



# What Kind of Creator?

GENESIS 1:1—2:4a

Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion . . .”

Genesis 1:26



## Gather

### CHECK IN

Fill in the blank: Growing up, I was taught that the Bible and science are \_\_\_\_\_.

You may choose your own word or phrase to fill in the blank or use one of the following: opposed/unrelated/in harmony

If you do not recall learning anything about the Bible and science growing up, how do you think you might have answered this question when you were a teenager or young adult?

### OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us coworkers in your creation. Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature so that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*ELW*, p. 80)

### COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Following the facilitator's directions, read through the group covenant on page 9 together. Share your questions and observations with the group as they arise.



Then consider the following questions: Have you ever experienced a time when you felt like God’s “coworker” in creation? What was that experience like? How did it feel?

## Dwell

### DWELLING IN THE WORD

#### Genesis 1:1—2:4a

<sup>1:1</sup> When God began to create the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup> the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry

land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.<sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so.<sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.<sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,<sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.<sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.<sup>17</sup> God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth,<sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.<sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.”<sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.<sup>22</sup> God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”<sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so.<sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created humans in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> 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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”<sup>29</sup> God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.”<sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air 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.<sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>2:1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their multitude.  
<sup>2</sup> On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.<sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4</sup> These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

## CONVERSATION

1. What key words or phrases jump out to you in this passage? You might find them beautiful, meaningful, confusing, or troubling (or you might not yet know exactly why you noticed them). Write them below. Flag one or two of these phrases for the group as topics you would like to talk about at some point.
2. What are some of the different things that God does in this story besides speaking? What can we say about *who God is* based on these actions? Here are some examples:
  - ♦ Separating (vv. 6-7): This might imply that God creates by bringing a measure of order to chaos. It also suggests that God works with what is available, whatever state it is in, rather than always starting from scratch.

- ♦ Assessing (vv. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25): God seems to take pride in creating things that are “good.” (Notice also that in verse 31, the sixth day, God adds that it is “very good.”) Is it possible for God to create something that is “not good”? What might God do in such a situation?
- ♦ Blessing (vv. 22, 28): One way that God creates is by sharing the task with creation itself. God’s first command in the Bible is literally to “get busy.” As you consider this, remember also that not all people can or choose to have children. What are some of the manifold ways that we can “be fruitful and multiply” within God’s creation without necessarily having children?

What other things do you see God doing in this story? What theological ideas might these actions imply?



3. Do you believe that the stories of creation in the Bible, like Genesis 1 and 2, are at odds with evidence-based theories for the origin of the universe, like the “big bang” or evolution? Is it necessary for people of faith to defend, harmonize, or coordinate the Bible and scientific accounts, or is it possible to live in the tension?
4. “Dominion” (v. 26) is a well-known and frequently misunderstood word in this passage. What are some potentially harmful ways to interpret this verse? Alternatively, what are some potentially positive ways to interpret it? You might take a moment to read through a summary of the ELCA statement on the environment available online to stimulate your thinking on this topic: [resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/environment-summary/](https://resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/environment-summary/).



# Engage

## WORD AND SERVICE

A new idea about God and creation I encountered today was . . .

## WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Turn to page 328 in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and follow the order for Responsive Prayer together. After the prayer of the day (p. 330), all will have the chance to share their own prayer concerns and thanksgivings.

## SESSION RECAP

God creates dynamically and relationally. We become coworkers with God when we contribute to the creation of beauty, justice, and life in our communities. Like God, we can commit both to creating from scratch and to creating from what is there, even when it needs a lot of work. While it is undeniable that humanity has power and dominion in the world, God's creation is not ours to do with as we wish. Rather, we have a calling to serve God and God's creation harmoniously, recognizing that God also has distinct relationships with other people and with the nonhuman world.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GOING DEEPER

- ✦ Read the introduction to Genesis in *Lutheran Study Bible, Second Edition* or another study Bible of your choosing. How does it illuminate this session's scripture text?
- ✦ Compare another translation of Genesis 1:1—2:4a with that of the NRSVue. (An especially instructive version to compare is the New Jewish Publication Society translation [NJPS], which is available for free online at [tinyurl.com/22vvxk58](http://tinyurl.com/22vvxk58).) What differences do you notice? What factors might have contributed to these differences? How do they open up the scripture text in a new way?

- ✦ Volunteer in a community project that embodies God's mandate to create and re-create the world. If you cannot find one, consider organizing a public cleanup, improvement of a neglected space, or gardening activity for your community.
- ✦ For further reading on the theme of creation and re-creation in Genesis, look up these passages, or read one per day.
  - ♦ Genesis 2:7-9
  - ♦ Genesis 6:5-8
  - ♦ Genesis 11:1-9
  - ♦ Genesis 24:10-21
  - ♦ Genesis 25:19-28
  - ♦ Genesis 41:14-36
  - ♦ Genesis 49:22-26
- ✦ Here are some prompts you might use this week in your personal prayer or journaling.
  - ♦ Scripture reports both that humanity is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and that the Son of God, Jesus, was incarnated as a human being (Luke 1:30-33; Philippians 2:5-11). In what ways do you feel God is both like and unlike you?
  - ♦ Make a list of the creative projects you have done or would like to do. Include acts of creation that restore, revitalize, or redirect existing things. What connections do you see between your creative work and God's creative work in Genesis 1:1—2:4a?
  - ♦ Study Genesis 1:1—2:4a again and write down everything that God creates. Identify all the places in your life where you encounter the different parts of God's creation.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is Genesis 3:1-24, the story of Eve, Adam, and the talking serpent. This scripture text promises that we are not destined to live with the consequences of past mistakes, but called to participate in God's restoration of what has been broken.

