



Creation

These sections of circles expanding from the bottom left corner represent how out of nothing, God created everything.

Paul David Tripp
Do You Believe?

What We Believe: Solid Doctrine for Everyday Life

The Doctrine of Creation

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Summary of the Biblical Storyline:
Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration

Notice the structure of creation days:
3 days of *preparing* spaces, then 3 days of

populating those spaces. Rest on the 7th day sets the pattern for our rest (see 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:11). God's work days serve as an analogy and pattern for our workweek.

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." (Genesis 1:28)

Creation (or Cultural) Mandate summary handout

Cultural Progress — from a Garden to a City.

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:17-20) fits into and fulfills the larger 3-fold Creation Mandate, applied to a fallen and redeemed world.

No "secular/sacred dichotomies." It all belongs to God and is all to be redeemed, cultivated, and stewarded for his glory.

Pause for Comments & Questions

Some Important Implications:

1) Everything is interesting! Asceticism (severe self-discipline and avoidance of enjoying created goods) is unspiritual, and possibly demonic! (1 Tim 4:1-5)

2) Purpose — God designed all of creation for a purpose.

Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) #1: "*Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.*" (1 Corinthians 10:31; Psalm 73:25-26)

Ask, "*What is God's purpose for _____?*" ... my work/vocation, my marriage, food, my gender, tools, friendships, mockingbirds, etc.?

3) Ownership — All creation belongs to God. (Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

4) Authority — All creation answers to God. There is no such thing as an independent human authority; it's all representative authority. We are “vice regents” and stewards. (Romans 13:1)

5) Worship — All creation is made to worship God. (Revelation 4:11)

6) Humility — All creation is meant to bend the knee to God. (Philippians 2:9-11)

7) Creation Care — Called to be good stewards of his world. (Genesis 1:28; 2:15)

Sing: *This Is My Father's World*

Discuss and Share:

- 1) Find an object ready at hand, and briefly explain its good purpose which glorifies God. (It doesn't have to be a “spiritual” purpose or about evangelism.) Then explain a way it could be misused to dishonor God.
- 2) Think about the WSC's summary purpose statement: “Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” How is this clarifying as you think about your own purpose? What further questions does it raise?

Recommended Resources

- The artwork comes from, *Do You Believe?: 12 Historic Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life*, by Paul Tripp (Crossway, 2021), on which this class is loosely based.
- “The Doctrine of Creation,” online essay by Guy M. Richard, thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-doctrine-of-creation.
- “The Creation Mandate,” online essay by William Edgar, thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-creation-mandate.
- “Evangelical Interpretations of Genesis 1-2,” online essay by Vern Poythress, thegospelcoalition.org/essay/evangelical-interpretations-genesis-1-2.
- PCA's “Creation Study Committee Report,” an 80-page resource explaining various positions Christians take (with pros vs. cons) on Creation Days, pcahistory.org/pca/digest/studies/creation/report.html
- Video: *Good Faith Debates*, “How Should Christians Care About the Environment?,” thegospelcoalition.org/video/good-faith-debate-christians-care-environment.
- *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, by Al Wolters (Eerdmans, 2005).

The Creation Mandate

Tim Burden

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.” (Genesis 1:28)

When God created our first parents he gave them a task. They, and all mankind after them, were to be fruitful and multiply and to exercise dominion over this newly created world. This is commonly called the Creation (or Cultural) Mandate. And even though Adam and Eve sinned, thereby introducing corruption and decay into all the workings of the world, this command is reaffirmed after the Fall (Genesis 3:16-19). We are still obligated by that mandate today.

There are three elements to this mandate. First, God pronounces his blessing, communicating his gracious good will toward humanity and, through it, toward the whole of creation. A three-fold task then flows from this initial blessing: we might label them Worship, Wedlock, and Work. (And we must remember the order: God’s grace always precedes our obligations.) 1) The first calling is implied, but it’s the all-important response that’s required to God’s blessing. All people are obligated to worship their Maker, living under his good and loving rule. This is demonstrated in Adam and Eve’s walking with God in the garden, and in our subsequent call to glorify God in all we do (1 Corinthians 10:31). 2) Humanity is also told to start families and to bear children, filling the whole earth with worshipers of the one true God. 3) And finally, we are told to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over it. This work is to bring out the full potential of all that God has created and called very good. So as mankind has grown and filled the earth, we have developed civilizations and technologies, science and art. Indeed, just as Adam *cultivated* the soil in the Garden of Eden, we still create *culture* in every area of life.

After the fall into sin, all of life is filled with frustration and heartache. This is not the way the world is supposed to be. And so we are called, as those belonging to God the Creator/Redeemer, to extend redemption and restoration “far as the curse is found.” In spite of the sin and sorrow we see all around us, we still affirm with David that “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1). Once we are placed into right relationship with God through Christ, we get busy with the work of the Creation Mandate. If Christ is indeed Lord over all of life, it follows that his disciples (us) will be found in every area of life. We will work hard to apply God’s Word to everything—from architecture and business to yard sales and zoology—in order to bring out the full potential of God’s good creation and therefore to better glorify him. Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch pastor-theologian and former Prime Minister of The Netherlands, famously said, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’” Christ died not just to save our souls—as glorious as that is—but to redeem and restore the whole of his good creation. God did not make junk at the creation, and despite the fall he does not junk what he has made. Rather, he does the self-sacrificial work of restoring every aspect of existence, all to the praise of his glorious name. God’s grace does not destroy nature, but rather it redeems and restores it. And we are privileged to join him in that work.

*1 This is my Father's world,
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas--
His hand the wonders wrought.*

*2 This is my Father's world:
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world:
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.*

*3 This is my Father's world:
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King: let the heavens ring!
God reigns; let earth be glad!*