

MATT & SARAH ROGERS

SEVEN ARROWS

A 52-WEEK DEVOTIONAL for Teens

LifeWay | Students

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LifeWay Press®
Nashville, Tennessee

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



MATT AND SARAH ROGERS

live with their four kids in Greenville, South Carolina, where Matt serves as a pastor at The Church at Cherrydale. Matt and Sarah met while working together at a summer camp for students, though it took a bit of convincing on Matt's part before Sarah knew she was destined to be his wife. They spent the first decade of their marriage serving students in camps and churches throughout North and South Carolina. Since high school, Sarah has always been up for trying anything new and different, and she is known for her love of music, dancing, and fun. Matt was a below average athlete who excelled at embarrassing himself in social settings. Not much has changed since! Today they give their lives to the mission of making disciples through tools like this *Seven Arrows Devotional* in the hopes that God will produce a generation of faithful and fruitful followers of Jesus.

THE SEVEN ARROWS BIBLE READING METHOD

I remember my Bible reading habits as a teenager. I'd been raised in a Christian home and attended a faithful local church, yet I rarely read the Bible myself. I listened to others talk about the Bible and could have answered many questions about Bible stories, but I rarely opened its pages on my own. There are probably two reasons why.

First, I was just lazy and distracted. It's embarrassing for me to admit now, but so many other things felt more important. I had school to attend, sports to play, friends to see, and fun to experience. Buried way down on the priority list was reading, understanding, and obeying the Bible. Every once in awhile, I'd hear a sermon or go to a Christian camp and commit to trying to read the Bible more, but I rarely followed through. Maybe you're a lot like me. You know you should read the Bible, but you just never seem to get around to it. Here's the bad news: No book—certainly not this book—can give you a passion for God's Word. This is a desire that comes as a gift from God Himself. Until you are convinced of your need to know God, you'll never truly engage with the Bible, at least not in a consistent way.

The second reason I often failed to read the Bible was that I didn't know how. At times, I felt God stirring in me a passion for His Word, but I quickly grew discouraged because I didn't know how to understand the Bible and apply it to my life. It was far easier to let someone else read the Bible and tell me what it meant. While I can't give you a passion to know God, I can help you know God.

That's why I created the Seven Arrows method in the first place. I would meet people who had attended church for longer than you've been alive, yet they still struggled to read the Bible for themselves. Many had never learned a plan for reading the Bible well, and as a

result, they rarely picked up their Bibles. Instead, they depended on others to tell them what the Bible said. I wanted to do something to help these people and others like them read the Bible.

I remember meeting with a young man in his late teens who had recently become a Christian. He was having a particularly hard time reading and understanding the Bible. Following his baptism, he was given a new Bible, so he set about the task of learning more about the God who had saved him. But he kept getting confused and overwhelmed, and he came to me asking for help.

Following our first conversation, I spent a couple of hours thinking about how I might teach him to read the Bible well. He didn't need a class on Bible reading, but a simple method he could use to help him ask good questions to better understand the author's meaning and apply the truth to his life. I wrote out seven questions that I ask when I read a Bible passage, then I attached a corresponding arrow to each question hoping that these arrows would be an easy way to help my friend remember these questions. That's my hope for you too.

ARROW 1 *What does this passage say?*

The first step is to summarize the passage in your own words. Think about what would happen if you spent 30 minutes on the phone with your best friend. In that time, you would have talked about all sorts of things, but there are likely one or two big ideas that you focused on. Maybe you complained about today's test or maybe you talked about your plans for the weekend. If you were asked to describe the phone call later, you wouldn't describe every detail of the call. You might say, "We talked about how difficult today's Spanish test was."

You should be able to do the same thing with any passage of Scripture—simply read the passage and put the main point in your own words. You might say something like, "Jesus said that people who are really great in this world are those who serve others" or "Paul said that all people sin and disobey God."

ARROW 2 *What did this passage mean to its original audience?*

Long before we can apply the Bible to our lives, we have to ask what the passage meant to those who experienced the stories of the Bible firsthand. It's easy to get bogged down on this question and think that you have to be an expert on the people and places of the Bible in order to answer it, but that's not necessarily the case. You might find it helpful to read the introduction to the book of Scripture you are reading or take a look at some study notes in your Bible, but you can often answer this question just by putting yourself in the scene and asking what you'd imagine those in the story would have thought or felt.

For example, you might read about Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well in John 4 and conclude that she would have been embarrassed by her sin, but also amazed that Jesus showed love and compassion to her anyway.



ARROW 3

What does this passage tell us about God?

The Bible is about God, so it's wise to ask ourselves what we learn about Him when we read each passage. This question is important because it protects us from making ourselves the main character in the Bible. It's easy to read the Bible as if it's actually about us—our problems, our struggles, our needs. But that's not the case. The Bible is about God and His story, and it's an honor that He would include us.

There will be times when the Bible just comes right out and tells us something about God. We might read that God is gracious, compassionate, or faithful. Other times, it may not be as clear, and we have to think about the story and consider how God's character is seen. Also, sometimes Scripture will refer to God the Father, but other times we learn something about Jesus or the Holy Spirit.



ARROW 4

What does this passage tell us about man?

Once you've asked the first three questions, it's time to turn the attention to your own life by asking what you learn about yourself from the passage you read. This question will likely be one of the easiest for you to answer because you know yourself well. Since the Bible is the story of God's work to save sinners like you, then you will see people who sin (like you do) and need Jesus (like you do) throughout the stories you read.



ARROW 5

What does this passage demand of me?

The final three arrows are action-oriented. They ask you to do something based on the truth you've discovered in arrows one through four. You will find that some passages make the application clearer than others. In many of Paul's letters, he comes right out and tells you what you should do: live a life of love, don't grumble or complain, and the list goes on and on. Other times you'll have to reflect on the passage you've read and consider the application based on your answers to the first four questions.

One word of caution: This application is not always a physical action. For example, you might find that some application will focus on your thoughts more than your actions—things like *trust God* or *don't worry*. This may not seem like an action, but these steps of obedience are just as important as other more easily observed actions.



ARROW 6

How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

Arrow six forces a specific type of application—one that challenges you to apply the Bible to the various relationships in your life. You might think of it this way—the Bible pushes us toward two types of application, vertical and horizontal. Vertical application is primarily directed toward God—things like prayer, trust, and faith. Horizontal application is directed toward other people.

This arrow calls us to consider how the passage would have us love the people God has put in our lives. Maybe it's sharing the gospel with a friend who doesn't know Jesus. Maybe it's apologizing to someone we've hurt or serving someone in need. Combined, arrows five and six help us to obey both aspects of one of the greatest commandments as we seek to love God and love others.



ARROW 7

What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

The final arrow in our Bible reading process invites us to talk to God about what we've read. Prayer should be a response to God for the ways He has spoken to us through His Word. It's the same way we would interact with a friend who sent us a text. We would read what our friend said, and then reply with our own message.

Relationships require interaction and communication, and the same is true of our relationship with God. We listen to Him speak to us through His Word, and then we respond back to Him in prayer. Prayer based on the Bible allows us to ask specifically and intentionally for those things God has shown us in His Word, rather than merely praying for whatever comes to our mind in the moment.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible can be an intimidating book. Its sheer size makes it unlike most books you might pick up. Then once you start reading, it can be overwhelming. There are so many names you may not recognize, stories that seem downright strange, and concepts that are hard to make sense of. It's easy to give up before you even try to read the Bible for yourself.

Once you get past the intimidation factor, you might find that the Bible isn't nearly as complex as you think. Of course, we are reading the story of the God of the universe and His work in the world, so we can expect that story to be challenging at times. In fact, the best thinkers in all of the world will never understand everything there is to know about God. But God did something amazing in giving us the Bible. He took the truth about Himself and His work in the world and put them into words. He gave us a book that is meant to show us what He is like, how we can know Him, and what we are to do with our lives. We would be foolish to take such a gracious gift and assume we can't understand it. We can understand the Bible because God wants to be known.

It might help you to think about the Bible in a series of chapters. Every story we read has a big idea—a main point—but that concept is told in a series of chapters with many smaller stories or ideas communicated within each. The story of the Bible is about God's work, through Jesus Christ, to save sinners and a broken world from the effects of sin. A good way of organizing the story is breaking it down into nine “chapters.”

- Chapter 1: Creation
- Chapter 2: Fall
- Chapter 3: Plan
- Chapter 4: People

- Chapter 5: Kingdom
- Chapter 6: Judgment
- Chapter 7: Jesus
- Chapter 8: Church
- Chapter 9: Eternity

The *Seven Arrows Devotional* is designed to move you through these chapters using the Seven Arrows method to understand the critical Bible passages in each chapter. Of course, there are more passages that could be selected, but I've attempted to provide the key sections of Scripture that will help you to understand the big story of the Bible.

You'll also notice that the last day of each week will connect that chapter of God's story to Jesus Christ, who serves as the key to understanding all of the Bible. These passages are selected to demonstrate the central role Jesus plays in uniting the Bible into a clear story of God's mission to save sinners and remake a broken world. Each day, I'll provide you with some context for the passage and will connect what you've read to the main story of the Bible. From there, you'll be ready to work through the Seven Arrows yourself.

Let's begin where every good story starts—in the beginning.

HOW TO USE

Here's how this process would work with a passage of Scripture. Let's take Psalm 19:7–11, which talks about the value of God's Word. Here's how I might use the arrows to help me understand and obey this passage. Notice that I don't try to answer each question in lengthy sentences or address every detail of the passage. What I'm trying to do is capture the main point and translate that main idea into truth I can live.

PSALM 19:7-11

7 The instruction of the Lord is perfect,
renewing one's life;
the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy,
making the inexperienced wise.

8 The precepts of the Lord are right,
making the heart glad;
the command of the Lord is radiant,
making the eyes light up.

9 The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are reliable
and altogether righteous.

10 They are more desirable than gold—
than an abundance of pure gold;
and sweeter than honey
dripping from a honeycomb.

11 In addition, your servant is warned by them,
and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.



ARROW 1 //

What does the passage say?

God's Word is a treasure that is meant to explain God's truth and guide my life.



ARROW 2 //

What did the passage mean to its original audience?

The Israelites had learned many painful lessons because of their failure to obey God's Word, so they would have understood the truth of this passage.



ARROW 3 //

What does the passage tell us about God?

God is gracious and gives His people the gift of His Word to protect them from harm.



ARROW 4 //

What does the passage tell us about man?

I need to be warned and led by God's Word, because I am often tempted to disobey God and do whatever I want.



ARROW 5 //

What does the passage demand of me?

Rather than thinking about reading the Bible as a task to complete, I should thank God for the gift of His Word and learn to treasure its wisdom.



ARROW 6 //

How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

I can learn to know, understand, and obey God's Word, so that I can share its truth with my friends and point them to God's plans and purposes for life.



ARROW 7 //

What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

God, I thank You for Your Word. I pray that You would help me learn to love Your Word over the course of this year, so that I can know You better and love You more.

That's it. Pretty simple, right? Now, let's give you an overview of where we're going in the next 52 weeks, as we seek to use these arrows to help us understand the entire Bible.

CHAPTER 1//CREATION

The main story of creation is told in the first two chapters of the Bible. The relatively small amount of space given to the story of creation does not mean that these two chapters are insignificant. In fact, as with every story, you simply can't understand the rest of the Bible unless you understand how the story begins.

Creation introduces us to God, describing who He is and why He made everything, including men and women. We meet the first couple, Adam and Eve, who are uniquely fashioned by God for a specific purpose. This purpose continues today, and even though sin has invaded God's good world, His purpose remains the same.

These key truths, established at the beginning of the Bible, provide the foundation for your life. If there's one word that describes the season of life you're in, it would likely be "change." Everything is changing. Your physical growth is matched by changes in your experience and understanding of the world. During these years, you are coming face to face with the brokenness of the world we live in. There are so many factors in life that seem out of control and don't appear to make sense. How is anyone supposed to move through life in such an ever-changing world?

You've got three options. One, you can try to figure out life on your own. You can attempt to use your own wisdom to determine how all the pieces of your life—your gifts and abilities, your passions, your problems, your past failures—fit together and make sense. Two, you can give up on trying to make sense out of life. You can follow your passions and try to make the best out of life on your own without the slightest concern for what you were put on this earth to do.

Or, the final option is to look to God. You could recognize that your knowledge is limited and seek God's wisdom. You could ask hard questions like: Is there a God? If there is a God, how can I know Him? What did God put me on this earth to do? How can I pursue what I'm created for? These questions are difficult, and many people don't ask them. But, if you really want answers, God has already given them to you in His Word.

GENESIS 1:1-2

There was never a time when God did not exist. Our Bible begins with the story of creation, yet God existed long before He created the world. Genesis 1 begins “in the beginning” of human history but it is not the beginning of God’s story. He is eternal—meaning that He always was and always will be. It’s hard for us to get our minds around this reality. Our lives seem so big most days—we’ve got so much to do, so many people competing for our attention, and so many things that make us worry about the future. We can easily lose sight of the fact that God is so much bigger than we are. He was at work long before we were born and will continue to exist long after our lives are over. Since our lives are so small in comparison, it’s critical that we understand our lives from the perspective of God’s story. Who is God? Why did He create all things? The answers to these questions help us catch a glimpse of how our lives fit within the great story that the eternal God is writing in the world.

What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?



GENESIS 1:3-19















God's words are powerful. They are not like the words you and I say every day. Our words can make someone laugh or cry; they can encourage or wound. We use words to communicate our feelings, to get a friend to do us a favor, or even to write a new song or poem. Sometimes our words have the desired effect, but they often lack power. People ignore us, they don't listen or do what we want, but God's words are very different. He created everything with His words—the sun and the moon, the mountains and the valleys, lions and bears—everything! He simply spoke and all of the things we see every day were created from nothing. That's some kind of power. But this power wasn't simply on display at creation. God continues to use His Word to show His power. Today, by His Word, God creates new life in those who were once dead in their sins. And the same power that once spoke all things into existence, speaks to you through the Bible you now hold in your hands.

GENESIS 1:20-25

After each day of creation, God stands back, considers His work, and sees that it is good. This reminds us that everything God creates is a representation of His goodness—God is good and He makes good things. If you’ve ever tried to make something yourself, then you know we struggle to create anything good. No one makes something good every time. Sometimes artists make good drawings, but other times, their creations aren’t all that great. Sometimes an athlete plays a good game, but often, he doesn’t. That’s because we’re not God. Only He can make everything good all the time. This goodness is the starting point for everything that exists in our world, but because of sin, all things are now broken and distorted. Even though there are now earthquakes and floods, creation is good. The problem in our world is sin. Still, the goodness of God is evident in His creation.



GENESIS 1:26-31















The high point of God's creation is people, like you and me. God made everything that stuns us with its beauty or magnitude—things like the Grand Canyon or a sky full of stars on a clear night. He declared all these aspects of creation to be “good.” But God called people “very good,” His highest praise. This means that every person who lives has tremendous worth, and further, serves a purpose in God's great plan. We may not feel very good some days. Like creation, our bodies and emotions are broken by sin, but we were not created this way. On days when we drop the ball, feel discouraged, get bad news, or struggle with feelings of loneliness, it's critical that we remember that we were created by a good God who sees us as valuable treasures. You don't need any other validation when God has already said that you have worth.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-18

When we say that God existed before creation and made all things, we are not merely speaking about God the Father. God exists in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and each were an active part in God’s creation. You may have noticed that Genesis uses plural pronouns saying, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen. 1:26a). There is one God, yet this one God exists in three persons, often referred to as the Trinity. Paul, writing in the New Testament, makes it clear that all things were created by, through, and for Jesus. We read about Jesus’ birth in Matthew’s Gospel, but the Son existed from the beginning and God always had a plan in place to save sinners through Jesus’ work. The Holy Spirit was sent to the church in Acts 2, but the Spirit hovered over the waters of the deep from the beginning of creation. Together, the Father, Son, and Spirit created all things. Further, each continues to play a part in saving sinners and restoring the world from the effects of sin.



GENESIS 1:26-27



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

One concept emphasized in God's creation of men and women is that we are made "in the image of God." This certainly doesn't mean that we look like God in a physical way. There's much more to it than that. A king in the ancient Near East would often set up an image or statue in a location as a representation of His rule and character in that area. Though the king was not physically present, the people were to be reminded of him whenever they looked at the image. In a similar way, God sets up image-bearers throughout the world, so others would be reminded of His character, how He relates to people, and of the fact that God rules over creation. The only way you and I can actually fulfill that image-bearing mission is in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

GENESIS 1:28-31

From the beginning of creation, God gave His people a mission. He didn't simply create Adam and Eve, put them in a perfect world, and tell them to enjoy the food and take a nap. He gave them a purpose, including working. First, they were to multiply and fill the earth. This process of multiplication would allow for an increasing number of men and women who would display the image of God. Second, they were to rule over the earth. Finally, they were to enjoy God's goodness as they ate and enjoyed the good garden in which they were placed. Often, we're tempted to discount the significance of what it means to be human. Marriage, children, work, and enjoyment are all essential to the way God designed the world to function. And whereas all these were initially pure and good, today the curse of sin has caused problems and made certain aspects difficult for us. Nonetheless, they are vital and valuable ways for men and women to reflect God's image in the world.



GENESIS 2:1-3















Rest is the final stage in God's work of creation. But God's rest is different than our rest. We experience a long, frustrating day at school and we end up crashing on the couch as soon as we get home because our energy is depleted and we need to recharge. God is all-powerful, and He doesn't run out of energy or hit a wall like we do. Yet He rests and establishes a pattern for His people to follow. When we rest, it shows that we are dependent on God's creative power to live. Apart from God's supplying us with energy, we can't do anything. When we get tired, God graciously gives us rest and teaches us to depend on Him. That's why He established a day of rest, the Sabbath, in which people were to cease their work and rest in God's goodness and care. Today believers continue to learn to depend on God through rest, which then enables us to reflect His image well.

GENESIS 2:5-9

Genesis 2 zooms in on God's creation of men and women in a more specific way than in chapter 1. Here we see that God created Adam, the first man, in two distinct stages. First, He took dust and used it to fashion the physical body of the first man. Then, he breathed His breath into this substance and gave Adam life. The dust of the earth and the breath of God were combined to demonstrate that all people, as descendants of Adam, have a component that you can see (a physical body) and an aspect of themselves that you can't see (a soul). Both are important. With our bodies, we honor God, do meaningful work, run, jump, and play. But there's more to life than our bodies. We're also filled with the breath of God and given a unique capacity to experience His presence and interact with Him in an intimate and personal relationship.



HEBREWS 1:1-3















The author of Hebrews applies the language of image-bearing to Jesus, who is described as “the exact expression of His nature.” Sometimes you might hear it said that a child looks like his or her parents. The child’s facial features or physical characteristics are designed in such a way that they model one parent or the other. Yet, no children are the exact imprints of their parents. In the same way, no person God makes is His perfect image. Sin makes this impossible. We all fall short of our created design, but there is one whose image reflects God perfectly all the time because He is God! Jesus is not made in the image of God; He is the image of God. If we want to know what God is like, the writer of Hebrews reminds us, we should look no further than Jesus. When we see His love for others, His compassion for the broken, His willing and humble service, His sacrificial death, and His victorious resurrection, we see a perfect picture of God.

GENESIS 2:15-17

As the story continues, the author of Genesis zooms in on God's creation of men and women in a very specific way. Men and women were given a task to work and develop the garden that served as their home. Though God made all things good, His design was that people would play a role in enhancing His good world, and God gave one clear rule that would provide a boundary for their work. They were free to enjoy all of God's good creation except the fruit of one tree which God declared to be off limits. He's the Creator of all things, so He knew that it was best for Adam and Eve to avoid this tree. As they submitted to God's plan, they had the privilege of working God's great creation and developing it to increasingly show off His greatness. The same is true today. We can invest our lives and God-given gifts in various aspects of God's world to help others see how great God is. Science, architecture, mathematics, arts, education, and sports are all ways we can invest our lives to work and develop the world in which He's placed us.

What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?



GENESIS 2:18-22















At some point, God saw something wrong with His good creation. He said it was not good that Adam was alone, so God continued His creation work by fashioning a woman from Adam's rib. God united the man and woman in marriage and set them out together on the mission of reflecting His image throughout creation. In Genesis 1 and 2, we notice that God created two unique and specific genders—men and women. Both genders are equally made in the image of God and with equal worth that comes from their Creator. They are, however, created with different physical characteristics and different roles to play within God's creation. These differences do not make one gender more valuable than the other. Rather they reflect the magnificence of His intricate care ensuring that the world is able to fulfill His mission through the uniqueness of men and women living as His image-bearers.

GENESIS 2:24-25

Have you ever wondered where marriage came from? Here, we see marriage was part of God's design from the beginning. The uniting of a man and a woman in marriage was His plan for filling the earth with image-bearers. He intentionally designed Adam and Eve to serve as complements in this mission. Adam and Eve set the pattern of marriage for the rest of human history, as a man and a woman leaving their biological families and uniting to one another in order to partner together to fulfill God's mission. This means that the decisions we make regarding who we may date and eventually marry are full of life-shaping significance. Perhaps no decision you make influences the path of your life more than finding a godly spouse with whom you can pursue God's mission together. This process does not lie outside the realm of God's concern, nor is it merely an area where you should feel shame and guilt over poor decisions from your past. Rather, the choice of a spouse is a spiritual decision meant to be made through the pursuit of wisdom from others and a deep dependence on God's leadership. These help us make wise decisions and enable us to fulfill God's mission for our lives.



ISAIAH 43:1-7















The prophet Isaiah reflected on God's creation making a very important point. He declared that God created all people for His glory. "Glory" is not likely a word you use every day, but the idea is one you experience all the time. Glory is used to describe something that is great, significant, or weighty. After a day of hiking, we might say that the mountaintop view is absolutely glorious. Glory is greatness intensified. It's an apt description for God. The combination of all of His attributes—His love, wisdom, and beauty—are so great that the word "great" will hardly do. God is glorious. Isaiah reminds us that He created men and women to declare and demonstrate this glory. How do we do this? We give Him glory when we fulfill the mission for which we were created by reflecting His image. We're meant to live the kind of lives that cause others to see and respond to the glory of our great God.

JOHN 17:1-5

John records Jesus' prayer immediately prior to His brutal crucifixion. This prayer, often known as the High Priestly Prayer, reveals to us the intimacy Jesus had with the Father, and it gives us an insider's perspective on the way in which He understood His life's mission. His prayer astounds us because, coming to the end of His life, He said that He had finished the work He was put on the earth to do. He even tells us exactly what this work was—to glorify God on earth. Like all people, Jesus' life mission was to demonstrate the greatness of God. Unlike us, however, Jesus was able to do it perfectly. Everything He did—the miracles He performed, the sermons He preached, the cross He faced, the death He defeated—shouted to the world that God is great! Jesus' life is a stunning testimony to a life well-lived.



PSALM 19:1-6



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

All of creation does, in a sense, what God meant specifically for people to do—proclaim the glory of the one, true God. It's not simply that God's glory can be seen in creation, but that creation speaks—it shouts—that God is great. If you've ever walked outside on a clear night and stared at the stars, you know this to be true. As you look up, you sense that there is something more to life than what you can see. There's Someone behind it all—Who made it all. You feel small and somehow captivated by the power and majesty of the Creator. It's no wonder that people have long been tempted to worship the stars, moon, and sun as gods. They are amazing! But they're amazing because they point beyond themselves to the God who spoke them into existence. If creation leaves us awestruck, imagine how great God must be.

PSALM 139:13-16

The Psalmist describes the intimate care that God took in creating men and women. The language here is personal—He intricately knitted every person together in their mothers' wombs. Every detail was fashioned by the hand of the all-powerful, ever-creative God. Like Adam and Eve before, everyone is hand-made by God. Not only that, but God also knows the length of our lives before we're ever born. Though death may be scary, we can trust that God was intentional in creating us in specific ways and for specific purposes. There will certainly be times when we're all tempted to forget this fact. There may be times when we don't like ourselves very much, times when we doubt whether God knew what He was doing when He made us like He did. Rather than growing bitter at God for the things we don't like, we should consider how every aspect of who we are is designed to help us accomplish God's mission for our lives.



ACTS 17:22-34















The speech recorded in Acts 17 took place as Paul and his band of missionaries traveled to tell people the good news of Jesus' work and establish new churches. In Athens, Paul found that the people worshiped a lot of false gods, so he took the opportunity to speak to them about the one true and living God. Paul began with creation—declaring to anyone listening that the true God is the one who made the heavens and the earth. There's no god but the Creator God. Not only that, but the true God populated the world with image-bearers—descendants of Adam and Eve. He did this very specifically. He intentionally determined the exact time and place that every person—including you—would be born. God was at work long before you were born, placing you in such a way that you could display His image and fulfill your life's purpose.

REVELATION 4:1-11

It may seem strange to include a passage from the book of Revelation in a chapter where we are learning about God's creation. But that's the beauty of the Bible. From start to finish, the Bible tells one story of God's plan for men and women to do what they were created to do—reflect His image throughout all the earth to bring Him glory. In the book of Revelation, John describes a future scene, when those who have been saved by God and remade in His image will gather around the throne in worship. It's then we will fully know and experience the glory of God in a world that is free from sin. We're told that God's creation will still be on the minds of men and women far in the future. There the world will be whole again—perfect and no longer broken by the implications of sin—and we will see clearly that God's glorious creation is very good indeed.



JOHN 1:1-18















John begins his Gospel a bit differently than Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He introduces Jesus as the Word of God who was at work in the beginning. Not only was the Word present at the dawn of creation, but this word was God. Centuries later, the Word of God did something amazing—He put on flesh and came to this earth as a man, Jesus Christ. This is not to say that Jesus was some sort of mythical creature who disguised himself as a person. Though His birth was unique, Jesus was fully human—and He was also fully God. He invaded a dark and broken world with the light of the glory of God, the very same God who spoke all things into being and willingly humbled Himself to come to earth knowing that He would face a brutal end because of His love for the men and women He created. God did not stand back and watch as people rebelled from His goodness; rather, He pursued wayward sinners with love by coming to them Himself. This mission was necessary because of the horrible choices Adam and Eve made in the next chapter of God’s story.