

A Biblical View of God and Nature

By Patricia Nason

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments and verses related to “God Was Here First!” in the section **It’s in the Book**. Several Scripture verses support Genesis 1:1. Look up each of the following and describe what the passage says about the preexistence of God and His relationship to nature: 1 Chronicles 16:26; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 102:25-27; Isaiah 40:28; Isaiah 42:5; Jeremiah 32:17; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; and Hebrews 11:3. Prepare to share your findings with the group.

Assignment Two

Read the comments and verses related to “Nature and General Revelation” in the section **It’s in the Book**. Also read Job 12:7-12. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What kinds of creatures are listed in this passage? When was their kind created (give verses)? What do they know that man does not know? How does this support Romans 1:20? How does this support God’s condemnation of man according to Romans 1?

Assignment Three

Read the comments and verses related to “Sovereignty over Creation” in the section **It’s in the Book**. When Jesus performed miracles, He was pointing to the power and authority of God over His creation and nature. Read each of the following verses and prepare to describe what aspect of nature Jesus demonstrated He controlled: John 2:1-11; John 4:46-5; Mark 4:36-41; Matthew 8:28-34; Matthew 9:27-31; John 11:1-46; Matthew 14:13-21; Matthew 14:22-33; John 20:19-26; Mark 14:47-51; John 21:1-8

Scripture to Memorize

“For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” Romans 1:20

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will defend the concept that the Creator God is separate from nature and has authority over it even today.

Patricia Nason is professor of Foundations in Teaching in the Price School of Church and Family Ministries at Southwestern Seminary and is director of the Master of Arts in Christian School Education. She teaches theology and philosophy for Christian Education and PhD courses relating to current educational philosophies.

Patricia is a wife, mother of five children, and grandmother of nineteen grandchildren. She has taught science in public school and science teachers at Texas A&M University (where she received her PhD), UNC-Charlotte, SFA, and at the Institute for Creation Research. She has been teaching director of Community Bible Study in Nacogdoches, Texas. Her walk with Christ is a story of His faithfulness and everlasting love toward her and her family.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Your family is discussing how they can help with relief for people in a country where an earthquake killed thousands and injured tens of thousands. Your eight-year-old sister, Becky, asks, "Why would God allow an earthquake to destroy so many people?" Mike, your older brother, states dogmatically, "It wasn't God who caused it; it was just a result of natural forces on the earth." How will you respond to Becky's and Mike's statements? Did God cause the earthquake or is it just a geologic phenomenon caused by the earth's movement?

God Was Here First!

Read Genesis 1:1 out loud.

Studying the Passage, v. 1

Verse 1. In the beginning, God. The first words usually set the stage for the rest of a book, and so it is with the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says God is all there was in the beginning and He is the One who created the cosmos and everything in it. He is separate from creation (transcendent). He exists apart from and is not subject to the limitations of the material universe.

When believers refer to nature and the natural world, they are talking about the universe and all that is in it as created by God. The Hebrew word for God is given to the Creator and Judge of the universe. Although the Hebrew word can imply "gods," the singular verb that follows indicates it is speaking of one God, the Trinity. The Hebrew word for "created" means "to make something from nothing."

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share what the Bible says about the preexistence of God and His relationship to nature.

Discussion Question

Carl Sagan's opening words of the TV series *Cosmos* were, "The cosmos is all that is, or ever was or ever will be." His definition of nature fits most perceptions today—that nature is the physical world and everything in it.

- An *atheist* believes there is no God.
- The *pantheist* asserts that God/the gods and nature are one, refuting the transcendent nature of God. Such belief justifies their worship of Mother Earth.
- A *materialist* asserts that matter has always existed.
- The *evolutionist* claims everything came into existence accidentally over a long process involving chance.

The first words in Scripture refute all of man's false worldviews. How can you use the words from Genesis 1:1 to disprove each of the ideologies above?

Nature and General Revelation

Read Romans 1:18-23 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 20. they are without excuse. Paul supports the fact that mankind has no excuse for not knowing that God exists. Observing nature will not lead one to salvation, but it does cause man to know there is a God. The point of this verse is not that God's attributes are *in* creation, or else we would worship the created rather than the Creator, but that creation proves **His eternal power and divine nature**.

Verse 20. clearly seen. This Greek verb strongly suggests humans have the ability to thoroughly perceive and clearly understand God's invisible attributes in nature. The instant God created the cosmos, creation began announcing the attributes of the Creator. Those attributes are recognizable when man looks on nature. They are **eternal**, going forward and backward in time. His **power** (*dynamis*) is inherent (part of His character), miraculous and full of strength. **divine nature.** This Greek word refers to God's uncommunicable attributes, those characteristics not shared with His image bearers (mankind). God's attributes include the facts that:

1. He is *eternal*. He always has been and always will be (Psalm 90:2; John 8:58).
2. He is *self-existing* and not dependent on anything or anyone else for His existence.
3. He is *unchangeable*—the same today, yesterday, and forever (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17).
4. He is *omnipresent*, everywhere at one time (Psalm 139:7-10).
5. He is *omniscience*. He knows all things (Romans 16:27; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20).

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share what the Bible says about the knowledge animals have about God.

Discussion Question

According to Romans 1:18-23, discuss the 10 reasons God gives mankind over to the lust of their hearts. (Note: All the answers are found in these verses.)

Sovereignty over Creation

Read Colossians 1:16-17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, floods, volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis and other acts of nature occur almost daily. The question of who controls weather and natural disasters—God or Mother Nature—is discussed among Christians today. However, Scripture teaches that God is in control.

Verse 16. all things. The Hebrew word for *all things* means “all things with nothing left out.” A list of these things include: things **both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities**, which sums up everything possible. **all things have been created through Him and for Him.** Jesus is the means through which the act of creation took place. The Greek word meaning “create” in this context indicates proprietorship or ownership. The word is used when something was made or created by the entity named—in this case, Jesus. Everything is not only called into existence from nothing, but everything is maintained in its present state by the Son who is the Preserver, as well as the Creator, of all things.

The most amazing picture of sovereignty is that God the Creator has power over death. The blood of Christ has power over a natural process, death. This is the ultimate example of God's sovereignty over nature!

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on biblical descriptions of those aspects of nature Jesus demonstrated He controlled.

Discussion Question

Read Romans 8:20-22 out loud. These verses tell us that all of creation is subject to Adam's curse. How might this help explain the seemingly bad things that happen through natural events?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

This week we learned that:

1. Only God was in the beginning and He created all of nature.
2. Nature (creation) reveals God's attributes.
3. God is in control of nature.

He is not just sovereign over the good things that happen, but He is also sovereign over diseases, floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, hurricanes, tornadoes and every living thing.

The results of Adam's sin have given mankind a need to see God's attributes. God has provided this knowledge, in part, through nature and natural processes. Beauty in the natural world, as well as disasters, display God's divine nature.

Read the following passages from Exodus. As you read, notice how God controls nature. By studying the Exodus verses, you can form a biblical reason for why and how God causes or allows disasters.

List the things in nature that God controlled. 7:8-13; 9:1-7; 10:21-29; 7:14-25; 9:8-17; 11:1-5
8:1-15; 9:18-26; 8:16-24; 10:1-20

From the following passages, write God's purpose in using nature to accomplish His goals:

7:3 - **I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply**

7:5 - **The Egyptians shall know that**

7:17 - **By this you shall know that**

8:10 - **May it be according to your [Pharaoh's] word, that you may know**

8:19 - **Then the magicians said to Pharaoh**

9:16 - **for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to . . . and in order to**

10:1 - **for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that**

10:2 - **that you may tell**

11:9 - **Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that**

Notice the condition of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19; 9: 17, 35; and 10:27. What was the condition of Pharaoh's heart?

How is Pharaoh's heart like the heart of mankind who rejects God, as Paul referenced in Romans 1:21: "For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."?

Disciples are on a lifetime quest to know Triune God and to grasp all His marvelous attributes. Knowing God as Creator of all things and as the ruler and authority over all things is central to that quest.

Follow up Question

*How did Adam's sin cause the entire universe to no longer be **very** good (Genesis 1:31)?*