

the beginning

module

3

Consider

The Story so Far...

In the previous module, we saw how the Bible is one book, made up of many books, with many writers, who claimed to be directed by God.

Continuing the Story...

If God has written everything important that he wants us to know, then it makes good sense to check it out. This week we start at the very beginning, in the book of Genesis. Take some time, enjoy the brief readings and start exploring the Bible for yourself.

Day One: Is God Real?

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I remember my cousin used to have an imaginary friend. Apparently, they're quite common among kids. Of 4000 adults recently surveyed, 44.96% said they had an imaginary friend in childhood – and another 8.90% wished they'd had one! But child psychologists say it's all fairly normal and healthy. My cousin's imaginary friend was called Emma-Lou. She seemed to be of no fixed abode. But I know when we holidayed at my grandmother's home, Emma-Lou always stayed close by. Believe it or not, Emma-Lou lived up a nearby power pole. We visited her often – it was fun! Then one day, without warning and without any fuss, somehow Emma-Lou just stopped existing.

Sad, really. It was fun hearing all about Emma-Lou's globetrotting adventures and her special powers. Amazingly, Emma-Lou never needed to sleep, never needed to bathe and never needed to eat vegetables – she was on a pure candy diet! But her teeth stayed strong and she had perfect health. She lived alone up the power pole. We never did get to meet her parents – they were far too busy working for the Queen at Buckingham Palace!

Some rationalists once put up a road sign. It read, "God is an imaginary friend: choose reality – it's better for all of us!"

But is God made up? Is he just an 'adult version' of the imaginary friends we create as children? What if God is just real – if believing in God doesn't make him more real and disbelieving in him doesn't make him less real? What if he is real, regardless?

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 1.

Count how many times 'God' is referred to. What is significant about that?

Day Two: Is God Eternal?

Life is full of tricky questions. Here's a few to make you smile. If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the 'terminal'? Why is the man who invests all your money called a 'broker'? Why don't we ever see the headline, 'Psychic Wins the Lottery Again'? Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

Here's another tricky question: Who made God? The Bible says that God is eternal – he had no beginning and has no end. He has always existed. If that's true, then no one made him. Moses described God as “the eternal God” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

And here's another one: If God endlessly exists, where does he get his life from? As humans, we are dependent on other things for our life – the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe. But what about God? According to the Bible, God is different. He endlessly 'self-exists'. He is not dependent on anyone or anything! His life doesn't come from anywhere. He has life in himself.

God made his self-existence very obvious to Moses one day when he appeared to Moses in the burning bush. The bush was burning but the leaves and the branches were as green and fresh as they were before the fire appeared. Normally, you can't have a fire without the branches or the leaves. The fire feeds off those things. It's simple. No leaves? No branches? No wood? No matches? No fire! But here, Moses is looking at a fire that existed purely on its own. That self-existent fire was a symbol of God who endlessly self-exists.

Explore the Bible

Check it out.

Read Exodus 3:2–6.

Day Three: Is God the Creator?

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Accidental art. It sounds crazy but apparently accidental art is just that – art that happened by accident. I read a story about a truck loaded with paint tins. The driver failed to take a corner, the truck tipped over and the paint tins all cracked open, leaving multi-coloured rainbows all over the road. I guess the road looked beautiful until it wore off!

King David once wrote a poem about creation (Psalm 19:1–4). In this poem, he likened creation to art, art that could even ‘speak’ and give a message about the artist to all people:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

According to King David, creation is a magnificent piece of art. But it was no accident. The beauty all around us is deliberate. It is here to tell us all about the artist.

If God wanted to remain a big secret, then why in the world did he leave his fingerprints all over the planet?

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 1:3–26.

What does creation tell us about God?

Day Four: Was God Lonely?

Because we are personal and relational beings, we need relationships with others to be truly fulfilled. Like John Donne said, “No man is an island” – we all need somebody.

But here’s a fascinating question: Do you think God was lonely before he created everything? That could have been one lonely, miserable existence.

Interestingly enough, the Bible pulls the curtain aside and gives us a peek into a time when there was no one and nothing but God (if, in fact, we can call that a ‘time’). And apparently he wasn’t lonely.

Although there is only one God, he exists in three different persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus (the Son) once said that the Father had loved him even before the creation of the world (John 17:24). It seems that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit enjoyed perfectly satisfying and fulfilling relationships with one another before the world began.

As the Bible introduces us to God, it introduces us to a personal spiritual being – one who talks, thinks, sees and works. In other words, God is a ‘he’... not an ‘it’. Now that’s good news... because he is personal, we can connect with him.

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 1:1–2, 4–5, 10, 16, 26–27, 31.

What indications are there that God is a personal being?

Day Five: Is God Good?

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The world around us can be an adventurous place! Have you ever climbed up to the top of a rocky peak and taken a gasping breath of mountain-fresh air? And while up there at dusk, watched the crimson and golden shades of the sunlight disappear over the horizon, to be left filled with awe by the breathtaking beauty that offers itself to us?

Or perhaps you enjoy the exploding sound of firecrackers erupting and the vivid colour, brightness and sparkling of the sky-show display? But then there's an even greater sky show that screens every night. The night sky, against a pitch-black background, displays hundreds of glittering stars and can leave any viewer in awestruck silence.

Is anything as soothing as hearing the ocean waves tumble gently onto a beach: a continuous background of tranquil sound? Or maybe you prefer the audio pleasure that our favourite musicians can produce. Stringed instruments, percussion, voice... all working together to make our ears almost 'dance'.

And when we feel the life-giving warmth of the sun and watch the earth absorb the rain that waters our crops – we can know that God is good. Each time our taste buds explode with the tingling taste of a strawberry, we know God is extraordinarily generous. After all, though food is essential for us to survive, 'taste' is a special extra. It seems that God wants us to enjoy food – and to have pleasure living in this world. And if all this power, beauty and grandeur is just "the work of [his] fingers" (Psalm 8), we can only imagine what God must really be like.

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

What do you enjoy most about creation?

Explore

Discussion starter

Q – If God existed and you could talk to him, what would you say to him?
What would you like him to say to you?

Q – What were some of the highlights from the readings?

Reading

Read Genesis 1:1–19.

Volunteers may like to read out loud a part or all of this story.

Q – What can we learn about God from this reading?

Q – Did anything surprise you about this story?

View

Video episode 3 – the beginning

Five things God tells us about himself:

1. God as a real being.
 2. God is the who made everything.
 3. God is
 4. God is
 5. God is
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Discuss

Questions I have

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For more information...
see www.longstoryshort.co/the-beginning



