



SESSION 1 LEADER GUIDE

HOST CODE: 246810

LEADER NOTES

_____ WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

Offer a personal welcome.

Ask how the group did with the Daily Assignment and ask whether anyone needs clarification on how to use the app.

Ask participants to open their app to the session's Meeting Guide.

_____ BEGIN SESSION (10 MINUTES)

Share the following:

Follow along with me silently in the **Meeting Opening segment** of your Meeting Guide as I read aloud these key items from this session.

Theme Word: Creation

Title: The Creating God

Theme Verse:

"God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them"
(Genesis 1:27).

Our Human Condition:

I wonder who made me and my world. If there is a creator, what is this creator like? Why was I made? Scientists say some rocks are billions of years old and stars millions of light years away. In a universe so big, surely I am only a speck of dust. Does God really have anything to do with me?

Briefly summarize what was shared by participants in the Group Discussion Question thread on this session's Human Condition.

Summary of discussion thread:

Opening Prayer

Share the following:

Thank you for using the Prayer Request board in the app this week. Please continue to do so throughout this study. Let's keep in mind the Prayer Requests as we use this week's Psalm as our opening prayer.

(Read the Psalm and offer any other brief words of prayer.)

"Your hands have made me and set me in place.
Help me understand so I can learn your commandments"
(Psalm 119:73).

A Biblical Scholar's Perspective

Share the following:

This week you heard our scholar share information meant to enhance our understanding of the scripture. What comments does anyone have on that video? You'll find any notes you took in the **Meeting Opening segment** of your Meeting Guide. *(Allow a couple of comments.)*

EXPLORE "THE CREATING GOD" (15 MINUTES)

Share the following:

The Bible is made up of 66 books with a variety of types of literature. This week you read samples of them. We are not yet concerned about the meaning of these verses. We just wanted you to experience a sampling. Let's have a quick show of hands *(pause between each of the following questions to allow*

for participation): Who enjoyed history the most? Law? Prophecy? Letters? Gospels? As you observed, each type of literature has its own characteristics. Some are easier to read than others. We will read a large portion of each type in the study!

Many different people wrote the Bible over hundreds of years. The process used to determine what would be in the Bible was called “the canonization of Scripture.” This happened over a long period of time during the early church when authorities gathered to use specific criteria to decide which writings to include and which to leave out. The collection in our Bible today was finalized in 397 CE.

Now let’s begin at the very beginning of the Bible, with Creation.

In this session, we read the two Creation stories in Genesis. You may find it interesting to know that there are many more ancient creation stories. Some include the sequence of days, darkness before light, and a division of the waters, but many also feature conflict between several gods. However, in Genesis, there is only one God, and God is the Creator. The one God, Yahweh, brought creation out of chaos by using words alone. These ideas are unique to Genesis.

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

Divide the class into **random breakout rooms of 3-4** participants and set the countdown clock for **20 minutes**. Tell participants to choose a small-group leader who will keep the discussion moving.

Tell participants to use the Small-Group Discussion segment of their Meeting Guide for content, questions, and answers they saved during their Daily Assignments.

Ask the groups to spend the next **20 minutes** on this activity. (The leader should participate in one of the small-group discussions. There is no need to have small groups report their discussions to the whole group.)

Note: The content of the Small-Group Discussion guide is included at the end of this document.

BREAKOUT ROOM GUIDE

Participants (excluding leader and co-leader)	15	12-14	9-11	6-8
Breakout rooms needed	5	4	3	2

BROADCAST MESSAGES

Countdown timer says:	Message to broadcast
15 minutes remaining	5 minutes elapsed ... 15 remaining
10 minutes remaining	Halfway through our breakouts
5 minutes remaining	5 minutes remaining
1 minute remaining	60 seconds remaining in breakouts

GROUP OPEN DISCUSSION (5 MINUTES)

Ask if there are any thoughts or questions about this session's content that have not been covered in this group meeting. As time allows, address comments. Remind participants that any topics not addressed can also be discussed on the Group Message Board. Be sure not to exceed the time allotted because the Mark of Discipleship section and Personal Prayer section are critical to the study.

CONSIDER THE MARK OF DISCIPLESHIP (10 MINUTES)

Share the following:

Please go the **Mark of Discipleship segment** of your Meeting Guide and follow along. Here is this session's Human Condition and Mark of Discipleship. (Ask a participant to read these.)

Our Human Condition: *I wonder who made me and my world. If there is a creator, what is this creator like? Why was I made? Scientists say some rocks are billions of years old and stars millions of light years away. In a universe so big, surely I am only a speck of dust. Does God really have anything to do with me?*

Mark of Discipleship: *Disciples know they belong to God, that God has claim on them.*

Share the following:

Remember that the Marks of Discipleship emphasize characteristics or practices of a Christ-follower. The "mark" is the disciple's response to Our Human Condition each session.

Mark of Discipleship 1:1's (8 MINUTES)

Divide the class into **random breakout rooms of 2-3 participants** and set the countdown timer for **8 minutes**.

Tell participants to use the Mark of Discipleship segment of their Meeting Guide for the content, questions, and answers they saved during their Daily Assignments. (The leader should participate in one of the pairings. There is no need to have paired participants report their discussions to the entire group.)

BREAKOUT ROOM GUIDE

Participants (<u>excluding</u> leader and co-leader)	14-15	12-13	10-11	8-9	6-7
Breakout rooms needed	7	6	5	4	3

BROADCAST MESSAGES

Countdown timer says:	Message to broadcast
4 minutes	Halfway through our breakouts
1 minute remaining	60 seconds remaining in breakouts

Below is what participants will discuss in their breakouts:

- + *We are God's creatures. As Christian disciples, we know we belong to God. God has claim on us. How do you show that you belong to God in the way you live?*
- + *Clearly, the Creation stories give us responsibility for caring for the planet, for plants and animals, birds and fish, air, and water. What are you doing to exercise this stewardship of all creation?*
- + *Describe your day of rest. How does it reflect a quiet trust in the great, good, and loving God who has created you and who will sustain you? How could you rest more creatively on your Sabbath?*

CLOSE WITH PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Share the following:

Now please turn to the **Meeting Closing segment** of your Meeting Guide. As we prepare to close in prayer, I want to remind you that you can use the Prayer Request chain section of the app at any time to share joys, sorrows, or personal needs, and that we should all be reading the requests and praying for one another daily.

In the Response to the Mark of Discipleship section on Day 5, you were prompted to write a Personal Prayer in response to this week's learning. You can find what you wrote in the Meeting Closing segment of your Meeting Guide.

The prayer could be a simple sentence such as "Help me to understand fully that I am made in the image of God," or "Help me to take better care of the earth," or "Show me how to honor the Sabbath," or "Help me to grow in my understanding of the Scriptures." Or you can pray for anything that you feel God has impressed upon your heart or mind as you have progressed through this week's learning. Please take the next minute to make any updates to your Personal Prayer as a result of today's discussion. I'm going to ask each of you to share your Personal Prayer in a moment as I close our meeting. Also, you can access your Personal Prayer each day of the coming week as you pray the Daily Psalm.

Give participants a minute to type.

I will start our closing prayer. I'll call on each of you when it is time to share your Personal Prayer. I will also indicate when it is time for you to share any additional prayer concerns, whether they are about our world, or community, or our study group. You may raise your hand to share aloud.

Closing Prayer

LORD, we know as your disciples we belong to you and that you have a claim on us. Now hear our individual prayers in response to what we have learned at the start of our journey together.

(Call on each participant.)

LORD, we bring to you these Personal Prayers as well as the following needs.

(Ask participants to speak up to add to their prayers.)

We bring you these and all of our unspoken prayer requests in Christ's name. Amen.

Remind participants to use the study group roster to pray for each person in the coming week.

End

LEADER NOTES

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

Select one person in your small group to be the timekeeper, allotting about 10 minutes per story.

You will be transferred back into the main group when the breakout time expires.

First Creation Story (Genesis 1:1-2:3)

The text of Genesis 1-2 is found below if needed for reference.

What does this story teach us about God?

What does this story teach us about humankind?

What does this story teach us about the relationship between God and humankind?

Genesis 1:27 says, “God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.”

What do you suppose it means to be made “in God’s own image”?

Genesis 2:2-3 says, “On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.”

How do you understand Sabbath rest?

Second Creation Story (Genesis 2:4-25)

The text is found below if needed for reference.

What does this story teach us about God?

What does this story teach us about humankind?

What does this story teach us about the relationship between God and humankind?

Genesis 1-2

World’s creation in seven days

“When God began to create the heavens and the earth—the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters—God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And so

light appeared. God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light Day and the darkness Night. There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

“God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other.’ God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. God named the dome Sky.

“There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

“God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear.’ And that’s what happened. God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. God said, ‘Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth.’ And that’s what happened. The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

“There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

“God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth.’ And that’s what happened. God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

“There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

“God said, ‘Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.’ God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. Then God blessed them: ‘Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.’

“There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

“God said, ‘Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.’ And that’s what happened. God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.’

“God created humanity in God’s own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.’ Then God said, ‘I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything

crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.’ And that’s what happened. God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

“There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

“The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

World’s creation in the garden

“On the day the LORD God made earth and sky—before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the LORD God hadn’t yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land, though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land— the LORD God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life’s breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. The LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east and put there the human he had formed. In the fertile land, the LORD God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

“A river flows from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides into four headwaters. The name of the first river is the Pishon. It flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. That land’s gold is pure, and the land also has sweet-smelling resins and gemstones. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It flows around the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris, flowing east of Assyria; and the name of the fourth river is the Euphrates.

“The LORD God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. The LORD God commanded the human, ‘Eat your fill from all of the garden’s trees; but don’t eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!’ Then the LORD God said, ‘It’s not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him.’ So the LORD God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found.

“So the LORD God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. With the rib taken from the human, the LORD God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being. The human said,

“‘This one finally is bone from my bones
and flesh from my flesh.
She will be called a woman
because from a man she was taken.’

“This is the reason that a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife, and they become one flesh. The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they weren’t embarrassed.”