

The Creation of God's People

Genesis 1:24–31

A robin picks up twigs and makes a nest. A group of beavers pulls together logs and mud to build a dam. Animals have some ability to work for purely survival purposes. Humans work, too, but it is on a depth and scale that far surpasses what animals do. You work on a term paper, a project in shop class, or a calculus problem. Moreover, today and in the future you probably will spend some time and energy on something that is artful and beautiful, expressing your soul and your spirit, and in that regard you will resemble God who creates.

Reading the Word of God

Genesis

1:24–31



This passage comes from the first account of creation found in the Bible. Before you read the Scripture, review the following questions. Write your answers below after you read the passage.



There are two accounts of creation in the Book of Genesis. Father Lapide, a sixteenth-century Jesuit priest, was the first scripture scholar to delve deeply into the origins of these two accounts. The first version of creation is actually placed second in the biblical text, beginning at Genesis 2:4. It was written in 950 B.C. and is part of what we know as the Yahwist tradition. Five hundred years later, the Priestly account was written. It begins at Genesis 1:1. Each of these inspired accounts emphasizes that there is only one God, not many gods.



What did God think about the creatures and wild animals after he had created them?

What relationship did God intend for human beings to have with the rest of nature? Why are humans capable of this?

MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

In this particular account of the creation story, the writer emphasizes twice that when God creates man and woman, he creates them in his image and likeness. We are all created to be like God. This is an awesome destiny for humanity. God's intention gives us a unique status in creation that we could never achieve or fulfill on our own.



Have you ever felt as though you were given "too much" responsibility for something? How did you handle the situation?

Going Deeper into the Word of God

God is mystery. All the images and descriptions given to God cannot adequately capture his divine nature. God is beyond all human characteristics used to describe him, yet these characteristics help express God's revelation to us and how we perceive that revelation.

God, in his divinity, is far beyond us. Yet God is very personal and real. God did not create us in order to forget us or abandon us.



Read Genesis 1:28–31 again. God bestows on humanity responsibility for all the other aspects of creation. We are given the totality of creation – our very selves and everything else – as a gift. It is not bestowed lightly. Notice in Genesis 1:31 that God judges his creation as “good.” The gift we have been given is meant for our “good” use. The implication is that our responsibility for utilizing creation does not include the malicious or unthinking destruction of it.



How well has humanity lived up to this responsibility? Support your answer with examples.

COMPLEMENTARY IMAGES OF GOD

There are many images of the one true God in the Old Testament. These images complement the initial image of God as creator. For example, God is pictured as:

- a master potter continuing the work of creation (*See Genesis 2:7.*)
- a good shepherd leading his flock (*See Psalm 23.*)
- a loving parent dealing mercifully with us (*See Hosea 11.*)
- a mighty warrior protecting us from harm (*See Exodus 15:3–4.*)
- a loving mother nurturing us (*See Isaiah 49:13–16.*)
- a champion of the poor who lifts up the downtrodden (*See Psalm 12:5.*)



Go over the above list of images with a partner, and compare your reactions.



Which of the images listed above most appeals to you right now and why?



In this account of creation, God is depicted as working to produce creation in six days. On the seventh, God rested, hence the reason for the commandment to rest on the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath. The Catholic Church does not interpret these scriptural “days” as equal to earthly days. God could very well have been the master of an evolutionary process that accomplished his creation. In other words, the scientific theory of evolution is not at odds with the revelation of God as creator.

Being created in God's image and likeness gives each person unique characteristics and an equal dignity, regardless of race, gender, age, or ability. Being made in God's likeness gives each person a soul and free will—the ability to choose and make decisions. We are able to think, act, and love if we so choose.



Divide into two groups, and discuss how well you think modern society has helped men and women today live up to their equal dignity. *Why do you or why don't you think this is so?*



How can we do better at recognizing our inherent and equal dignity?

CO-CREATORS

We have been given the ability to create, to use our minds and souls to fashion the new and the beautiful. We create, following the example of God our creator, with the purpose of enhancing life. The arts and sciences, when they are at their best, promote our well-being and draw us closer to one another and our true calling as children of God.



On a scale of 1–10 (with 10 being the highest), how creative would you rate yourself? Why?

CARE FOR CREATION

God gave humans responsibility for all of nature—all living plants and animals. God put care for the environment into our hands from the very beginning. Think about this when you are recycling, when you are conserving water, when you are writing a letter to help stop air pollution, or when you are being kind to animals.



What environmental needs or challenges does your local area or region have? In what ways does your parish, school, or local community address these needs?



How can you be involved in the commitment to preserve creation for future generations?