



YEAR 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

Module 1—Genesis Part 1

Lesson 1: God Desires Offspring—Genesis 1

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

(A theological and biblical reflection on today's Scripture passage.)

INTRODUCTION

Before there was anything there was God. God is. God has been and will be, forever. God's cosmic purpose is to love. Out of God's very being flows a holy love only fully comprehensible by God.

When God hovered over the earth, God embodied love. That is who God is—love. It is God's nature to love. This love is for you, the world, and me. God must love because God is love.

Somewhere in the cosmic timeline that only God is privy to, God desired to create beings that could experience God's love. God desires to share God's self with anyone who will love God in return. The stars, trees, lakes, planets, animals and of course humankind reflect the glory and splendor of not only God's creativity but also God's love.

Ruah is a Hebrew word that is often declared to be untranslatable by the English language. The word ruah is often used to mean breath, wind, or spirit. In Genesis 1, the word means "the Spirit of God." The Spirit of God was hovering over the earth seeking to reduce chaos to order for the purpose of creating life. As God moved about the darkness and void, God desired to create a world in which God could express God's love in relationship with God's creation.

GOD'S STORY

When God chose to order the world, God chose to bring form to formlessness, light to darkness, and dimension to the deep. This ordering of the universe into what we enjoy today wasn't a battle against evil forces as some may presume. This was not a fight against a forbidden angel or a war against formlessness, darkness, and deep. Rather, it was an indication that God is the Creator. It was truly out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) that God began to create—motivated by God's nature of love, creativity, beauty and trust.

OUR STORY

I think it is important to note that when humankind looks at the beginning of the first creation narrative in Genesis 1, what God created on the first day is not as important as the fact that God created with purpose. Christians today spend more time discussing the manner in which God may or may not have created on the first day than the fact that God created with purposefulness. God created for relationship's sake, not science's sake.

The Israelites would have asked very different questions about the origins of the cosmos than we would today. The Israelites would want to know why they were created or for what purpose, rather than trying to understand what was created and how it was created. These were a people hearing the cosmos narratives through the lenses of wandering and restlessness. Today, we read and hear the narratives through the lenses of settlement and safety. When we put ourselves in the place of the Israelites we find meaning in the purpose of creation—mutual loving relationship—than in the science behind it all. The creation narratives are not meant to be engaged in an evidential way. They are, however, to be engaged in a way that brings forth a longing for a pure relationship with the Creator.

When you approach the creation narratives with a theological lens as opposed to a scientific lens, you interpret the text in its original intended context and put into order the way in which God desires to act and work in the world. God's work is personal, as is God.

OTHERS' STORY

From eternity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit knew the joys of relationship. God created humanity to desire relationship as well. Knowing it is not good for man to be alone, God created a companion for man. God knew that man needed community, friendship and affection. The “helper (Eve)” that God created was not created to be lesser than man. On the contrary, Eve was created to bring strength and influence into the relationship.

In order for people to live in relationship the way that God intended for people to live in relationship they must do three things. First, they must see each other in the image of God. Each of us has been created in the *imago dei*, or the image of God. To understand another as created in the image of God requires an equal view of all. Second, to live in relationship the way that God intended for people to live in relationship they must realize that a mutual relationship is based on love. To love is to accept, not to manipulate or objectify another. Finally, to live in a relationship the way God intended for it to be we must think about our love and devotion in terms of quality or the highest conceivable love rather than in terms of quantity or the minimum. I don't reveal my love for my wife on solely the sum total of the number of kisses, hugs, and gifts. Instead, I reveal my love for my wife by my ever-increasing love, loyalty, trust, and devotion. This is how God intended for relationships to be.

THE WORLD'S STORY

Genesis 1:31 says, “And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”

We tend to see the world as a broken place, and it is. However, the world was intended to be a place of wholeness, not of brokenness. In our inability to see the world as good we see what's wrong with the world as opposed to the way God intends the world to be.

Some of us live out of a place of despair. We look around and can only see what is wrong, broken, sinful, and dark. This place of despair produces fear and anxiety. It creates within us (and potentially all those around us) a desire to hide from culture and to protect us and all of our loved ones from all that is wrong with the world. This pessimism brings forth merely life in the shadows instead of life in the open, vibrant, sun-filled warmth of hope. When we are overtaken by despair we don't live with hopeful imagination. In fact, when we live from a place of despair we see only victims of darkness instead of victors over darkness.

We must live from a place of hope. Let the framework of God's creation reign in you. Consider the big things like the heavens and stars, the work of God's hands (Psalm 8), and the glory that surrounds. Consider the small, beautiful things in life that reveal God's universal goodness—the seasons, the flowers, the kind acts of humanity. Also, consider the creativity of God in the animate things of this world and look deep into humankind and find the goodness in which they were created, not merely the sinfulness in which they are held captive. When we look onto this world through the eyes of Jesus, we find worth in all—even the worst of people. There is goodness in all of us—find it. Choose to live out of hope, not despair. God is actively restoring the world to its intended wholeness and we are a part of that. How is that not a hopeful imagination of our future together?