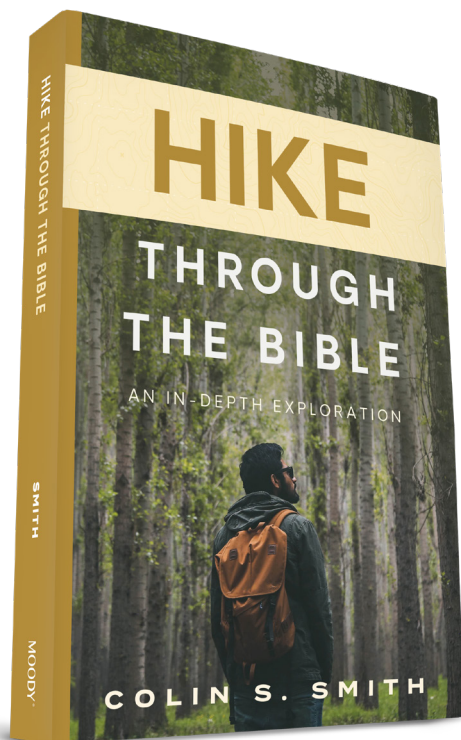




Gear up for some trails that will change your life.

This 50-session journey helps you navigate through difficult passages of Scripture and takes you down exciting new trails where you'll encounter the Lord in a personal way. Smith leads you on paths where you'll explore the depths of God's Word.

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1

LIFE

GENESIS 1–2

The Bible begins with God walking onto the stage and introducing Himself: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The Author wants you to know that what you are about to see is entirely His work.

The Creator has the rights of an owner. We live in a world of trademarks and patents. If I say “Just do it,” you will immediately think about Nike’s iconic slogan. A slogan is owned by its creators, who always have the rights of ownership—and God owns all He has made.

If your life were an accident, only a result of indifferent natural processes, you would be a free agent, accountable to no one but yourself. But if you were created, your Creator would have full rights of ownership over your life.

One or the other of these things must be true: Either you are an accident of history and therefore completely at liberty to do whatever you please with your life, or you are a created being and your Creator has absolute rights of ownership over your life.

God introduces Himself as your Creator and therefore your owner. You are not your own. Your life is a trust given to you from God. That means you are not worthless. You are not the product of random chance. God has a purpose for you, and as you get to know God your Creator, you’ll begin to discover it!

The Image of God

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). “Man” is used as a generic term here; it includes male and female. We are specifically told, “God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them” (1:27). Notice the plural “us” in 1:26. It is a fascinating hint about the nature of God to be revealed more fully later.

After five days of creation, the crowning moment has come. It is almost as if God has a conversation with Himself: “Let’s do it! Let Us make man in Our image.” An image is a reflection, and so God is telling us that He made us in such a way that we would be able to reflect something of His own nature and glory.

The image of God is what distinguishes people from animals. Animals were made *by* God, but none of them were made *like* God. That is why no man or woman should ever be treated like an animal or behave like an animal. Men and women who believe they are simply developed animals have missed the most fundamental thing that God says about them. We are made in the image of God!

The Kiss of Life

Men and women are made in the image of God, but we must always remember we are not God. God made the first man from the dust of the ground, so we should not be surprised if there are similarities to the animals at a biological level. But there is more to human life than chemistry or biology.

“The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7). God formed a body that lay lifeless on the ground. Then God breathed His own breath into the body. He gave man the kiss of life, and the body became a living, self-conscious being.

God is always doing what He did that day: “[God] gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:25). God sustains you one breath at a time, and you are absolutely dependent on Him. If you can grasp these twin truths—that you are made in God’s image and that you are dependent on Him—you will discover a great dignity and, at the same time, a profound humility.

God gave Adam four special gifts that made his life wonderfully rich—a place, a purpose, a partner, and most of all, the gift of God’s presence.

Taking a Walk with God

God is Spirit. That means He is invisible to the human eye. Yet right at the beginning of the Bible we read about God relating to Adam and Eve in such a way that they could see Him, hear Him, and enjoy Him. “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8).

The Old Testament has many examples of God appearing in visible form. We call these theophanies. Later in the Bible story, we will see that God became a man, so it should not seem strange that in the Old Testament He would appear in a visible form.

These appearances show us the intense desire in the heart of God to have fellowship with us. It is almost as if the Son of God could not wait to come. He burst out of heaven, entering human time and space, and walked with the first man and woman in the garden.

What that would have been like! God was interested in what Adam had done in the day, and He was listening to whatever was on Eve’s mind. That’s the kind of relationship God wants you to enjoy with Him.

As we’ll see in the next chapter, this fellowship between God and man was broken, and it has remained so throughout the generations of human history. But Jesus Christ came into the world to restore that broken relationship and to make it possible for us to walk with God again.

We cannot see God, but when we come to Him with faith and in the name of Jesus Christ, His presence is as real as it was when He appeared in visible form to Adam. Think about that next time you pray.

A Place Called Home

We don’t know precisely where Eden was located, but the important things to grasp are that it was a real place and that God put the man and the woman there: “The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed” (Genesis 2:8).

God created a place where Adam and Eve would know and enjoy His blessing, and He does the same thing for us. He has determined the exact places for all of us to live (see Acts 17:26). Try to envision God walking with you into your home, your workplace, or your church and saying, “This is the place I have

prepared for you.” You are not where you are by accident. When you know, as Adam did, that God has set you where you are, you will have stability in the most difficult times.

There’s Work to Be Done

God, who “called the light Day” and “the darkness . . . Night” (Genesis 1:5), invited Adam to participate in His work of naming things: “Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name” (Genesis 2:19).

Right from the beginning Adam was occupied with work: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (2:15). Work existed before sin entered the world, and it will continue after sin has been cleared out. Sin has introduced frustration into our work, but the first thing to say about work is that it is a good gift from God.

God has work for you to do, and you will find it helpful to think about how your work reflects the work of God. God brings order out of chaos. When you clean out a closet, bring order to a home, or organize a business, you are reflecting God’s work. God creates what is beautiful. If you paint, draw, or design, you are reflecting God’s work. God protects, and everyone who guards the safety of others reflects His work. God provides, and all who play any part in building homes or in growing, transporting, selling, or cooking reflect God’s work. Think about how your work reflects God’s work, and you will find great joy in knowing that this is the work He has given you to do.

God took a personal interest in Adam’s daily work by bringing the animals to him (2:19). Adam was God’s fellow worker. God worked with him and through him, and it was in this way that God’s purpose for the world was advanced. God is interested in your work and wants to be involved in it. That’s something to consider when you’re in front of the computer, on the shop floor, at school, or stirring something on the stove.

A Marriage Made in Heaven

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’ . . . And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Genesis 2:18, 22).

Once again the Lord appeared to Adam, and said, “Adam, I have someone I want you to meet.” Adam’s jaw must have dropped wide open. He certainly seemed pretty pleased! He said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23).

Notice, the Lord Himself brought the two together. The first wedding service was conducted by almighty God. Try to picture it in your mind: The Lord God takes her hand and puts it into his hand, and says, “Here is the partner I have made for you. Help each other, and love each other well.”

We will see in the next chapter that this marriage had more than its fair share of troubles. But whatever their problems, Adam and Eve knew that they had been joined together by God.

There will be times in every marriage when a husband and wife need to come back to this. Marriage is the joining of one man and one woman by God. As the Scripture says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (2:24).

If you are married, try to picture God taking your hand and the hand of your spouse and joining them together. As He does this, God says, “Go through life together, love each other, and forgive each other.” This is what God did for Eve and Adam, and if you are married, this is what God has done for you. Knowing that God has joined you and your spouse together will help you weather the toughest storms.

If you are looking for a marriage partner, remember that God brought Eve and Adam together. The pressure of trying to find the right person can be intense, but you can trust God to bring the right person to you, or to bring you to the right person. I am not suggesting that you should be passive, but you have no need to panic. You can trust the Lord with every area of your life.



TRAIL MARKERS

God wants you to know that He is the Owner of all things. He made you in His image and you have unique dignity and worth.

At the beginning of human history, God made it possible for our first parents to know Him and enjoy Him. He brought the man and his wife together. He led them to their home and gave them their work. He provided all that they needed, and He shared in their life. What God did for them, He continues to do for us today. The only difference is that we don't see Him do it. We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).



1. What is your reaction to the creation account — that God created you and therefore you belong to Him? Doubt? Fear? Comfort? Something else?



2. Do you think it matters whether you were intentionally created by God or the product of random chance? Why or why not?



3. What do you think the Bible means when it says that God made us “in his own image” (Genesis 1:27)?



4. Would you like to experience walking with God as Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden? Why or why not?



5. What would it mean to you to know for sure that your home, job/school, or spouse is a gift to you from God Himself?

To memorize:

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

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