

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT



# Six Days to Create the World

It is an issue that divides school boards, inflames legislatures, and loads the dockets for courtroom battles. Should we teach in our public schools that God created the universe? Many of us are happy to leave science to scientists and teachers, and matters of faith to clergy and theologians. But from within our own faith settings, a closer look at what the Bible says about God's act of creation might have something to offer. The Bible has much to teach us today about why God created us. Just as we may want to clearly understand what science teaches regarding evolution and the origins of the universe, we might also read Genesis to more deeply appreciate its truth.


Believing in Scripture is not at all the same thing as taking Scripture literally. For example, there are actually two accounts of creation in the first two chapters of Genesis. On the surface, they seem to contradict each other. If forced into a literal interpretation, they could confuse those who read Genesis expecting a detailed account of exactly how the world was created. When a believer reads Genesis with a different expectation—to learn God's purpose in creating the world—the two versions simply show different aspects of God's purpose. Both accounts affirm the dignity and purpose of creation, truths that nurture our faith without denying the credibility of modern scientific understandings, whether that means the big bang, evolution, or something else.

When we read Genesis 1 and 2, instead of asking how long it took God to create the world, or if God literally shaped Adam out of dirt from the earth, we might find even richer rewards if we join the ancient Hebrew people in asking some very important, enduring questions. Is the world God's creation? Is God in control or not? Why did God create us? What is our relationship to the rest of creation? How can we honor our purpose in the daily patterns of our life?

One reason the days are so important to the story of creation is because the world in which we live our lives is marked by the



**We believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible. Is it always necessary to interpret the Bible literally? Why or why not?**



**Read the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2. What are some key differences between them that stand out for you?**





How might reading Genesis 1:1–2:4a as poetry affect the way it is understood?



constant pattern of days we experience as a week. It is within this basic rhythm of time that we must find our meaning and fulfill our purpose as divinely created beings. The creation story can help us in our own time to find our meaning and purpose as well.

Because the days of the week reflect the rhythmic pattern of our lives, they are presented as the literary structure of the creation account in Genesis 1. It is a well-thought-out, structurally precise pattern. Like most ancient Hebrew poetry, it seeks to rhyme, not words or sounds, but ideas. Read Genesis 1 carefully. Note how in each of the first three days God creates a place and then goes back to each of those places in days 4–6 to fill them with the things that call them home. Days 4–6 are the “rhymes” that make this story poetic.

### The poetic structure of Genesis 1

Day	Places	Creature	Day
1	Day and Night	Sun, Moon, and Stars	4
2	Sky and Water	Birds and Fish	5
3	Dry Land	Animals and Humans	6



The poetry of this creation story tells us something very important about its message as well. It tells us to look beyond the mere words for the message and to look at its structure for clues to its meaning.

The message is an age-old wisdom, one that our parents tried to teach us and we try to teach our children: “Everything has a place, and there is a place for everything.” To take it further, we might say that the earth is our home; we belong here. We were made for each other. But when it comes to humans there is also a special message. We have been assigned a unique role in creation.

**What message about God’s purpose in creating the heavens and the earth is conveyed by the events depicted in the six days of creation?**



*More in-depth study online and free!*



Little Rock  
Scripture Study

Visit our website [www.littlerockscripture.org](http://www.littlerockscripture.org) and select the “**What the Bible Says About ...**” button to find a more in-depth free Catholic Bible study on “**Six Days to Create the World.**”