

September 9

Lesson 2 (NIV)

## GOD CREATES LIGHTS AND LIFE

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Psalm 136:1–9](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Genesis 1:14–25](#)

### [GENESIS 1:14–25](#)

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from 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 water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase 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 land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

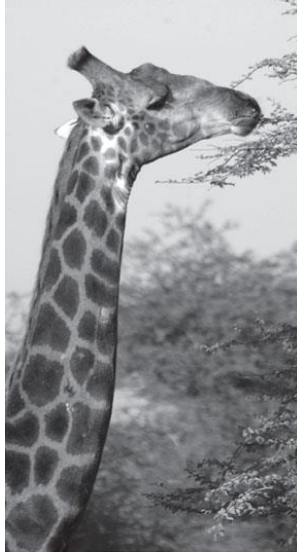


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## KEY VERSE

*God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years."—[Genesis 1:14](#)*

# GOD'S WORLD AND GOD'S PEOPLE

## Unit 1: God Creates the World

LESSONS [1–5](#)

### LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Relate what came into being on the fourth, fifth, and sixth days of creation.
2. Explain the permanent patterns of created order as found in [Genesis 1](#).
3. Write a personal "Creation Declaration" that describes a way he or she will honor God for his creation.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### [Introduction](#)

- A. ["Where Did We Come From?"](#)
- B. [Lesson Context](#)

I. Day Four (GENESIS 1:14–19)

A. Seasonal Cycle Created (vv. 14, 15)

B. Sun and Moon Created (vv. 16–19)

*Drawn to the Light*

II. Day Five (GENESIS 1:20–23)

A. Avians and Aquatics Created (vv. 20, 21)

*Light and Life*

B. Abundant Supply Created (vv. 22, 23)

III. Day Six (GENESIS 1:24, 25)

A. Animals Created (v. 24)

B. Animal Categories (v. 25)

Conclusion

A. For the Beauty of the Earth

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

## HOW TO SAY IT

Deuteronomy *Due-ter-ahn-uh-me.*

Leviticus *Leh-vit-ih-kus.*

Pentateuch *Pen-ta-teuk.*

## Introduction

### A. “Where Did We Come From?”

Almost all cultures attempt to answer the question above. But as we saw in last week’s lesson, every proposed answer ultimately takes one of two positions: we trace our origins either (1) to eternally existing impersonal matter or (2) to an eternally existing personal being.

Explanations that fall into the latter category are often labeled “myths,” a term that injects an air of untruth into the story. If an explanation is mythical, it can be consigned (some think) to the area of religion and therefore marginalized. Secular culture tells us to keep our religious views separated from the larger issues of our culture.

Today this is seen in the apparent conflict between those who adopt a scientific viewpoint that disallows supernatural explanations and those who accept the Bible as God’s revealed Word. *Where did we come from?* We want to know, and competing explanations are set in opposition.

One side explains origins through a theory of a spontaneous “big bang” and billions of years of development. While this theory draws on certain facts derived from scientific investigation, it cannot explain where the matter for a so-called big bang came from. It cannot explain why there are laws of nature that allow this bang and subsequent development. Can there be laws of physics without a lawgiver?

The other side listens to the account given in Genesis plus other Bible texts that speak of creation by a Creator. These accounts will not answer every question a scientist might want to ask, but that is not their intent. The biblical account of origins reveals an orderly plan for the creation of the heavens and the earth.

#### ***What Do You Think?***

What resources have you found valuable for resolving tensions between faith and science? Which will you recommend to others?

#### ***Digging Deeper***

Research the concept of “evidential faith” at [www.coldcasechristianity.com](http://www.coldcasechristianity.com).

## **B. Lesson Context**

Christians look to Genesis to explain God’s orderly creation of the universe, and this it certainly does. We should not forget, however, that Genesis is also a part of a five-volume set: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This collection of books, sometimes called the Pentateuch, is associated with Moses. He is the great hero of ancient Israel, and he is the primary character in the books beginning with Exodus (see [Luke 24:44](#)). These books answer the question of human origins from the perspective of the nation of Israel.

As these books relate the origin and history of Israel, the early chapters of Genesis go all the way back to the origins of humanity as a whole, because the people of Israel have common ancestors with all other peoples. Genesis gives an account of the origins of the world and the universe that surrounds us.

Last week’s lesson took us through the third day of creation. To summarize: day one related the creation of light and its separation from darkness. Day two told of the creation of a vault, a barrier that separates the water above it from the water below it. And day three described the emergence of dry land and the furnishing of this land with vegetation.

## I. Day Four

([GENESIS 1:14–19](#))

### A. Seasonal Cycle Created (vv. [14](#), [15](#))

**14a.** And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night,

As with the other days of creation, this one, the fourth, begins with God speaking. Having created “light” (singular) on the first day, God now creates *lights* (plural; compare [Psalm 136:7](#)). These are physical objects that serve specific purposes. For them *to separate the day from the night* speaks to the need for cyclical illumination of the earth.

**14b.** “and let them serve as signs

This illumination goes hand in hand with the lights’ being *signs*: things that attest to divine power at work. The idea is to give credit to God for his active role in the world. This is the word used to state the significance of the rainbow, given as a sign in the sky that God will not again destroy the earth by a flood ([Genesis 9:12–15](#)). While there might be the occasional extraordinary sign, the ordered nature of earthly cycles is a daily reminder of God’s provision and presence.

**14c.** “to mark sacred times, and days and years,

Beyond the signs, we now see three derivative manifestations of God’s order. First, the celestial lights also give us *sacred times*. The idea of seasons may be included (see below), but the idea as it develops throughout the Old Testament is more along the lines of time periods longer than 24 hours in general and the religious festivals of Israel’s calendar in particular. These become appointed times (example: [Exodus 23:15](#)) as determined by phases of the moon (compare [Psalms 81:3](#); [104:19](#).)

Hand in hand with such periods of time are the *days and years*. These are the familiar periods of 24 hours and 365 days, respectively. The yearly cycle is what gives us the seasons of fall, winter, spring, and summer (or, in some areas, the rainy season and the dry season).

All these provide order and regularity. We are created to thrive within this system. For example, astronauts who leave the earth still try to regulate their activities in 24-hour cycles. God has designed a world to fit us and created us to fit his world.

#### *What Do You Think?*

Since God is the author of the calendar, what are some ways to manage time that will honor him for that fact?

#### *Digging Deeper*

Which of the three *M*s of *modifying* your environment, *making* a commitment to another, and *monitoring* your behavior would work best for you in overcoming time management challenges? Why?

**15.** “and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so.

We should catch a little of the wonder and awe of the ancient author here. He understands the value and purpose of light (created on day one), of heavenly *lights* (created on day four), and of the need for *light on the earth*. We are created to be creatures of light, both physically and spiritually. The more science learns about sunlight, the more we realize our dependence on it for life.

Without the God-provided light that bathes our world on a regular basis, we would lead a sad existence—if any existence at all. The lighting of our world is a testimony to God’s love and care for us. It is an exciting comparison, then, for Jesus to take the role of “light of the world” ([John 8:12](#)), God’s loving answer to our spiritual darkness.

## B. Sun and Moon Created (vv. [16–19](#))

**[16](#). God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.**

The created order has three classifications of observable heavenly *lights*. First we have *the greater light*, the sun, which rules *the day*. This does not imply that the sun comes out when there is daylight. Rather, it’s the other way around: the sun defines and causes the day.

Likewise, *the lesser light*, the moon, defines a darker period, *the night*. Nights are not without some light, given the shadows we observe when the moon is bright. Even on nights of a new moon, *the stars* provide light, although dimly.

While we see God’s intentional patterns in creation here, we should also notice that the descriptions are observational, from the perspective of the author or any other human. It is silly to criticize this portrayal by saying that some of the stars we see are far bigger and brighter than our sun. It doesn’t appear that way from the author’s viewpoint, nor from any other unaided human viewpoint today. Stars are tiny in the amount of light they shed on the earth. This is the point.

**[17](#), [18](#). God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.**

These celestial lights—sun, moon, and stars—are placed *in the vault of the sky* by God to provide various degrees of *light on the earth*. Their intensity causes the distinction between daytime and nighttime. All of them counteract *darkness*, the absence of light. In this sense, they are testimonies to the presence of God in our world, for we are never without a heavenly light source.

As at the end of the previous day of creation, the author notes that God observes what he has created and approves by designating it as *good*. It is pleasing to him and beneficial to us.

### *What Do You Think?*

What responsibilities do we have to distinguish between moral light and darkness?

### *Digging Deeper*

What are some dangers that come with accepting this task? How do we manage them?

## ***DRAWN TO THE LIGHT***

Missionaries who live off the grid have a unique appreciation for light and for the creatures that are drawn to it. I remember huddling at night under a mosquito net with my old e-reader, reading with a small light. Every little bug that could fit through the mosquito net's holes would join me, irrepressibly drawn to the light. One time a battalion of tiny spiders began spinning their webs on the little light in my hands.

Another time my wife came stumbling into the room. "There's something in my ear!" she cried. She had been in a deep sleep and wasn't fully coherent, but I heard her say, "I can hear it breathing!"

I didn't see anything. I tried carefully probing with tweezers (which was difficult as she kept freaking out with shuddering spasms). As I held the flashlight over her ear, I tried to suggest that perhaps she had been dreaming and hadn't yet fully awoken. Then the insect's legs emerged from her ear, and a little beetle finished its journey out toward the flashlight. After it had found a more appropriate habitat, my wife thought the beetle, which had intricate colored markings on its tiny shell, was quite beautiful.

God's creation is amazing in its diversity. I shared an unlikely camaraderie with the creepy crawlies as we clustered around my little light under the mosquito net. We were fellow creatures created by God, attracted to the mysterious phenomenon of light that he created first. More importantly, we remember that spiritually we are "all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness" ([1 Thessalonians 5:5](#)).

—D. G.

### **19. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.**

As before, the cycle of what makes up a day is noted. The Bible's way of marking a day begins with sundown, a pattern still observed by Jews. It is not so much that night commences the new day as that the setting of the sun ends the old day. On the various possible meanings of *day*, see commentary on [Genesis 1:5](#) in lesson [1](#).

#### ***What Do You Think?***

What one improvement can you make to imitate better God's deliberate and rhythmic approach to work and creativity?

#### ***Digging Deeper***

What forces make it difficult for you to maintain a creative rhythm? What strategies can you adopt to overcome those challenges?

## **II. Day Five**

### **([GENESIS 1:20–23](#))**

#### **A. Avians and Aquatics Created (vv. [20](#), [21](#))**

**20. And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky."**

The ancient person sees the world in three parts: the watery world of seas, lakes, and rivers; the habitable world of dry ground; and the above-ground world of the atmosphere. Day five of creation begins, as the others have, with God speaking. On this day, God speaks into existence the living animals for the watery world and the sky. As before, this is presented from an observational perspective—what the author or any reader could see.

**21. So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.**

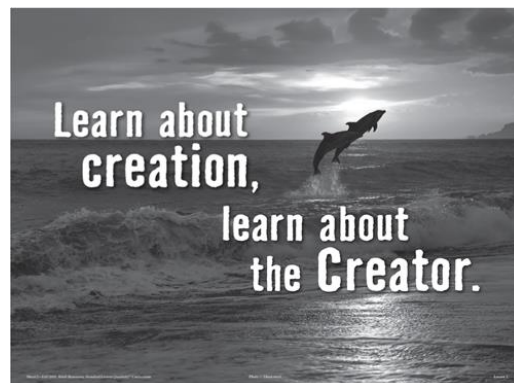
The unpolluted and unfished waters of the ancient world teem with life. This includes water creatures of massive size, something the author (Moses) is aware of on some level. Has he heard of *great creatures of the sea* (whales) that have breached the surface of the ocean or washed up on a beach? God's creation has variety that is barely imaginable for us. After hundreds of years of study, scientists are still discovering and classifying new water creatures (compare [Psalm 104:25](#)).

The author also acknowledges creation of the creatures of the atmospheric world, the birds. He knows that most creatures do not have the capability of flight—only those with wings. These make up a special and wonderful category of God's *good* created animals.

The author also gives another insight into the wonder and awe of the ancient person when it comes to beholding God's created order: the reproductive capability of water creatures and birds. This is their ability to produce offspring *according to their kinds*. Why does a sparrow always reproduce sparrows, not eagles sometimes? Why does a trout always reproduce trout, not barracudas sometimes? This is part of God's created order as observed by the author, and it is marvelous for him. As we appreciate the enormous variety of God's creatures, we should also understand the boundaries for variation he has built into each one.

#### **LIGHT AND LIFE**

There is a clear relationship between light and life in the creation account of Genesis. I recently stumbled across a book by scientist Michael Gross that explores this relationship from the perspective of modern secular science. After noting the vital linkage between light and life, he further reflects that even reading the page requires light reflecting onto retinas and being converted into nerve signals.





Visual for Lesson [2](#). Start a discussion by pointing to this visual as you ask, “Where is your favorite place to marvel at the wonders of God’s creation?”

Given modern humanity’s reliance on light for energy, information, and guidance, Gross concludes that it’s quite understandable that ancient cultures worshipped the sun. But despite his tone of wonder as he contemplates light, Gross takes a nonreligious stance himself.

I share this sense of wonder at the complex relationship between light and life. But for me, these observations elicit praise for the Creator of light and life. When I read of the outpouring of God’s creative activity in [Genesis 1](#), from the great lights of the heavens to the vast diversity of life in the land, sea, and sky, my heart joins the ancient psalmist’s in thanking the Lord, the Creator of all. See [Psalm 136:1–9](#).

—D. G.

### B. Abundant Supply Created (vv. [22](#), [23](#))

**[22](#). God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”**

How many of each type of fish or bird does God create to get things started? We don’t know, but we do see that his plan includes multiplication of these creatures. He intends that the salt waters and fresh waters be filled with appropriate creatures. God intends that his created variety of birds *increase in number* and spread throughout *the earth* (compare [Genesis 8:17](#)). It is a tragedy when a species becomes extinct because of human behavior.

**[23](#). And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.**

As the day ends by marking the cycle of *evening* and *morning*, the sustaining earth has been stocked in its waters and its air.

## III. Day Six

([GENESIS 1:24, 25](#))

### A. Animals Created (v. [24](#))

**[24a](#). And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds:**

God speaks again, on day six, to call into existence specific components of his overall created order. On this day God addresses the dry land, the earth itself. This will be the home of God’s ultimate creation, human beings, later in this same day ([Genesis 1:26–30](#)).

**[24b](#). “the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.**

There are three general categories of land animals presented. The first, *livestock*, is a generic term that generally refers to herded animals, and here it has the sense of domesticated livestock as distinct from wild animals (see below; also see the distinction in [Leviticus 25:7](#)). This may include goats and sheep, which are popular choices among cultures dependent on herding. Later in the history of Israel, it will be animals from this category that are considered ritually clean for food or sacrifice (see [Leviticus 11](#)).

The second category, the *creatures that move along the ground*, refers to creatures that live on the ground, including reptiles and snakes. Such animals will not be considered clean when the food laws are instituted for Israel ([Leviticus 11:42](#)). It is also likely that the tempting serpent of a coming story ([Genesis 3:1](#)) is included in this category.

The third category includes *the wild animals*. We might divide these into carnivores (example: lions), herbivores (example: gazelles), and omnivores (example: bears). Such animals might be hunted for food, but they are not part of a nomadic herd or a located farm.

## B. Animal Categories (v. [25](#))

**[25](#). God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.**

As with the creatures of the sea and air, the land creatures are made with the capacity to reproduce *according to their kinds*. Again, God finishes creating these three categories and sees his work as *good*.

We should notice there are many missing, undiscussed animals. These categories are quite general and not intended to be exhaustive. What about rodents—are they creeping things? What about insects and worms? Or, some might ask, what about dinosaurs? The silence of the text on such matters is just that: no information. It does not imply ignorance or avoidance. The author tells the story he wants to tell; and just as he does not divide the “stars” into planets, comets, meteors, and distant suns, he does not give more than a brief description of the creative activities of God on each of the days.

### *What Do You Think?*

Where will you unhurriedly allow creation to inspire you to worship the Creator this week?

### *Digging Deeper*

Which of the following texts speak to you most forcefully regarding the need to worship God as Creator: [Job 9:9](#); [38:31](#); [Psalm 19:1–3](#); [95:4–6](#); [104:5–24](#); [Isaiah 40:26](#); [Amos 5:8](#); [Romans 1:20](#)? Why?

## Conclusion

### A. For the Beauty of the Earth

The old hymn “For the Beauty of the Earth” was a favorite in years past. This hymn spoke to me when I was a child growing up in remote, mountainous Idaho. We can see God’s power, wisdom, and intellect in the lofty mountains, the sparkling streams, the lush forests, the soaring fir trees, the tranquil lakes, the majestic deer, the glorious eagles, and many other features of our earth.

The second line of the hymn is “for the glory of the skies.” This is one of the lessons of [Genesis 1](#), that God’s glory is shown in his creation of the heavens as well as the earth. More recent worship songs such as “God of Wonders” continue this tradition of celebrating God as Creator of a universe filled with endless marvels for human observers.

Science, rather than being the enemy of faith, has shown us the wonders of the heavens in breathtaking pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope. Going the other direction, advanced microscopic technology of “inner space” has shown the intricate designs of God on the tiniest levels.

The Genesis account of creation is brief and beautiful (unlike scientific treatises of our day). It gives us a hint of the wonder and awe that ancient men and women experienced when they contemplated the world they inhabited. They were convinced that this ordered and beautiful universe came into being through the acts of a Creator ([Job 9:9](#); [Psalm 8:3](#); [Proverbs 3:19](#); [Isaiah 40:26](#); etc.).

The marvels of creation were not only the visible, tangible things, but also the systems of days, months, and years that followed patterns that could be analyzed and then predicted. It was for later observers to understand that the angle of the earth’s axis, its period of daily rotations, and its yearly circumnavigation of the sun were all essential to sustaining the ecosystems that permit life.

There would be no life without God’s plan and provision. Genesis, however, teaches us that life did not arise on our planet as random adaptations to existing conditions, but that the earth was created to sustain the life that God intended and designed. That includes us human beings, the topic of next week’s lesson.

### **B. Prayer**

Creator God, we are learning about our world at a furious pace. May we channel our increased knowledge into more opportunities to contemplate you and your marvelous designs. You are truly the God of wonders, and we give you praise and glory. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### **C. Thought to Remember**

If creation is not an endless wonder to you, you’re not paying attention!

## **INVOLVEMENT LEARNING**

*Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student*

### **Into the Lesson**

Provide each participant with a portion of clay or drawing paper; challenge students to model or draw a creature of their own design. After a few minutes, have students describe their creatures, including how they move and communicate.

Then pose this question: “What do these creatures teach you about their creators?” (Expect humorous responses.) Make a transition by saying, “Learning about things God created is good; learning what they imply about their Creator is even better. Let’s do both.”

## Into the Word

Say, “Genesis explains God’s orderly creation of the universe. Last week’s lesson described the first three days of creation. Now it’s time to consider the next three.” Write these headings on the board:

Creation

Purpose

God

For each section of the lesson’s text below, jot students’ responses under the appropriate heading.

Have a volunteer read [Genesis 1:14–19](#). Ask students to (1) identify what is created, (2) describe their purposes, and (3) explain what this aspect of creation reveals about the character of God. If students are slow to respond to the third, don’t jump in to fill the silence too quickly! Eventual responses should be along the lines of how light testifies of God’s love and presence.

Have a volunteer read [Genesis 1:20–23](#). Then challenge students to identify, describe, and explain as above. Inquire whether any students have unique experiences with creatures of the sea or sky, and invite sharing of those experiences. Ask students to describe how these creatures reveal the character of God.

Move to the next segment of text by saying, “The skies and seas have been filled. Next is the provision for animals on dry land. Our lesson will cover only the first part of the sixth day of creation. The new day begins as God speaks again.”

Have another student read [Genesis 1:24, 25](#). Then challenge students to identify, describe, and explain as before. Ask participants to describe the three categories of land animals; use the commentary to correct misperceptions. Note that the categories are not meant to be exhaustive.

*Option.* Distribute copies of the “Six Days of Creation” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Form students into small groups to complete as indicated. This activity will help learners see the bigger picture of six days of creation by connecting last week’s lesson with this week’s.

Sum up by saying, “Genesis teaches us that life did not arise on our planet as a random adaptation of preexisting material. Rather, the earth was created to sustain the life that God intended and designed.”

## Into Life

Go to a window or lead class members outside to a place where they will have a striking view of God’s creation. (*Alternative.* Provide pictures of scenery and animals.) Say, “When God declared aspects of his creation to be ‘good,’ that carried a sense of something’s being excellent, just right, as God intended. What do you see that strikes you as particularly ‘good’?” Encourage free discussion.

Brainstorm reasons to be good stewards of God’s creation. For each reason, ask students to state a way they can make that reason a reality. After returning to your classroom (if your class went outside), ask each student to write a “Creation Declaration” that describes a way he or she will honor God for his creation in the coming week.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “For the Beauty of the Earth” activity from the reproducible page. Allow time to complete as indicated. Encourage sharing of results.

