

The Gift of Creation

Why should I enjoy and appreciate God's creation?

Creation Reflects God's Majesty (Ps. 104:1-5)

1. Describe a most magnificent natural setting you have ever seen.
2. Scan these verses and list evidences of God's majesty. How are they expressed?
3. How can viewing the creation lead to seeing the Creator?
4. Discuss how people who do not know God might *feel* as they observe the beauties of nature.
5. Under what circumstances are you most likely to take the wonders of nature for granted? What are the results of taking these wonders for granted, and how can taking them for granted be avoided?

Creation Provides Our Sustenance (Ps. 104:13-15)

1. Discuss how, in what ways God provides for His creation. Explain man's part... how might that relate to God's instruction in 2 Thessalonians 3:10?
2. When has God's provision come at just the right time for you?
3. Is God's provision enough for you or are you left wanting more? Explain.

Creation Depends on God (Ps. 104:24, 29-30)

1. How do these verses show that nature depends on God for His sustaining grace and power? How do these verses stress God's absolute power over life and death?

2. For you, is dependence on God a happy state? Unsettling? Scary, etc.?

Creation Inspires Us to Worship God (Ps. 104:31-34)

1. How does the psalmist portray God's might and power in these verses?

2. What happens to the psalmist as he meditates on God and His creation; how does he respond?

3. Is it easy for you to get excited about God when you think on His creation? Why or why not?

Review

What was the most meaningful statement, thought or Scripture from this lesson?

How do you sense God "at work" in your life today?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

The Gift of Life

Why should I celebrate being alive?

God Gives Physical Life To Enjoy (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 5:18-20)

1. [Just for fun] What are some good gifts you remember receiving as a child?
2. (Gen. 2:7) What is God's role in giving life to people?
3. (Eccl. 5:18-20) List reasons for celebrating physical life given in these verses?
4. God has given life as a gift and intends His gift of physical life to include finding satisfaction and enjoyment in it. Where and how do you experience satisfaction and enjoyment in life? What factors or attitudes might hinder you from experiencing life like this from time to time... think of any adjustments that could be made?

God Desires Us to Have Full Life (Ps. 103:1-5)

1. Too often we major on problems and forget the abundant blessings God has given us. List the rich abundant benefits of a full life based on these verses. (benefit means, "*something dealt out to*")
2. (John 10:10) How are these benefits truly full and enriched only through a personal faith relationship with Christ?
3. What factors or attitudes might hinder you from experiencing life like this from time to time... think of any adjustments that could be made?
4. What can we glean from the psalmist' model of worship/celebration (vv. 1-2)? What affect does it have on the worshipper?

God Offers Everlasting Life (Rev. 22:1-5)

1. Water is essential for physical life and here symbolizes eternal life as well. List some reasons we should celebrate eternal life as seen in heaven from this passage.

2. As a group sound out and list as many needs you can think of or have.

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- Next celebrate by drawing a line through those needs as you see they are fully met in heaven. [The believer’s eternal life, lived in the presence of God, will be lived free from need, darkness, and curse!]

Review

What was the most meaningful statement, thought or Scripture from this lesson?

How do you sense God “at work” in your life today?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

Is there someone you know who needs a word of encouragement?

Someone you would like prayer for who needs to experience salvation in Christ?

The Gift of Jesus

How should I respond to God's gift of His Son Jesus?

Recognize That God Promised to Send His Son (Isaiah 9:6-7)

1. [Just for fun] What family traditions do you participate in at Christmas?
2. About how many years was this promise made *prior* to it being fulfilled? Who made this promise?
3. What evidence does Isaiah give regarding the *permanence* of the Son's reign?
4. What are the names listed referring to Jesus? How, or in what circumstance, has Jesus been any of these to you personally?

Realize That Jesus Is God's Promised Son (Matthew 1:18-23)

1. How was Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled?
2. What is the most miraculous aspect of this story to you? Why?
 - a. that a virgin could give a baby
 - b. that an angel appeared to Joseph
 - c. that God came to earth in the person of a baby
 - d. that this baby would save people from their sins
3. Discuss the miracle of the new birth, i.e. when He comes into our lives and we are "born again"; how is it similar to when Jesus was born into the world?
4. How does it make you feel when someone keeps a promise made to you? God kept His promise to send a Savior for you. Discuss why some people doubt the accuracy of the Bible despite the accuracy of its foretelling the birth of Jesus Christ.

Respond to Jesus in Faith and Worship (Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11)

1. When is the best time to receive God's gift of His Son? When and how did that happen for you... when did Jesus really become your "Immanuel" - God with *you*?
2. Discuss the relationship of Matthew 1:23, "Immanuel... God with us," to Matthew 28:20, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (consider the context of these verses)
3. How did the wise men express great faith?
4. How does your faith compare to that of the wise men? How does our worship compare to that of the wise men?

Review

What was the most meaningful statement, thought or Scripture from this lesson?

How do you sense God "at work" in your life today?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

Through your actions, who is a family you could minister to others?

The Gift of a New Start

How can I make a new start in life?

Let Go of the Past (Phil. 3:13)

1. [Just for fun] What nicknames have you been given in the past? Why? What do/did they mean?
2. What is Paul's opinion of himself in the first part of this verse? How did he express his feelings about his past? What are his feelings about his future?
3. Why do sprinters today use starting blocks? How important are the starting blocks after the race begins?
4. Name some "things from the past" that can really make it tough in making progress in the things of God.
5. List and discuss some ways a person can "let go of the past".

Focus on the Goal (Phil. 3:14)

1. Using the imagery of the track race, where does Paul picture himself in his spiritual life?
2. What prize is he after; what was his goal... how is he going to reach it? (reflect on Heb.12:2, John 15:5; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:22,23)
3. If you had to compare your life in Christ right now to a track race, where would you be: Sitting on the sidelines? Warming up? At the starting blocks? Giving it your all?

Embrace God's Perspective (Philemon 10-21)

[Philemon, a member of the church at Colosse and led to faith in Christ by Paul, was the owner of a slave (Onesimus) who had run away from him. Somehow Onesimus got to Rome, met Paul and became a Christian. Runaways were considered criminals who were punishable by severe measures including

death. This letter is Paul's attempt to persuade Philemon to forgive the crime and receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul himself. Paul admonishes Philemon to accept Onesimus as an equal, being one "family" in Christ. Historical writings appear to support that Onesimus became a leader in the church in Ephesus and provides vivid proof of how Christ can transform and use even a rebel runaway slave.]

1. What radical changes was Paul asking Philemon to make:
Economically? Socially? Spiritually?
2. How do you suppose Onesimus changed?
3. From experience, who do you most identify with - Philemon or Onesimus? Why?
4. How do vv. 15 -16 illustrate the promise of Romans 8:28?
5. Is there an area of your life you would like to make a "new start" in order to be more useful to Christ and others... the letting go of the past so that God can work out His best in you?

Personal Review

Mentally list your goals in life. How many of these goals will help you become more like Jesus? What adjustments would He have you make?

How do you sense God at work in your life today?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

