (Psalm 119:64). In actuality, God created you to love you! This week we are going to study about God's creation and how it applies to us personally. Just a little reminder from scripture, it is very clear humans are the focal point and masterpiece of God's creation.

Day One God Created You Very Good

God created everything in 6 days. After each day of creation God saw that what He had made was *good*. Yet, after God had created everything – especially man and woman, He saw that all He had created was *very good*. God creating humans, made His creation very good. You are very good in God's eyes! Genesis 1:31 says,

And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (NASB)

1. **Read Genesis 1 and 2** and summarize what each chapter is saying to you. (His creation is His work of love for us! If you doubt this, as you read Genesis 1 and 2, make the creation story personal to yourself. You can do this by asking yourself, "Why did He create that for me?" Example: God created the sun so I can delight in its warmth and light on chilly days.)

2. At one time in my life, because of my childhood, I thought I was worthless. I later realized from Genesis that I was very good in God's sight. The word "very" means exceedingly. The word "good" is defined by many positive words. Some of the positive words are: beautiful, delightful, pleasant, glad, precious, correct, excellent, lovely, convenient, joyful, fruitful, secure, kind, and righteous. What if someone who loved you wrote you a letter using these words to express what they thought about you? How would you feel? Remember, these words are what God thinks about you! Take a few minutes and think of that fact.

3. Answer the question, "What do you *really* think of yourself?" Take some time with this question. Use your journal if you want. Ask the Spirit to search your heart and mind, so you can answer truthfully. Be specific.

4. Take some of the positive words from above that define the word "good". Describe how that word applies to your life with God. (Examples: I am beautiful to God because He called me very good in Genesis 1. I am convenient to God, not an inconvenience as my childhood family led me to believe.)

5. You are very good in God's eyes and that is the truth! Since you are very good in God's eyes, how *should* you think of yourself? Use God's Word to answer this question if you can.

Day Two God Created You in His Image

1. Reread Genesis 1:26-31

What does being created in God's image mean? Well to be honest, the Bible doesn't give much detail about it. But I will try to explain what being created in God's image means, from my studies.

Since we are created in God's image, we can reason and speak, and we have a will to choose, like God. We also have the power to act out our reasoning, our speech, and our choices, like God does. (Granted we are limited in these things compared to God.) Our ability to do these things is clearly seen in Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God for the first time.

We do have the same form that God the Son, Jesus Christ, has. His Word says of Jesus in Philippians 2:8a, He was, "*found in appearance as a man...*" You are created in the very form that Jesus, the God of the universe, chose for Himself. That's pretty amazing to me! How about to you? However there is a huge difference, Jesus has God's essence and nature because He is God, we *don't!* Jesus says in John 14:7,

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." (NASB)

God has two types of attributes, they are incommunicable and communicable. The communicable attributes of God are the ones that we have (Yes, in a finite way compared to God), such as a personality marked with emotions, moral character, the desire for relationship, the want to be loved and to love, the capacity to have understanding and wisdom, as well as the desire for mercy, justice, truth and faithfulness. We also have an eternal existence that began when God created us. The incommunicable attributes of God are the ones only God can have because God is God. These include being self-existent, self-sufficient, sovereign, all-powerful, all-knowing and always present.

Think about why God would make us in His image. I love my cat, but I can't have a truly intimate relationship with her because she isn't in my image. We can relate to each other because we are in each other's image, but even more importantly we can relate to God because He created us in His image. Since God created us in His image we are linked to heaven and to God Himself unlike any other creature God made. He made us in His image to be able to have a truly intimate eternal relationship with us. All of His workings throughout eternity prove it.

5. I am sure some of you are thinking, God did create us in His image, but didn't sin do something to His image in us? It did! We still possess God's image within us, but it has been corrupted by sin and needs renewing. **Read Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9.** The only way to truly have God's image again, is through Jesus Christ and by allowing the Holy Spirit to progressively renew His image within us. **Read Ephesians 4:20-24 and Colossians 3:9-11.**

Day Three God Created You Fearfully-Wonderfully

Humans are the highlight of God's creation. God made us fearfully and wonderfully!

King David in Psalm 8 writes about how surprised he is that God, the Creator of everything, would make us, mere humans, just a little lower than Himself. David was amazed that God cares for us so much that He allows us to rule over His creation. David also seemed astonished that God would crown us with glory and majesty. (I can relate to what David is feeling. How about you?) David says of God in Psalm 8:3-6,

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him? Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, And dost crown him with glory and majesty! Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet. (NASB)

Some of you are not familiar with King David. King David reigned as King in Israel around 1000 B.C. He was Israel's most famous king and is called a man after God's own heart. King David wrote many of the Psalms. The Psalms are Hebrew poetry and were often used as songs of worship. David was a man who truly enjoyed God. He would lift his voice in song to worship Him because he knew God loved him and he loved God. When you are feeling down and out, it's always a good idea to read a Psalm or two.

Psalm 139 tells us that God made us wonderfully, which means we are amazingly constructed! As I look in the mirror or make a foolish comment, I certainly don't think of myself as amazingly put together. Yet the truth is, whether or not we think or feel we are God's amazing creation, we are!

God's Word even says God made us fearfully which means He made us awesomely. Do you think or feel awesome? I don't most the time, but God thinks I am, so I am! I do believe God thinks of us as His beloved wonder women (excuse my modernization). Psalm 139:14 says,

I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. (NASB)

Day four God's Characteristics are Seen Through His Creation

We are going to look at God's character throughout this study. Getting to know God's characteristics will enable you to get to know Him better. Romans 1:20 teaches us that, God's character, or Who He is, is seen and understood by the things that He has made.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (NASB)

I would like to remind you as you travel the road of life, to look for God's character in His creation. If you have ever seen the movie, "March of the Penguins," you saw the sacrificial love the penguins have for their young. I thought, "Wow! What an example of God's love."

Let's begin with the most important of God's characteristics to us. It is His love. God's love permeates who He is. God is sovereign, but His rule is acted out through His love. God is all-powerful, but every act of His power is done because of His love. God's act of creation was an act of love which resulted in life for all things.

God is love.

"*Agape*" is the Greek word that best describes God's love. *Agape* means, unselfish love that is driven by what is best for the person loved, not by the person loving. In other words, it is an unselfish, unconditional, and sacrificial love. I think we think God loves us out of duty not out of desire. However, "*agape*" love suggests that the lover finds joy in that something or someone. In other words, God's love is bursting with emotion for us.

The Hebrew word that best describes God's love is defined by the word "*hesed*". This word is translated love, unfailing love, lovingkindness, mercy, and loyalty. It is used about 250 times in the Old Testament. It means loyal, steadfast or faithful love. It also stresses the idea of belonging together for those involved in the love relationship. Both words make me think of the joy and the total commitment a bride and groom have for each other on their wedding day. God has been waiting eagerly to love you!

1. **Read about God's love from Jeremiah 31:3, Hosea 2:19-20, Zephaniah 3:17, Ephesians 1:4, 2:4-5, 3:17-19, 5:2, 23-32 and Revelations 19:7-9.** Write down any insights and applications that the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

2. What does God's love mean to you? Use a Bible verse in your answer.
(Example: When I feel unloved, I think about the fact that God loved me so much that He died for me. (Ephesians 5:2))

3. Love should permeate everything we do. God tells us and shows us how to love through His Word, with His Spirit. We will never completely *agape* love anyone because it is a supernatural phenomenon coming from the God of love! God does want to empower us to come as close to His love as humanly possible. Take some time with God right now and ask Him to empower you to love someone you don't particularly love, with His type of love.
Prayerfully thank Him for His love of you!

We see God's power in creation. Wouldn't it have been quite thrilling to have seen God create the visible universe from things we cannot see (Hebrews 11:3)? When I think God spoke the universe and our world into being without lifting a finger, I am dumbfounded with such power. Let's take a look at God being all-powerful.

God is Omnipotent which means all powerful, almighty

Many leaders throughout history have done awful and quite horrifying things because they have the power to do them. Think of Hitler. Just turn on the TV and you will hear how someone has misused his or her power. No one or nothing can stop God from doing what He wants to do with His power. Aren't you so glad His power is permeated by His love? If you doubt that His love leads His power, just think about His willingness to put Himself under the control of sinful men and die from a man-made torture, death by crucifixion, out of His love for you.

4. **Read about God's power from Psalm 62:11-12a, Daniel 4:34-35, and John 11:33- 45.** Write down any insights and applications the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

5. What does God's power mean to you? Use a Bible verse in your answer. (Example: When I am powerless to change my situation, I need to trust in God, who can turn death into life. (John 11:43-44))

6. No one in history has been all powerful like God except for Jesus Christ. Some people would like to be all powerful, but thank God they are not. Power does seem to corrupt sooner or later. As Christians, God certainly won't make us all powerful, but He does want us to have access to the power we need to live the right way, which is His way. We get His power by being connected to Him through His Spirit (Acts 1:8). **Personalize 2 Timothy 1:7** by writing the verse out and putting your name where the word "us" is.

For God has not given us [gini] a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. (NASB)

Day 5 If God Created Us Wonderfully, Why Isn't life Perfect?

In Genesis 2:16-17, God gave Adam and Eve just one command that they needed to obey, but they did not obey it. They did what God told them not to do – eat from the tree that gives the knowledge of good and evil (or bad). A world-wide nuclear war would have had less life changing effects on all of us than what Adam and Eve did! This disobedience brought the awful consequences of sin and death into God's perfectly created world.

1. **Read Genesis 2 and 3** and summarize the 2 chapters or draw a picture of what goes on in each chapter. This will help you to remember and understand what you read. Do you see a contrast between these two chapters? If you do, write it out.

2. **End of the lesson application:** Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind one thing you learned from this lesson that He wants you to remember and make a part of your life. Be quiet before God and wait on Him to tell you. Write it down and ask Him to help you to do it!

Prayerfully plan an outdoor outing with God this week. I like to drive somewhere, where I can safely observe His creation, and talk to Him about it. Or, you might want to take a walk and enjoy His creation. If you are doing this study in a group setting, be ready to share your outdoor experience with God to your group.

Bibliography

Many of my ideas on love, goodness, and the image of God that I share in this lesson were obtained from the following sources.

Love

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Good

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God's Image

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Wayne Grudem, **Systematic Theology**, p 448-449.

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