

LESSON ONE

GOD, OUR CREATOR

The Story of Creation Genesis 1:1-3

**Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth
by your great power and by your outstretched arm!**

—Nehemiah 9:6 (ESV)

—Job 9:8 (ESV)

It's a Jungle Out There

Do you consider yourself a "control freak"? Most of us do. If you ever wondered where in your life you have control freak tendencies, look no further than your mobile.

Imagine you're embarking on a long road trip to a city (or jungle) you've never visited in days of yore (think 25-50 years ago), what was the one item likely you'd want to have before taking on such a destination? That's right! You'd want to have a map or an atlas. If you were traveling alone, you had to learn to steer the car while simultaneously unfolding (and then re-folding) that map to note your route, the next rest stop, and any interesting sites you might encounter along your drive. Ever read it wrong or have that map upside down? You could have driven



100+ miles out of your way and not realized it for hours! For some, that was more than okay. It was freedom to explore before making your way back to your intended route. Oh, the gems you found when you weren't looking for them! Modern technology in today's vehicles, however, virtually guarantees that you won't get lost, and you certainly won't need a horrendously detailed map that won't fit in the glove box anymore.

Whether it's the car's internal navigation system or an app on your ever-present smartphone, you will most assuredly reach your destination even though you may need your satellite receiver to do it once or twice. Relying on a satellite for your directions, though, removes much of your control for your drive. If you're unfamiliar with a route, the GPS keeps you on track, forcing you to "keep left" or "turn right." Failure to do so results in directives such as, "make an U-turn, when possible." The freedom to leave the highway in search of adventure isn't part of the navigational package. The control is out of your hands.

Isn't that a lot like our spiritual journey through life? It's so easy to say that God is in control, but putting that faith into practice is an entirely different matter. Far too often, our approach to the obstacles in our lives is to turn first to the spiritual voices that tell us what to do instead of relying on God.

Such thinking can cause our lives to become a jungle of stress or dissatisfaction. At some time our circumstances (or a drive) fall short of what we need and expect. And, So, what do we do about it? In a chaotic world that's filled with constant struggles for power and control, how can we, as Christians, possess the faith that allows us to trust in our future despite what we see in our present? You can find the answer in the first five words of the Bible: *"In the beginning, God created."*

What's in a Name?

From the opening verses of Scripture, a level of power is revealed that is beyond our comprehension. Genesis 1 also reveals a God who masterfully controls that power as He creates ~~anything~~ anything we see and know. When we explore Genesis 1 through the original Hebrew text, we are introduced to God through His Hebrew name Elohim.

Whenever we see the name God in the Bible, it is usually translated from the Hebrew word *Elohim* or a related form of the word such as *El* or *Elohay*. This word appears more than 2,500 times in the Old Testament and is present in nearly every verse of Genesis 1, establishing God's power and strength from the beginning. *Elohim* is formed from two Hebrew words, *El*, which means power, and *him*, which establishes plurality, signifying that God is comprised of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Bible, we continually see this Godhead working together as one to accomplish mighty works of power (see Genesis 1:2, 26 and Colossians 1:16).

When we consider the name of our God, it is little wonder that He makes the demons tremble (James 2:19). What about all of us? How do we react to the unfathomable might of God whose very name means power? When we begin to know God as Elohim, it should bring about a life-changing reaction. We start with complete awe of all He has done and continue to do.

**When we know God as Elohim,
we will find awe in the miracles of yesterday.**

Verses for personal study or discussion:
*Revelation 4:11; Psalm 139:13-16; Psalm 33:6-9;
Psalm 19:1; Psalm 104:24;
Romans 1:20; Hebrews 11:3*

Though we have heard it many times, the creation story still gives us an inspiring glimpse into God's wisdom and power. Consider how He took what was not yet imaginable and turned it into reality. He touched a world that was dark, formless, and without design, and He gave it life, shape, beauty, and purpose. God didn't stop there though. He then began to produce plants, birds, fish, and especially living creatures and created them so that they might continue to sustain their own existence by giving new life, each to its own kind. Genesis paints a vivid picture of power and control.

Many of us have heard the wonderful stories of God's power before we were old enough to walk. We can recall by heart how He created the world in six days, parted the waters of the Red Sea, and crumbled the walls of Jericho. The danger we face is losing our familiarity with these amazing miracles to result in a cold, emotionless view of His continued ability to perform powerful acts in our lives.

Conversely, the more we know about God's strength and power, the more inspired we should be by it. David was inspired by God's ability to create man (Psalm 139:12), though he probably knew little about the makeup of the human body. He knew nothing of cellular structure, how bones and joints fit together, or how the bloodstream carries nutrients throughout the body. God pieced together all these incredible features from many different parts.

How much more should we be amazed at God's power by knowing these details! The more we know, the more we should be filled with awe at God's power and wisdom. Even now, He causes the seasons to change and the earth to turn so that we experience both day and night. Is there any doubt that He is in control of the world He created? The knowledge of the miracles of yesterday should lead us to acknowledge the control He still has today.



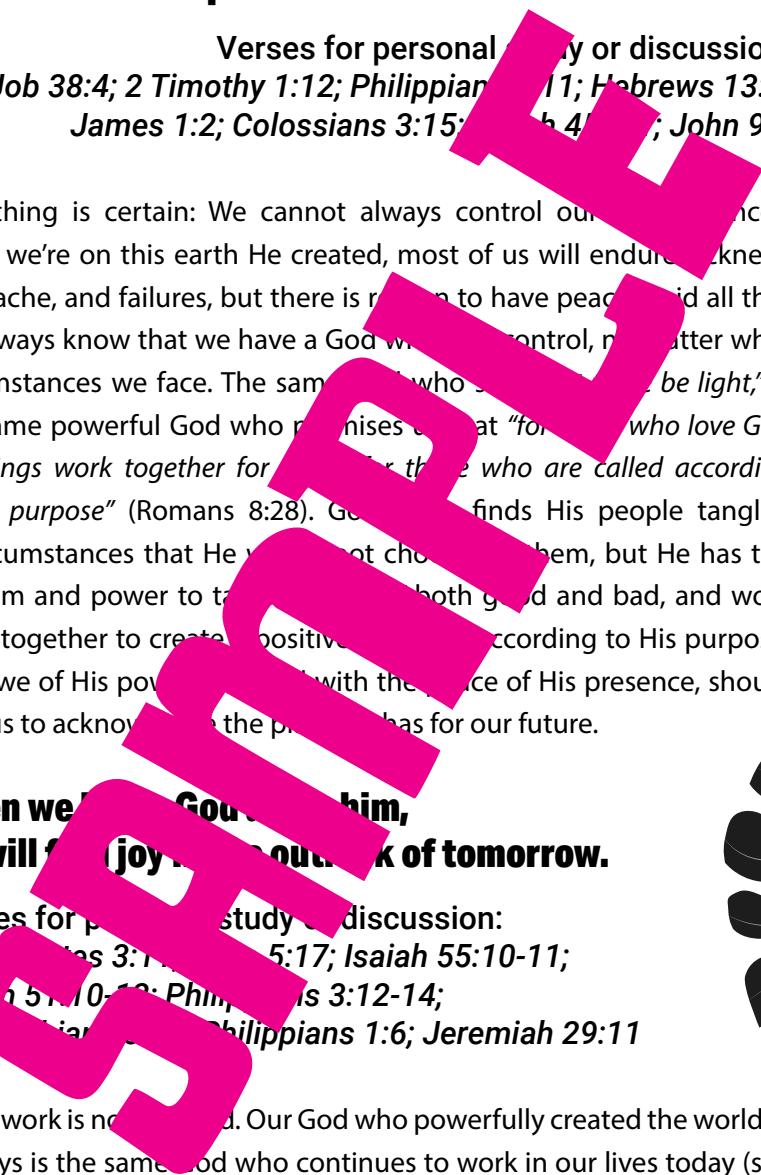
When we know God as Elohim, we will find peace in the circumstances of today.

Veres for personal study or discussion:
*Job 38:4; 2 Timothy 1:12; Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 13:5;
James 1:2; Colossians 3:15; Ephesians 4:1; John 9:3*

One thing is certain: We cannot always control our circumstances. While we're on this earth He created, most of us will endure darkness, heartache, and failures, but there is room to have peace amid all this. We always know that we have a God who can control, no matter what circumstances we face. The same God who says "I will be light," is the same powerful God who promises us that "for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). God often finds His people tangled in circumstances that He did not choose for them, but He has the wisdom and power to take both good and bad, and work them together to create positive outcomes according to His purpose. The awe of His power, along with the peace of His presence, should lead us to acknowledge the positive He has for our future.

When we know God as Elohim, we will find joy in the outlook of tomorrow.

Veres for personal study or discussion:
*Ecclesiastes 3:11; John 5:17; Isaiah 55:10-11;
Psalm 51:10-12; Philippians 3:12-14;
2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 1:6; Jeremiah 29:11*



God's work is not finished. Our God who powerfully created the world in six days is the same God who continues to work in our lives today (see John 5:17, Psalm 51:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:17). Our weaknesses, failures, and sins as humans seem to continually pull us back toward chaos and

darkness, but we can be assured through faith in His promises that God will continually work on His people until His purpose has been fulfilled (Philippians 1:6).

Here's the truth: God has a plan for you. The reality of this thought should give us all hope for our future, which is greater than any aspiration that we could achieve on our own. Though we may never know or understand His plans (Ecclesiastes 3:11), we know that "yielding control of our lives to Him is in our best interests, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Discussion Questions

1. Concerning your spiritual journey through the jungles of life, are you ever afraid to "swing"? The harder you swing," the more power and control you have? What's the result?
2. Look about some of the many wonderful things God created in the beginning. Which ones inspire you the most and why?
3. What are some ways that God is continuing to work in your life?
4. How does knowing God as the all-powerful Elohim help bring peace and joy into your life as you continue your daily walk?