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CHAPTER 1

GOD MADE YOU (AND HE MADE YOUR FRIENDS TOO!)

My daughter is fascinated with outer space. She loves to try to find constellations like the Big Dipper and gets excited when there's a full moon. The universe is massive and **DIVERSE**. That means it's huge and filled with many different objects. There are stars and moons and planets and black holes and a bunch of other stuff I can't even imagine!

When you look up at the sky, what do you think about?

**WHEN YOU LOOK UP AT THE SKY,
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT?**

Looking up at the sky reminds me of Psalm 8:3–4:

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them? (NIV)



At the beginning of time, God created the heavens. He set it all in place. He thought of the idea of Mars—the planet that’s also called the red planet. God created the moon that shines bright in the night. God created stars that appear to twinkle. God created the sun that warms the earth throughout the year. God did all of this.

Have you ever created something from scratch? It’s hard to create from nothing (only God can do that!). Whether it’s drawing a picture or writing a story, creating is a lot of work. Because God is powerful and full of knowledge, I don’t think it was hard for God to create the world, but it was a lot of work.

AND HE KEPT CREATING.

He created water that would cover the earth—oceans, rivers, and lakes. He created land with mountains and valleys and deserts and plains. And He made sure the land had plants and flowers and trees. And He didn't create just one type of plant or flower or tree; there are thousands of different types!



AND HE KEPT CREATING.

God created animals, lots and lots of animals. He created the giraffe with an incredibly long neck. And He created elephants with their massive trunks. He created lions, which are just really, really big cats. He created fish in the sea, too many to number. He created every insect and bug—those that slither on the ground and those that fly in the air.



God created all of these things, and the Bible tells us that when He was done creating these things, He said at least three times that what He created was good (Genesis 1:10, 18, 25).¹

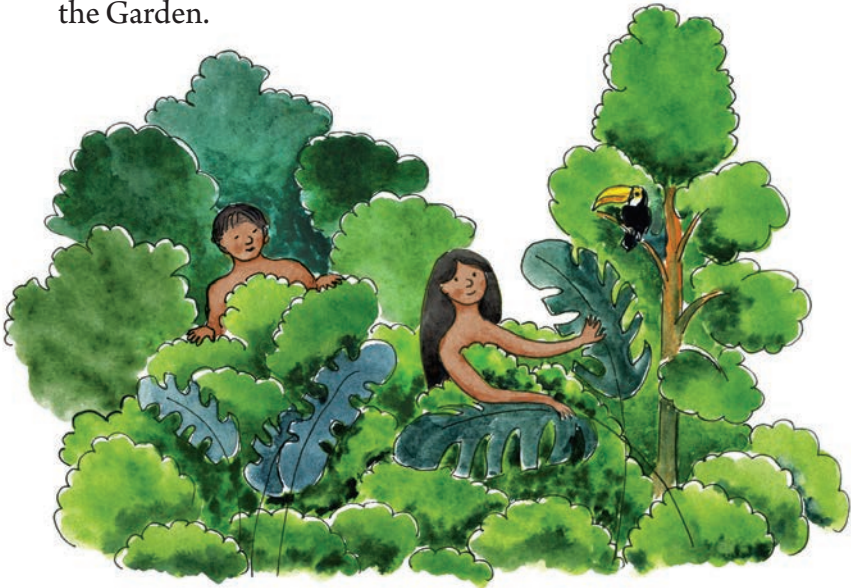
God could have stopped creating. God was happy and didn't need anything. But the land needed to be taken care of, kind of like a farmer or a gardener cares for their land (Genesis 2:5).² Because God is good and kind, He decided to create people to work the land and care for the animals and begin having children and families to fill the earth.

Maybe you've heard the story of Adam and Eve. God created Adam, the first man, out of the dust on the ground. After Adam was created, God placed him in a garden known as Eden. Eden had everything Adam needed

for food and for living a good, long life. Eden was beautiful. Adam got to work caring for the land and all that God had given him. But Adam needed some help and couldn't take care of all the responsibility the Lord gave him on his own.

SO, GOD KEPT CREATING.

God took one of Adam's ribs and crafted a woman. When God was finished, Adam was so happy! Adam and Eve were the first man and woman, and they were also the first husband and wife. They enjoyed each other so much. They loved each other perfectly. They had so much fun in the Garden.



God wanted Adam and Eve to take care of the Garden of Eden so that it could grow and grow to become even more beautiful and big. Eventually, the whole earth was supposed to be like the Garden of Eden. The whole earth would be filled up with God's truth and beauty and goodness. Even though God didn't need anything, He didn't want to do this special job by Himself.

That's why God did something very special when He created humans. Adam and Eve were not like the other creatures He created. God made humans different from the animals. He made them in His own image. That means you and I reflect different characteristics of God Himself!

So God created mankind
in his own image,
in the image of God
he created them;
male and female he created them.
(Genesis 1:27 NIV)



The idea that you are made in the **IMAGE OF GOD** might be hard to understand, but it's true. Since God made ev-

everything—the earth, the stars, the whole universe—He gets to be in charge of everything. God is the King of all creation. And when God made us in His image, He gave us the amazing task of being His partners in His special mission. What's His special mission? God wants to fill the whole earth with His glory! That means that God wants the whole world to know and love all of His perfect ways.

Every person walking on this earth and every person that ever lived is made to reflect God. Like a mirror reflects our own image, we reflect the image of God to one another.

THE BIG IDEA

Every person is made by God and in the image of God and therefore is equal in value and worth.

For example:

GOD IS KIND—you can be kind too.

GOD IS LOVING—you can be loving too.

GOD IS FAIR—you can be fair too.

GOD IS FORGIVING—you can be forgiving too.

GOD IS TRUTHFUL—you can be truthful too.

GOD IS WISE—you can be wise too.

GOD IS GOOD—you can do good too.

God is all those things and more, and we can be all those things too. That is how we reflect God. Animals can be fun to play with or loveable or even gentle, but they can't really be truthful or forgiving or fair. Only we can be those things. That's what makes us a special part of God's earth. We are not like other animals. We reflect God.

A friend of mine once wrote, "The Bible does not begin with the creation of a special race of people."^{*}

You know what that means? Every person, from every background, no matter what their skin color is or what they look like, no matter whether they can walk, run, or crawl . . . every person is made by God and every person is made equally. God doesn't have favorites! Isn't that such good news?

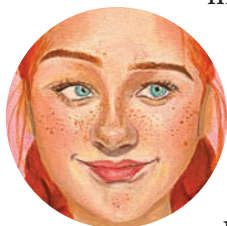
God made you. He loved making you. God makes some people tall and some people, like me, short. He makes

^{*} J. Daniel Hays, *From Every Tribe and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 48.

some people with dark skin and some people with lighter skin. He makes some people with straight hair and some people with curly hair. He makes some people with big eyes and some people with small eyes. He



makes some people with birthmarks



and some people with freckles. He makes some people with different abilities. God makes all sorts of people. God makes boys and God makes girls. God made everything

about you—you are wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).³ We are all important to God because He took time to create us. He is a good God!

We are all made in the image of God, so we all have value and are important to God. Understanding that God made you, your friends, your family, and every person you'll ever meet should help you see others as God sees you.



But as you probably already know, all true stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The creation of Adam and Eve is a wonderful story. But it isn't the end of their story. What happened next is the reason why it is so hard for us to see each other the way we should. Sometimes we don't like each other. Sometimes we get angry. Some-

times we are mean. This is all because of sin. But God always had a plan to rescue us.

But before we find out how, let's pause and think about what we just read.


WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Here are some questions for you to think about. You can write out your answers in a notebook or journal or talk about your answers with others.

- 1 How are you different from animals?
- 2 You and all your friends and every other person ever created by God are made in the image of God. Write what you think that means in your own words.
- 3 Since every person is made by God, how do you think we should treat each other?
- 4 Think about the fact that God made you and loved making you. If you wrote a letter to God thanking Him, what would you say?

Here's a prayer I'd write to God for making us:

God, You are so awesome! You are creative and made so many good things. Thank You, God, for making people. Thank You that You had the idea of making people from all over the world with different skin colors and different languages. Thank You for being so kind and so loving. You made all creation, and it is beautiful. Thank You for giving us so much to enjoy. You are good. I love You. Amen.

 Do you remember the big idea of this chapter? Look back at *The Big Idea*. Sing it, rap it, or chant it so that you can remember it. Then share it with a friend!

ACTIVITY

Take a blank piece of paper (or a paper plate) and write "I'm made in the image of God" at the top. Then draw your face on the paper. You can color it or paint it and add yarn, cotton balls, or stickers. Get creative! In the space around your face, write down words that describe the way God made you (example: funny, smart, curly hair,

straight hair). Also, write down words that describe what God wants us to be like so that we can reflect Him (example: kind, fair, loving).

REMEMBER: God loved to make you, and He made you on purpose. You are made in His image.