

# CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

March 1, 2009

A view of the earth  
from an orbit of the  
moon.

## Genesis: The Story of God, the Story of Us Beginnings

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”...These enduring words have no equal in all of literature. They are the words uttered by Borman and crew as they completed their final orbit of the moon during the Apollo 8 mission. More importantly they are the first words recorded in Scripture and as such present an arresting yet elegant starting point for both epistemology and history. With these words we too begin a journey studying the book of Genesis over the next six months. A breathtaking pursuit, our time in Genesis will take us from the quaint comforts of the Shire to Mount Mordor as we ask the questions related to existence, worldview, and identity. “Who am I?” will no doubt ring in our soul, but to begin this trek we need to first have an understanding of what Genesis is not and what it is. First, the book of Genesis is not a compendium of mythology if by mythology you mean some fabled tale. You will find no unicorns here, but you will encounter the awesome magnitude of God. Secondly,

Genesis is not about faith versus science although Scripture is capable of helping us understand our natural world, but the opposite holds true as well. In the words of Galileo Galilei ““The Bible shows the way to go to heaven, not the way the heavens go.” So what is Genesis? Genesis is first one singular story about God and his creation. But in this story we are not intended to idealize the characters as moral heroes whose lives we should emulate, but instead look to God as the genuine hero of this narrative. Scholar Bruce Waltke comments that as a narrative, Genesis is ideological art and in the end we see that it is not mere history or fact, but can most accurately be described as a theological narrative. The book of Genesis is also about life. It is less interested with the ‘how’ and more interested in the ‘why’. In it’s original context this narrative was addressed to the Israelites who had just departed Egypt heading to the promise land. They were asking questions of identity and in order to address these questions Moses recorded history in a four part

structure (creation, fall, partial restoration, and ultimate restoration) that would serve as a template for all of redemptive history. As with the Israelites Genesis calls us to persevere in Christ for we are not made for chaos and darkness, but rather order and light. In these initial verses we first understand that God was there in the beginning. As the only being to have no origin, to know Him is to know our own purpose. Contrary to existential philosophy freedom is not found in our own creation of meaning, but rather in God’s design for all things. In John 1:1-4 we also see that God is the source of life. From within the loving fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sprang forth life. Love that preceded essence moved against the dark chaos to create the heavens and the earth. In creating our ‘blue marble’ God taught us the way of love. Our love for others must first begin with an understanding of God’s love for us. May the love of the Trinity invade our heart and soul!

# Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

## Application Questions: Genesis 1:1-4

1. What has been your experience with the book of Genesis prior to this series? Before worship on Sunday how would you explain the book of Genesis to someone who knew nothing of it? What was something that changed your perspective of the book that was mentioned in the sermon?
2. Consider the original context for the book of Genesis (author, audience, setting). Why would you not say that Genesis is a mythology or a rebuttal of science? If these classifications generally fail, what is Genesis about and how would you properly label it?
3. In the first verse of Genesis we see that God is in existence, the only being without a beginning point. As such we recognize that our purpose lies in his being and design. Share about a time when you've struggled to create meaning in your life. Have you ever experienced freedom living within God's design? If so what was that like?
4. What is so unique about Genesis 1:1-4 & John 1:1-4 as it relates to God, love, and the act of creation? How can the impact of God's love upon creation influence our understanding of authentic love? What is the nature of love when it does not stem from a understanding of God's love for us?
5. Consider your life at the moment. What is something of this world that you look to for life? What is the result? How can the love of God found even in creation and ultimately in Christ change this process and result in your life?

"Life is not a set of propositions, it is a series of dramatic scenes. As Eugene Peterson said, 'We live in narrative, we live in story. Existence has a story shape to it. We have a beginning and an end, we have a plot, we have characters.' Story is the language of the heart. Our souls speak not in the naked facts of mathematics or the abstract propositions of systematic theology; they speak the images and emotions of story."

John Eldridge  
*Sacred Romance*

## Lent: A Wilderness Journey

by Jim Dolas

**Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.""**

(Matthew 4:1-4 ESV)

As we journey through the forty days of Lent in anticipation of the Resurrection, we would do well to call to mind the time Jesus spent in the wilderness. Immediately after the heavens opened and the Spirit descended on him at his baptism, the same Spirit led him into the wilderness to make war on our behalf. The wilderness is where the battle is joined; the cross is where the battle is finished; the empty tomb is where his victory is undisputed.

What can we make of the opening salvo in this battle? It is a subtle temptation, one that seems almost innocent in light of forty days of hunger. After all, how hard would it be for the one who fashioned the universe out of nothing to make bread out of stones? But Puritan theologian Matthew Henry wrote, "He (the devil) tempted him (Jesus) to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him."

It is that despair and distrust, I think, that lurks behind many of the temptations that assault us today. Whatever our circumstances, whatever our physical or emotional desires, it is too easy to forget the goodness of our Father and the love he has for his people. But the good news this Lenten season is that Jesus did not forget the goodness and love of his Father. The Spirit that led him into the wilderness had already confirmed his status as the beloved Son of the Father, and he remembered and rested in that knowledge.

Likewise, the Spirit reminds us that even as Adam's disobedience became ours at birth, so Jesus' obedience became ours at rebirth. Our hearts are made new and we are adopted as sons and heirs of the Father. And so, like Jesus, may our wilderness journey be sustained in devotion to God "by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

