

TRANSITION:

Good morning Church! As we get started here, let me encourage you - regardless of how your week has been/good, bad, ugly, or somewhere in between/regardless of what is most top-of mind right now - THIS is sacred time: An opportunity to hear from our Heavenly Father through the teaching of His Scriptures. SO if you have a Bible or Bible App, and I hope you do, go ahead and open it to...the first page/**Genesis chapter 1**...If you recall, two weeks ago when we launched these every-other-week, virtual Sunday Gatherings, we also began a year-long teaching series through the Bible called, "*True Myth: From Genesis to Revelation*" - the name taken from C.S. Lewis, who called the Bible a "*True Myth*," meaning a worldview-forming, grand story up there with all the greatest stories ever told...EXCEPT...that it's true! And really the reason we're doing this series is because for most people/even perhaps many of us, the Bible is treated similarly to like a...Shakespearean play, meaning there's clearly great value in Shakespeare's plays right? Otherwise they wouldn't still be performed 500 years later. BUT that doesn't mean we always understand or find em to be relevant to our lives...Unfortunately, that's often how we see the Bible. Perhaps a helpful book with some nice phrases/certainly one of the most quoted books in the world. BUT you've never brought it all together in one, unified whole and SEEN that in all the stories, commands, genealogies, and characters OF the Bible, there's really just ONE story being told - A story NOT about you and your life, but about Jesus and the giving of HIS life so that YOU can experience real life! And so that's what we're hoping to do this year/bring it all together for you and those you know!

TEXT:

SO, without further adieu: **Genesis 1!** Starting, as the title of my message indicates, "*In The Beginning*"!...Follow along if you will, as I read **vv.1-3** and **26-31** to us:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" ...Jump down to v.26... "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." - This is a part of God's Story...

When my daughters were younger, hide-and-go seek was THE game of choice around our house. And as I think back to how we played and honestly, how Charley Grace, whose 4, still plays, I

remember...how boring it all was. Cuz one of my daughters'd say, "Daddy, will you play hide-and-go seek with me?" And being the amazing Dad that I am, I'd of course say, "Sure sweetie! You wanna hide or seek?" Which you parents know is a really dumb question, cuz every time the kid chooses to hide. But I'd say, "Ok I'll count to 10 and you hide." And without fail, when I'd get to 10 and open my eyes, I'd find my daughter NOT having hidden, but rather having simply scrunched down next to a chair or something and covered her eyes with her hands. Plain sight, but just not picking up her eyes, and so kinda missing out on a lot of the fun.

From the very beginning, the Bible opens NOT by telling you how to fix your life, but by telling you to pick up your eyes and fix them on God! It opens, as you heard read, by inviting YOU to open YOUR eyes and see, *that ALL life is found in God and there is no life outside of Him...* And there's 3 things this text tells us you have to wrap up in God if you're gonna experience/not miss-out on His life. 3 Things: Your **Meaning** and **Purpose**, Your understanding of **Love**, and Your **Hope**...*First*, your **Meaning** and **Purpose**. Ya notice the first words in the entire Bible are what? "In the beginning God..." Why's that significant? It's significant BECAUSE it shows you that your existence/your purpose in life is not by accident! See, in most other creation accounts, the universe is said to be an accident - usually of multiple gods who engaged in a some sort of cosmic battle, that resulted in the accidental creation of things. In one myth, the human race is said to have arisen from the blood of a slain god!...Even within secular thought, life is considered to be nothing more than the byproduct of an accidental explosion of primordial ooze...BUT the Bible begins by saying, "No!" Creation/humanity/YOU, "as male and female, in God's image"...are not an accident! YOU are the intentional artwork of a creative God, who's always existed, and who created "ex nihilo" - from nothing!

Now here's why this is important: If all things come from God and God's made you in His image, then the only way you'll ever be able to find true *Meaning* and *Purpose*, is if you find it in God...THAT'S how, we're being told here, God's designed things. I heard a great illustration of this by Tim Keller. He said, "imagine looking at a soaring hawk."² And we've probably all seen it right? Soaring through the sky/carried along by the air currents/totally free. You can almost get jealous when you see their ability...But step back for a second. You ever seen a hawk on the ground? Even better, on the ground being chased by a predator? Not a pretty sight. Cuz those things can't run. And when they try, they usually get eaten. As far as I know, hawks are pretty useless on the ground. BECAUSE they're built for the sky! They're designed to ride the air currents and when they're abiding by that design, there's almost total freedom! It's only when they ignore or reject their design that they find themselves in "enslaved" in some way. The same is true for you. God has designed you for Himself/built you to find your meaning and purpose in Him, such that when you submit to that design there's life and freedom. But when you ignore or reject it, there's always pain and slavery. The French mathematician and physicist Blaise Pascal used to describe it by saying we're created with a "God-sized hole in our hearts." And to be sure, we try to fill that hole with all kinds of things right?: The love of our parents; the praise of

¹ "Gen 1:1-3 // The Beginning // *The Whole Story #2*" - J.D. Greear - <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=38c24688-3e55-4d37-8e12-ec0c5d7a1e41>

² "Before the Beginning - Bible: The Whole Story—Creation and Fall—November 16, 2008 - Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-3, 10-14 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

others; money; success; our families; our looks; morality; sex; even drugs and alcohol...only to find that because those things can't fill up your "God-seized hole," the happiness, meaning and purpose you think is always just around the corner, continually seems to elude you.³

For some of you, this is why no matter how many personality tests you take, therapy sessions you attend, or circumstances you change, ya still never seem to find real **Meaning** and **Purpose**. Because the One from whom all life flows, is not at the center of YOUR life. It's like this key Abby and I found recently in an old drawer. Little gold key that we had no idea what it went to. So of course w went around trying it out on all the different locks, each time thinking, "*ok this 'll be the one that opens up.*" That's some of you today: Life is like that key that you don't quite know what it's for, so no matter how many "locks and doors" you try, real **Meaning** and **Purpose** never really open up for you... You haven't wrapped your **Meaning** and **Purpose** up in God, EITHER cuz you don't really know Him/might know some things ABOUT Him, but you don't really know HIM, at least as He's revealed Himself in this book, OR you do, but're unwilling to surrender to His design for you. Your **Meaning** and **Purpose**.

Second, your understanding of **Love** also has to be wrapped up in God: Look in **v.2** and **v.26**. Those are incredible verses, because what they're showing you is that God didn't create you to FIND love, as if life is a kind of cosmic Match.com. He created you to BE loved! Let me show you what I mean: Numerous scholars have pointed out that when **v.2** says that God's Spirit was "*hovering,*" it's connoting the image of a mother bird fluttering over her young/a really intimate and warm image showing that when God was bringing life into existence by His word - "*Let there be light. Let there be water. Let there be animals, etc*" - He was doing so with the kind of overseeing love and care that a mother bird would have for her young. See?...Now go to **v.26** where it says, "*God said, 'Let US make man in our image, after our likeness...*" And you've obviously got an allusion to the Trinity there - God as 1 God, in 3 persons - Father, Son and Spirit, which I know is a crazy thought. In the NT, the Apostle Paul said the best analogy for the Trinity is marriage, since in a marriage, you've got two distinct beings/a man and a woman coming together, as one essence to form a community of love within themselves.⁴ That's God and as Trinity, He's there creating you and me...how?...AFTER Himself! What are they saying? Keller says, "*They're saying, 'Let's make these beings able to give what WE are giving each other. Let's make em able to love and be loved, know and be known, praise and be praised, enjoy and be enjoyed. Let's make em capable of...entering our dance.'*"⁵ Cuz have you've ever seen two, truly skilled dancers? When they move, it's almost like they're moving as one essence. But the only way they're able to do that is if they both have a profoundly "other-person" orientation. The minute one of the dancers decides to lead when they shouldn't or not follow when they should, is the minute the dance breaks down... That's God! One essence, in 3 distinct persons engaging in this perfect, eternal dance AND creating to invite you into it!

³ Section starting at "The human heart..." adapted from "Gen 1:1-3 // The Beginning // *The Whole Story #2*" - J.D. Greear - <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=38c24688-3e55-4d37-8e12-ec0c5d7a1e41>

⁴ Analogy from "Gen 1:1-3 // The Beginning // *The Whole Story #2*" - J.D. Greear - <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=38c24688-3e55-4d37-8e12-ec0c5d7a1e41>

⁵ Made for Relationship - Genesis—The Gospel According to God—October 29, 2000 - Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18-25 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

So here's what this means: When God created humanity/YOU, He didn't do so because He was lonely. No! He created you as an overflow of His love! He created you, not because He needed to be loved BY you, but because He wanted to share His perfect love WITH you. He created you to BE loved... which not ironically, is why in the NT, Christians are referred to as "the Beloved." Those who are BE-LOVED by God! See, because you're created in the image of a loving God, your life will never really be complete UNTIL you're living in love with Him AND others who know Him. 2 Parts there and ya gotta have both. **First**, you gotta have that love relationship with God. C.S. Lewis famously said, "*God invented you as a person invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline right? And it won't run properly on anything else. God designed (you) to run on Himself...and no other.*"⁶ This is why, even in the best of human love-relationships, there can still be lovelessness, loneliness, rejection. Because while those horizontal relationships are good and needed; at their best, they're still just approximations of the VERTICAL love relationship you're created to have with God. Until your understanding of **Love** is first wrapped up in God, the best you can hope for is to be tossed about by the fickle, imperfect love of others! You gotta have that love relationship with God. But **Too**, you DO have to be in loving relationships with others who know God. And I know in our wildly individualistic culture, which basically says that relationships are subservient to things like personal success, even to the point that we Christians can think that our Christianity is ultimately about "me and God" and "feeling at peace with God"⁷...the truth is: If God is a Trinitarian "Us", then you can't possibly believe you'll truly get to know and love Him without...an "us"⁸ - A community/a family, that while bound to be messy, is nonetheless committed to each other and knowing God together... This is WHY we don't JUST gather like this on Sundays, but also encourage you to be in a DNA Group and a Missional Family Meal, so that you can have a people committed to helping you know God's love for you/a DNA Group, and THEN share His love with others/a Missional Family Meal... Your understanding of **Love** has to be wrapped up in God.

Now before I mention the Final thing, let me pause and address 2 questions that usually get asked here. **First**, the question about the differences between **Genesis 1** and **Genesis 2**, since they both to giving the Creation account. And the short answer is: It's the difference between a wide-angle/panoramic photo and a close-up/portrait one. J.D. Greear helpfully says, "*Genesis 1 is not meant to be a historical documentation of every fact of creation; it's meant to be a poetic celebration of the WHO of creation. And that doesn't mean it's un-factual, just that its purpose is the celebration of the God in whom all life exists, NOT documentation.*"⁹ So you have to read these two chapters NOT as contradicting, but as a kind of overview that then zooms in... Which leads to the **Second** question: How bout all the others questions that get raised from Genesis 1 LIKE: Did God create the world in 7 literal days? How bout dinosaurs, or life in other galaxies? What's the deal with evolution? And could there be evolved dinosaurs living in other galaxies?...

⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperOne, 1980), pp. 49–50

⁷ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bring-sin-light/>

⁸ Made for Relationship - Genesis—The Gospel According to God—October 29, 2000 - Genesis 1:26–27; 2:18–25 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

⁹ Section starting at "The human heart..." adapted from "Gen 1:1–3 // The Beginning // *The Whole Story #2*" - J.D. Greear - <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=38c24688-3e55-4d37-8e12-ec0c5d7a1e41>

And I know you're gonna think I'm duckin' this, but here's the truth: From a strictly Bible Interpretation perspective, I don't think you can use JUST the text of Genesis 1 to come to any solid conclusions on any of those questions. Because again, the focus of Genesis 1 is that all life is in God, NOT HOW God brought all life to pass. Genesis 1 isn't a physics paper. It's an art canvas. So what you have to do is study it in the context of the rest of Scripture. So that's my encouragement to you: Study these questions! AND then when you have questions about em, email me...at EdSpence@HubChurch.com.

Ok **Third and Finally**, Your **Hope** has to be wrapped up in God if you wanna experience His life! In **vv.1-3** it says, "*The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep*"...So catch the picture here: There's this shapeless chaos in the beginning...UNTIL God speaks. And when He does, order is brought out of chaos. Out of this primordial darkness God's WORD brings light. You say, "*Ok so what?*" Here's what: "In the beginning" here, you and I are being shown what will become a pattern. And the pattern is this: Apart from God's word, there's chaos...UNTIL God's Word comes into your life/really until your whole life comes UNDER God's word, there's a "*formless void.*" That's the pattern, because as we'll see when we gather again in 2 weeks and look at **Genesis 3**/the account of Adam and Eve, you'll see that that whole narrative is predicated upon God speaking a word to Adam and Eve and them choosing to disobey that word, such that the result is chaos. Even in the very beginning, the pattern is: God's word is what creates, orders and brings both light and life, WHILE our sin is what de-creates, disorders and brings darkness and death...Sin, which is the rejection of God's Word in favor of living for yourself is why: Your family's hurting; Your self-image is filled with darkness; Your behaviors are littered with deceit, compromise...addiction, chaos...If you wanna see any amount chaos or darkness in some area of your life, turned to beauty, peace, and light, your **Hope** has to be grounded in God's Word. You have to come under His Word. To the degree that any area of your life is NOT under God's Word, THAT'S where you'll experience darkness, disorder, and death. To use OT imagery: You'll be like a city without walls or for us moderns, a computer with cyber security weaknesses. You'll be exposed. Every area of your life/your **Hope** has to be grounded in God's Word! And I don't just mean you gotta read more of Bible or memorize more Scripture/though both those are really good. I mean...You have to open your eyes to see that the Word is really a person in whom all life is found. Cuz in **John chapter 1**, we read this about Jesus Christ: "*In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made...In HIM was life, and the life was the light of men.*" You see? John opens His Gospel by connecting Jesus' life to Creation, BECAUSE Jesus THE WORD you understand, not only entered into a dark, sin-filled, chaotic world, and brought life and light to it, but on the cross allowed himself to be de-created, so that if you'll find your life in Him/come under His authority in everything, YOU can be re-created and re-ordered by His resurrection...Don't you see? Even from the first page of the Bible, we're being told that this isn't a story about you or me, and our lives, but about fixing your eyes on Jesus, who gave HIS life so that YOU can experience real life; have your **Meaning, Purpose, Love and Hope** all wrapped up in Him...Because in Him is ALL life and there is no life outside of Him! **Is He the center of your life today?**...Take a minute to think about that to yourself, after which we'll move into a brief time of discussion and application. Take a minute...

APPLICATION:

Because there may not be a more important question than that, I wanna give you a chance to not only contemplate it, but BEGIN discussing and applying it in community. So at this time we're gonna move into breakout rooms for just 10 minutes. And each of these Breakouts'll be organized by Missional Family Meal. So if you're connected to one, you'll be automatically placed with others in your Missional Family. If not - no worries - you're welcome to jump off, though we hope you'll stay and remain here for just a low-key time to connect and ask questions. But after 10min discussing the question that's gonna be put onscreen **NOW**...we'll all re-gather back here for a short time of celebration and sending. Ok? Ok! At this time we'll move into those breakout rooms and you can begin chatting together..."

- ***This Sunday's Application Questions: What would it mean for you to truly have Jesus at the center of your life - To more locate your Meaning/Purpose, Love and Hope in Him?***
- ***CHARLIE BREAKOUT: Welcome > How Connected > Q&A/Abridged Covenant Card Share***

CELEBRATION:

Hey, Welcome back! I know 10 minutes is certainly not long enough to fully unpack a question like that. BUT that's kinda the point. Our hope is that you would take this question, along with what we discussed today and continue the conversation in your Missional Family Meal time, as that's REALLY where we are invited in to apply and then live out the Scriptures together.

But in the meantime and before I send you out with a blessing, would 1 or 2 people be willing to come off mute and BRIEFLY share any Aha's today, or things you discussed that you feel like are evidence of God working, so that we can celebrate with you? Anyone?

SENDING:

Church as you are SENT into your week, to enjoy and share the life of God together, receive this truth from **Colossians 1:15-17**, "*He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by HIM all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (ESV)*" Go in peace, knowing that in Christ, is all life and there is no life outside of Him. You are SENT!