

Core 52 Beginnings
01 – Creation / Here on Purpose
Genesis 1

There are items we use every day that were created by accident. Some of these things changed life as we know it and they came about because someone somewhere made a mistake.

- Penicillin was discovered when a petri dish of staphylococcus bacteria was mistakenly left out on the windowsill of Alexander Flemings laboratory in 1928. Because of antibiotics, the average lifespan jumped from 47 years to 78 years.
- Corn Flakes were created when the Kellogg brothers accidentally left dough to dry too long.
- Post-It notes were created when a 3M chemist was trying to create a super strong adhesive, when he accidentally created a super weak adhesive.
- Artificial sweetener was discovered after a chemist noticed one evening that his finger food tasted much sweeter than normal. He traced the source of sweetness to the chemical he'd been working with earlier in the day. He quickly set up a business mass producing Saccharin.
- Safety glass was accidentally discovered by a French chemist knocked a glass beaker from a high shelf. When it shattered but didn't break, his assistant informed him that the container had previously held a clear plastic that left a film on the glass.
- Chocolate Chip cookies were a mistake. Ruth Wakefield of the Toll House Inn was baking when she ran out of baker's chocolate. She substituted small pieces of sweetened chocolate instead. She expected the chocolate to melt and make chocolate cookies, but pieces stayed intact, and milk has never been the same.
- Potato chips are the result of a temper tantrum by chef George Crum. One day a customer sent back his plate of potatoes multiple times and kept asking for them to be crispier and thinner. Crum lost his cool, sliced the potatoes insanely thin and fried them until they were hard as a rock. To the chef's surprise, the customer loved them and wanted more!
- Percy Spencer, an engineer with Raytheon, was conducting experiments with radar. He realized something was happening when the candy bar in his pocket melted. He then tried popcorn and when it started to pop he knew he had a winner, and the microwave was born.

What about the world in which we live? Is it one giant accident, or are we here on purpose?

Many who claim to carry the torch of modern science tell us our world's existence is nothing more than a statistical quirk— a series of random chances and remarkable coincidental accidents that turned out to be the luckiest roll of the dice in history of dice.

Darwinian evolution tells us we are nothing more than an unimportant bit of dust on an unimportant planet in an unimportant galaxy in an unimportant region in the vastness of space. There is nothing to see here. Move along. It's just a collection of ordinary minerals and common biochemical reactions.

But what if? What if none of this is an accident? What if our world's place in this universe is on purpose? What if your being here was meant to be? Then that changes everything. What is that purpose? Whose purpose is it? What are they like?

But before we dive into all of that, let's take a quick look at our GPS to see where we are and where we're going in 2020. We're beginning a brand new series this morning. It's a series that on one level will take us all the way through 2020. It's based on a book by a former professor at OCC named Mark Moore. It's called Core 52.

What's Core 52? Studies show that 80% of us would like to know the Bible better. The two big reasons we don't is we are too busy, and we don't know where to start. The Bible is this huge book made up of smaller books. They are not in chronological order, and it can become quite confusing.

What we're going to do this year is give you a big picture view of the Bible. Core 52 identifies 52 of the most important Bible passages and relates them to the most significant themes and stories in the Bible and ties it all together.

If you do nothing, but come to Sunday morning services this year, you will have a more comprehensive understanding of the Bible, it's message, and it's relevance to your life. However, Core 52 is designed to do more than that. This is a book for you to use in your daily devotions, in your quiet times with God. It provides for 5 devotions for every week of the year. So if you miss a couple of days, it's no big deal, you aren't behind, because there's only 5 per week. Also, each day's devotion takes only 15 minutes. If you can't find 15 minutes to spend some quality time with God, you are too busy. Not only that, but each day's activities are different. So, if you're ADHD, this can keep your interest. You're not doing the same thing every day. So I encourage to get the book and follow along with us this year. You will get so much more out of it. We have some books available this morning, so pick one up.

Even though we're spending the whole year in Core 52, don't worry. The messages are broken up into much smaller series, so even if you miss one part, you can jump in at any point. If you can only be here 2 Sundays out of the month, you won't be totally lost. The big picture is important, but each message also stands on its own.

The first section is called beginnings and comes from the book of Genesis. So let's jump back into our question— are we here by accident or we here on purpose?

Genesis is a book of beginnings. In fact, the word Genesis means beginnings. Genesis shows us not only the beginning of our world and humanity as a whole, but we see the beginning of marriage and family. We see the beginning of civilization and culture.

Unfortunately, we also see the beginning of everything getting messed up. Genesis shows us the origins of human failure, death, disease and natural disaster. Ours is glorious world of beauty and wonder. It's also a world where something has gone very, very wrong.

We also see in Genesis the beginning of God's plan to fix what is broken. God has a plan to bring people back home to the paradise He intended for them. We see the beginning of the hope and help that every one of us most desperately needs.

The World is Here on Purpose, Not by Accident

The undeniable message of opening verses of the Bible is that the world is here on purpose, not by accident. Out of all the rocks and balls of gas floating in this vast universe, our particular little blue sphere is here for a very special reason. Here are the opening 5 verses of the Bible:

¹ *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* ²*The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* ³ *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.* ⁴ *And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.* ⁵ *God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

The essential truth of Genesis 1 is that there is a Creator. The name of God appears 32 times in the first chapter of Genesis alone! *"God said, God called, God saw, God said, God made, God called."* Over and over again, this world is the story of what God has done.

This is why naturalistic evolution is so insidious, because if you can undermine the very first big idea in the Bible, you can pull the rug out from the whole thing.

The Creator is a God who not only makes the world, He makes it from nothing. This is what theology calls *creation ex nihilo*—creation out of nothing. God is the uncaused first cause. God didn't need Legos or Play-doh or any sort of matter or energy to get started. He simply creates with a word. He speaks the world into existence. God said it, and there it was.

It's impossible to wrap our heads around this. Try to imagine nothing. Even a blank canvas is something. An artist has colors of paints and brushes with which to work. Their mind is filled with images of things they've seen and experienced. But God began with nothing. He used nothing. Does this require a startling leap of faith? Certainly.

Both Evolution and Creation require Faith

But then again, naturalistic evolution tells us that everything exploded into existence in a big bang that began with all the matter and energy in the universe crammed into a singularity! The big bang theory tells us that in this singularity, its mass and energy are infinite, because all the laws of physics and space-time break down. Infinite – just like God. The Darwinian Bible would begin with this sentence. "In the beginning there was mass and energy collected in a single point and the universe spontaneously exploded into existence." Can't observe it. Can't prove it. Can't repeat it. Not science. Faith. Others would say, "No, the universe has just always been here. Contracting. Expanding. Eternal. Without end. Interestingly, just like God. Again. It's faith.

Keep this in mind; all of these are theoretical guesses because science doesn't have the math or the knowledge to explain it.

So the universe begins with infinite matter and energy, or an eternal cosmos that recreates itself over and over again. The beginning requires something infinite. Either that infinite something is mindless matter and random chance, or it is an infinite Someone who is calling the shots. Either view requires the same leap of faith. The spontaneous explosion into being of the universe makes much more sense if there is an infinite Someone at the helm, manning the controls.

Genesis doesn't just tell us that God created something. It tells us He created with purpose and design. The world wasn't a mistake or an accident as seen in some of creation myths of the ancient world. God made exactly what He wanted, and He got exactly what He wanted. Nothing thwarted His purposes in creation. At no point, did God ever say, "Oops, let's try that again."

Creation as we see here in Genesis 1 establishes several important truths about God.

God is Powerful

Creation shows us that God is powerful. Everything in creation from the stature of mountains, to the depths of the sea, to the vastness of space, to the subatomic intricacy of quantum physics speaks to the power of the God. Everything that has been made, was made by God. That is powerful indeed.

Let me give you some perspective on His power. The nearest star to our sun is Proxima Centauri. It is 4.23 light years away or nearly 25 trillion miles. That's 25 followed by 12 zeros. (actual number 24,984,092,897,479) Travelling at the fastest known theoretically possible speeds, it would take more than 13,000 years for us to get there.¹

Now consider this. The European Space Agency has a mission mapping the locations of approximately 1 billion stars in our galaxy. They estimate that is only 1 percent of a total of 100 billion stars in a galaxy that is 100,000 light years across. A mere 2.3 million light years away is the next nearest galaxy, Andromeda which contains billions of more stars. And so far the Hubble telescope has revealed an estimated 100 billion such galaxies in the universe.

Consider now the words of Psalm 147:4-5

*He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.*

I'd say so. You pick one of any of the billions of stars in any one of the billions of galaxies and God could tell you everything about that star. Because He made it. That's power.

God has a purpose

Creation doesn't just reveal God's power; it confirms this powerful Creator has purpose in what He does. Verse 2 tells us that upon creation that the "earth was formless and empty" and "darkness was over the surface of the deep." At first, this world seems just a collection of mineral and matter as we might expect from a godless cosmos of chance. But this state of things changes in an instant. "The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." At this point God begins to give purpose and design to everything in the world. Out of chaos comes craftsmanship of magnificent design.

He fashions the oceans, the rivers, the lakes and the seas. He constructs the continents, vast vistas of field, forest, and mountain that he fills with plants over every imaginable variety. He hangs the planets and stars in their places. He populates the land, the seas and the skies with creatures of every kind. Every creature is perfectly suited to the environment in which it is placed. The design is exquisite.

We come from generations raised on the assumptions of Star Trek, Star Wars, and the X-Files, a sci-fi universe teeming with intelligent alien life. But real science from microbiology to astrophysics is increasingly showing that life on our planet is an intricate design involving the perfect interplay of millions of different factors all perfectly balanced for life to thrive on our little sphere floating in space.

Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards write in their book, *Privileged Planet*:

Mounting evidence suggests that the conditions necessary for complex life are exceedingly rare, and that the probability of them all converging at the same place and time is minute.

This isn't to say God couldn't have created intelligent life elsewhere, but it is enough to tell us that He must have had a very special purpose in putting it here.

God is Eternal

Thirdly, we learn God is eternal. "In the beginning, God." The opening words of the Bible presume the preexistence of God. Before there was anything, there was God. God existed before the existence of space-time. In the beginning, God was already there. The universe was made by an infinite Someone. He can paint the picture, because He is not part of the painting. God simply is.

The name that God reveals to the nation of Israel is *Yahweh*, which simply means, "I am." He is not, nor will He ever be "I was" or "I will be." He simply is. In a Psalm written by Moses, in Psalm 90:2 it says,

*Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

God is Good

Another thing we can learn from Genesis 1 is that God is good. How can we know that God is good? Because the world is good. 7 times, after every day of creation, Genesis 1 declares, "And God saw that it was good." You can almost hear God laughing with delight. When He was all finished, it ends with the triumphant exclamation point, "It was very good." It is good in its individual parts and it is good as a whole. From the smallest subatomic particles to the grandest galaxies spinning in space, God's creation is good.

"It was good." That is more than a statement of functionality— everything works as intended. Creation's goodness is more than aesthetics— where everything is stunningly beautiful. The Hebrew word for good here means good in every way possible. It is good in its function. It is good in its beauty. It is morally good.

In Genesis 2:9 we read that the trees in the garden were both pleasing to the eye and good for food. Aesthetics and function. It looks good. It tastes good. I can almost imagine God smiling to himself thinking, wait until they figure out chocolate cake.

There is a sense of joy and celebration to the marvelous beauty and wonder of Creation. God didn't just make one kind of tree, or one kind of flower or one kind of animal, but He created a vast assortment arrayed in glorious variety all according to their kinds. There is artistry and craftsmanship to everything God makes. We hear it in the language of Genesis 2 where God plants a garden. He fashions a man. He is an artist at work, and indulges in His craft with great joy.

Some mythologies and philosophies in biblical times viewed the physical world, not as something good, but as something evil, a corrupting influence at best. The Greek philosophy of Plato believed that the world as experienced with our senses was only shadows of universal realities.

Hinduism teaches that we must escape the illusion of our unreal physical existence to attain enlightenment. Radical environmentalism has exchanged the glory of our Creator for the beauty of creation. It acknowledges the wonder of the world, but denies the glory of its Maker. Instead of seeing the glory of God in the beauty of creation, they worship creation as a god.

The philosophy of Nihilism started by Fredrick Nietzsche in the 19th Century continues to wield great influence in the modern world. Underlying this worldview is the idea that nothing has intrinsic worth or meaning. The bottom line is that life means nothing.

Into this darkness, Genesis 1 shines this incredible light of truth. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...and it was very good.”* We live a world of incredible worth and meaning. The goodness of creation tells us that there must be a Creator who is also very good. We know God is good because his creation is good.

This also means you have a place and a purpose here. Your being here is no accident. Your life has God-given worth and meaning. We will explore this idea next week, but for this morning what should be our response to Creation. Let me give you two things real quick.

Live Thankfully

First, live thankfully. Enjoy the world God has made. Accept it for the gift that it is. When you give a gift you expect it to be enjoyed. You hope they like it. You want to see their face light up. You want to hear them say, “It’s perfect. It’s what I needed.” So enjoy all that God has given us in the beauty of this world and be thankful for it.

1 Timothy 4:4

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.

Watch the sun set. Stop and look at a rainbow. Go out in the rain and splash in puddles. Climb to the top of a mountain and look as far as the eye can see. Go to the beach and take off your shoes and wander out into the surf, and gaze across the seemingly endless waters. Savor every bite of a ribeye cooked to perfection. Drive out to the middle of nowhere, turn off the lights, and wonder at the stars above. Enjoy a cold one with a good friend. Stop and smell the roses. Take the scenic route. Plant a garden. Smile at the bird that lands on your deer stand during hunting season. Adopt a pet. And after all of it say, “Thank you, Lord, for you are good.” Live thankfully.

Live Worshipfully

Secondly, live worshipfully. We just completed a whole series on worship, so I won’t expand on this too much other than to say this. The glory of creation points to the glory of our Creator for a reason.

Creation itself is an expression of praise, of worship to God. The Psalms are filled with praise coming from Creation. Psalm 19:1, *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”* In the Psalms, hills clap their hands, trees shout their praises, and the earth bows down in worship. Even the weather offers its praise.

We are a part of creation. We are creatures, and so our voice should join the praise.

Revelation 4:11

*“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”*

Don't just admire, enjoy and praise the good things of this world. Give praise to their Creator.

ⁱ <https://www.universetoday.com/15403/how-long-would-it-take-to-travel-to-the-nearest-star/>