

separate from the idols of this world, so that God can fill you with His presence. The third part of this pattern is found in Gen 1:28, God blesses. Now take those three parts; separation, filling, blessing, and see if you can identify them in the call of Abram. (Gen 12:1-2)

Genesis 12:1-2 NLT - 1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others."

Let's take a moment to see if we can identify this pattern in our own stories. Has there been anything God has separated you from in order to fill you and then use you as a blessing? This could apply many ways- perhaps geographically you moved to a place God filled and blessed you, or maybe there was some "thing" (alcohol, anger, lust, greed) you had to separate from in order to receive God in your life. Share some thoughts with your group about how this might apply to you.

WRAP-UP

In the creation account God reveals much more than how the world began. It is a rich and beautiful story of a loving and creative God who brought order to chaos, and light to darkness. He has a purpose in what He has created, and in order to fulfil that purpose He separates, fills and blesses. Our story is also a reflection of that creation story. We are the object of God's love, made in His image to be a blessing to the world. He separated us out of darkness and filled us with His wonderful light to be a blessing to the world.

Memory Verse

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge- You are created to be a blessing. Ask God to show you how you can be a blessing to someone this week.

"Creation" *Live A Better Story- Week #2*

INTRODUCTION

You can probably quote Genesis 1:1 without any trouble. And if asked, you are likely to say that the first two chapters of Genesis tell us how God made everything. Although that is true, it may not be the sole purpose of what we know as the creation story. As we seek to find "our story" within the grander story of the Bible, we may need to step back from the physical processes and timelines of creation account, and let God open our eyes to some of the other things He reveals to us about himself and about us in this narrative. What if Genesis 1 and 2 are meant to reveal who we are, who God is, and the relationship we were meant to have? Let's humble ourselves long enough to set aside Genesis merely as a story of "How things began" and listen to what God says about the purpose for our very existence as the object of His love.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Did you ever have to answer a child's question about "Where did I come from?"

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Seeing God through Creation

We typically get to know someone by finding out about their personal story. And since the first two chapters of Genesis are filled with the revelation of God's nature and His character, this account helps us to understand more about God through His story. Don't the ones who know you best, know the most about your story?

Genesis 1:1-2 NLT - 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

The first two things God created in Genesis 1:1 were the heavens and the earth. What was the condition of the earth? In the Hebrew, the words used for formless and empty are *tohuw and bohuv* referring to an empty

place of chaos. How might those words describe a life apart from God? But God didn't leave the earth in darkness and chaos, and neither does He leave us there. Consider how He brought order to the earth.

Genesis 1:3-10 NLT - 3 Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day. 6 Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." 7 And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. 8 God called the space "sky." And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day. 9 Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. 10 God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Can you think of an area of your life that was in darkness or chaotic, that God stepped in to bring light and order? We can easily allow darkness and chaos to overwhelm us, but the story of creation tells us that God can bring light and control the chaos when we allow Him to.

2. Our Creation Story vs Theirs

Do you know who first wrote down the story of Genesis? It was probably Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit, who penned the creation story. So, let's consider into what setting this story was introduced. Israel was surrounded by neighboring cultures worshipping various gods. One of their prominent influences was Babylon. Babylon's creation account was one of violence and a battle of gods. How did Deu 6:4 and the creation story of Genesis, arm Israel against the influence of such idolotry?

Deuteronomy 6:4 NIV - 4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Genesis 1:27-28 NLT - 27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

For Babylon, man was created into slavery as a product of violence. The story of Genesis counters their story. The declaration of one supreme and

loving God was foreign to the Babylonians. It is still unaccepted in much of our world.

How does Genesis 1:27-28 describe the assignment for man and our relationship with God? How does understanding that part of "your story", as a creative partner and a reflection of God's image, arm you against the influences of today's culture that seek to define your identity and purpose in life? Can you name some competing identities and purposes that the world promotes?

3. Separation - Filling - Blessing

Let's look again at the process of creation. On days one, two and three God created day and night, sea and sky, and land and sea.

Genesis 1:4, 6, 9 NIV - 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ... 6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ... 9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.

What did God do to keep a distinction between each of these pairs? This is the beginning of a pattern we will see throughout scripture.

How is the same idea repeated in 2 Corinthians 6:17?

2 Corinthians 6:16-17 NLT - 16 And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 17 Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you.

Genesis 1:14, 20, 24, 28 NLT - 14 Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ... 20 Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ... 24 Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind--livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. ... 28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

Before God fills, He separates. In days four, five and six God filled what He had separated. Similarly, as the temple of the living God, you are to be