

## GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to believe:

1. that the Creator *is a reality*, but a part of the creation
2. that God created the earth for man
3. that ‘time’ and ‘human history’ begin at the creation
4. and that God intended man to be the bearer of the image of God and to commit himself to God’s task on earth

## I. WORSHIP (13 min.)

### 1. Prayer

*Pray* that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

### 2. Meditation

Worship is adoring and praising God

**Theme: God is great and powerful**

*Read* the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

#### Psalm 19:1-4

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup> Day after Day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

<sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

#### Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

#### Isaiah 40:25-26

<sup>25</sup> “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

God challenges man to try to imagine his greatness and power. There is nothing on earth that can be compared to God’s greatness and power. Even the Himalaya Mountains are too small! There is nothing in the solar system that can be compared to God’s greatness and power. Even the sun is too small! What can help people to picture the greatness and power of God? People know of nothing that can be compared to God’s greatness and power. That is why everyone remains silent.

Then God points to the stars and invites man to consider who created the stars. The stars are a constant reminder of the greatness and power of God. Try to imagine the following:

#### ➤ *The number of the stars<sup>1</sup>*

On a clear and dark night a man can see about six thousand (6000) stars with his naked eye. Most of them belong to our galaxy, called ‘the Milky Way’, which contains about one hundred milliard (100 000 000 000) (11 zero’s) stars.

By means of the greatest telescopes man can see more than ten thousand trillion (10 000 000 000 000 000 000) (22 zero’s) stars and about one hundred milliard (100 000 000 000) (11 zero’s) galaxies like the Milky Way. Some stars have never been discovered, because since the creation their light has never reached the earth! The number of stars in the universe is so great that no one can count them in his whole lifetime.

#### ➤ *The distances of the stars*

The only star in the solar system is the sun and it is the closest star to earth. The distance to the sun is 150 million kilometres. Just how far is that? Flying by plane to the sun at 1000 kilometres per hour would take 17 years. The distances to the stars are so immense that scientists use ‘a light year’ to indicate the distance. Light is the fastest phenomenon known to man. The speed of light is about three hundred thousand kilometres (300 000) per second. That equals 7½ times around the earth in one second! ‘A light year’ is the distance light travels during one year. One light year equals a distance of nine-and-a-half billion (9 454 000 000 000) kilometres!

<sup>1</sup> million (British + American) = 6 zero’s

milliard (American: billion) = 9 zero’s (a thousand millions)

billion (American: trillion) = 12 zero’s (a million millions)

billiard (American: quadrillion) = 15 zero’s (a million milliard)

trillion (American: quintillion) = 18 zero’s (million million millions)

The moon is one and a third light second away. The planet Mars is 5 light minutes away. The sun is 8 light minutes away. The planet Pluto is five light hours away. The star closest to the solar system is 4.3 light years away. Flying by plane to this star would take four and a half million (4 644 000) years!

Our galaxy, the Milky Way, has a diameter of about hundred-and-twenty thousand (120 000) light years! The galaxy closest to our galaxy is called Spiral Nebula N-1. It consists of billions of stars and the distance to it is more than one million light years! The furthest stars are milliards of light years separated from us! Astronomers estimate that the furthest measured distance in the universe is plus minus seventeen milliard (17 000 000 000) light years!

Man will never be able to conquer the universe!

➤ *The sizes of the stars*

Our planet earth has a diameter of 12 756 kilometres. The diameter of the sun is 109 times that of the earth. There are stars that have a diameter 100 and even 1000 times that of the sun! The size of a super blue giant star is so great that the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars could rotate with ease inside such a star!

If the diameter of the earth could be represented by 1 millimetre, then in comparison the diameter of the sun would be 11 centimetres and that of a super blue giant star 110 metres!

➤ *The greatness and power of God*

People can observe and study the stars with telescopes. But who created the greatest things in the universe known to man? The Bible reveals that God created the stars, controls their movements and even gives to each star a name (Isaiah 40:25-26)! God says "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry hosts" (Isaiah 45:12).

If man cannot fathom the number, the distances and sizes of the stars, how could man then fathom the existence, being and greatness of God? The existence of the stars point every night to the existence of a great and powerful God!

### 3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) as the great and powerful God.

## II. INTRODUCTION THEME (7min.)

### The theme for this meeting is: The creation

Give each person a sheet of paper. Ask the group members to create something making use of the sheet. After 3 minutes the members can explain to the group what they have created. The purpose of this demonstration is to understand that the Creator is not a part of his creation.

*Read or explain.*

God is not a philosopher. He is not an idea, a power or a universal soul. The God of the Bible is a personal God, who revealed himself, not by means of a philosophical or religious discussion, but through a revelation of his words and deeds.

God is the Creator of the universe of stars and the planet earth. God created the earth for man! Then he created man in his own image and gave him the task to live a meaningful life on earth. God is himself not a part of his creation, but speaks and acts in his creation and in the history of man on earth. Human history begins with the revelation of God to the first human beings. Because man was created last, he was not present when God created everything else. Therefore God had to reveal to man who created everything and why he had created everything.

## III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

*Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.*

### Theme: The creation

- |                     |                                                                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Day 1               | Colossians 1:15-20<br>God created by means of Christ                  |
| Day 2               | Psalm 33:1-11<br>The power of God's speaking Word                     |
| Day 3               | Job 38:1-14<br>The Creator versus the creature                        |
| Day 4               | Romans 11:33-36<br>From God, through God and to God are all things    |
| Day 5 <sup>BS</sup> | Genesis 1:1 – 2:4<br>The creation of heaven and earth                 |
| Day 6               | Genesis 2:4-25<br>The creation of man and woman                       |
| Day 7               | Ephesians 1:3-12<br>God's eternal plan for people                     |
| Day 8               | Romans 8:18-25<br>The (fallen) creation now waits for the recreation  |
| Day 9               | 2 Peter 3:1-13<br>The (fallen) creation will finally disintegrate     |
| Day 10              | Revelation 21:1-5<br>The creation of the new heaven and the new earth |

#### IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.  
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over,  
the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

##### 1. Discussing the study

*Discuss* the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

##### Theme: The creation

- What is God's purpose with revealing the history of the creation?
- What makes man unique in the creation?
- What is the task of man in God's creation?

##### 2. Commitment

*Let the group members* consider the following questions and record their answers:

- "How do you view yourself as an image bearer of God?"
- "What is your contribution to God's cultural commission?"

##### 3. Personal sharing

*Discuss* personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

#### V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

##### 1. Review previous Bible verses

*Let* pairs of group members review each other's first two memorised Bible verses.

##### 2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

*Explain* the meaning of the new Bible verse.

##### THE CREATION Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand  
that the universe was formed at God's command,  
so that what is seen  
was not made out of what was visible.

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

##### 3. Memorisation of the Bible books.

*The first 6 of the 12 historical books:*  
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel and 1 Kings.

#### VI. BIBLE STUDY (40 min.)

##### Theme: The creation of heaven and earth

##### 1. Bible Study

*Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method and study:*

##### Genesis 1:1 – 2:4.

##### Genesis 1

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 (Literally:) Now the earth *was* 'empty' (Hebrew: tohu) and 'formless' (Hebrew: bohu) and 'darkness over the flood' (Hebrew: choshek al pane tehom), while the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water (i.e. the flood).

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he 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.

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse (Hebrew: space stretched out, atmosphere) between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning--the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the Day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made (Hebrew: caused, appointed) two great lights--the greater light to govern the Day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the Day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning--the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning--the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made (Hebrew: produced, brought about), and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

## Genesis 2

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. 2 By the seventh Day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh Day he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh Day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

4 This is the account (Hebrew: historical account) of the heavens and the earth when (Hebrew: in the day) they were created.

## 2. Emphasis

The purpose of Genesis 1 is not to tell us *how* God created everything or *how long* it took to create everything, but to reveal *who* created everything, *what* he created and *for whom* he created everything. God created the earth for man!

## 3. Explanation for the group leader

### 1:1. The beginning and the completion of creation

God created the universe with all its stars, the solar system and the planet earth, not yet complete, before the beginning of human time.

The Bible makes no statement about the duration or the speed of the creation process in terms of modern terminology of 'time'. It only says that God created the universe 'in the beginning' in an absolute sense. This *beginning* is connected to God's eternity and his eternal decree (cf. John 1:1-3). This beginning cannot be imagined by any man and thus can also not be calculated.

Then God *completed* (Genesis 2:1) his creation in 'six days' (Genesis 1:3-31). These were 'creation days' in differentiation from 'calendar days' (Genesis 1:14).

### 1:2. The creation of the earth

The earth was still 'empty or void', without its great variety of creations and creatures that now exist on earth (as plants, trees, insects, animals and people). The earth was still 'an expanse of emptiness' (Job 26:7).

The earth was still 'formless or shapeless', without any recognizable form. The continents (with its land, mountains, rivers and lakes) in differentiation of the oceans had not yet been formed. The earth was still in 'an unformed or unfixed state'. It existed in fluid form, 'a flood' consisting of 'water'.

There was no light on the earth; only 'darkness over the surface of the deep' (the mass of water with its sources underneath).

All three words are governed by one verb: 'was'.

The Spirit of God 'trembled as breath that is about to utter a word of creation'. Or the Spirit of God 'hovered above the flood of waters in order to sustain, care and guide' the creation process.

Thus, the Triune God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) created the universe and the earth (Hebrews 1:3a; Psalm 33:6,9; John 1:3). God the Spirit prepared what had been created in the beginning for further completion (Genesis 1:2) and God the Son sustained everything that had been created (Hebrews 1:3a).

### 1:3. The light

From all eternity God is light in a spiritual and moral sense (1 John 1:5). He is also the Creator of physical or empirical light (including energy) (Genesis 1:3).

### 1:5. The word 'day'

The word 'day' is used in 5 different senses between Genesis 1:5 and Genesis 2:4:

- (1) 'Day' as the light part of a divine creation Day (Genesis 1:5a).
- (2) 'Day' as a divine creation Day (Genesis 1:5b). Because 'time' as we know and calculate it to Day was only created on the fourth divine creation day, there is absolutely no way to know the duration of a divine creation day! The divine creation days are not described in terms of their relationship to the sun, moon and stars (i.e. time in a physical sense), but in their relationship to God himself! Thus, the six divine creation days are not ordinary human days, but special divine days! In Genesis it is not possible to speak in a scientific way about 'time' and 'the duration of the divine creation days'.
- (3) 'Day' as a human Day of 24 hours; a calendar Day as a unit of a calendar year (Genesis 1:14). God created 'time' in the sense of natural science only on the fourth divine creation day! Only after God has caused the heavenly bodies as the sun, moon and stars to be sources of light for the earth and future man, can we speak of 'time' in the sense of natural science!
- (4) 'Day' as the light part (about 12 hours) of a 24 hour calendar day. It is the period the sunlight shines on a particular place on earth as it turns around its axis with respect to the sun (Genesis 1:14,18).
- (5) 'Day' as the whole period of creation (Genesis 2:4), which consisted of the period in the beginning when the universe and the earth were created (Genesis 1:1-2) and the period of six divine creation days when the creation was completed (Genesis 1:3-31)! The translation of Genesis 2:4 from the Hebrew text says: "This is the (historical) account of the heavens and the earth at the creation, *in the Day* that the Lord God made earth and heaven (the universe)".

Conclusion: The word 'day' in the creation account has different meanings. Because the Bible speaks of days in the sense of divine creation days, the creation process may have taken a very long time. However, this has not been revealed in the Bible. Because God is able to create faster than the speed of light, the creation process may have taken a very short time. Also this has not been revealed in the Bible. It is wise not to speculate where God in his wisdom has remained silent (cf. Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Corinthians 4:6).

### 1:6-8. The atmosphere

The expanse between the clouds (the waters above) and the seas (the waters below) is 'the atmosphere'. From earth's point of view it is called 'the sky'.

### 1:9-13. Land and sea

God gathered the water under the sky to one place and called it 'seas' (the oceans). The dry ground appeared and God called it 'land' (the continents). The plants, trees, seeds and fruits were created according to their various kinds. The Bible does not relate how God created these living organisms.

### 1:14-19. The light as indicator of time

The bodies of the sun, moon and stars were already created in the beginning (Genesis 1:1). Light was already created on the first divine creation day. On the fourth divine creation Day God 'caused' (Hebrew: made, put or appointed; not 'created') the sun, moon and stars to become the sources or bearers of light for the earth, possibly by making great openings in the thick layer of clouds around the earth. From then onwards the sun, moon and stars could be observed from the earth's (and man's) point of view.

After man has been created these light bearers would serve as indicators of direction (navigation) in shipping, as indicators of the seasons in agriculture and as indicators of time in the human calendar.

### 1:24-25. The living creatures

On the sixth divine creation Day God created the living creatures that populate the land according to their many kinds: the domestic animals, the wild animals and the creatures that move along the ground. The Bible does not relate how God created these living creatures.

### 1:26-28. Man as God's image bearer and steward

Finally, still during the sixth divine creation day, God created man. Man is absolutely unique, because he is the only creature created in the image of God. That is why man is able to know God and to personally relate to God and to other human beings.

God delegated some authority to man to execute the cultural commission on earth (Genesis 1:28). Man is appointed as God's steward on earth and man is responsible and answerable to God for the following three tasks:

- To fill the earth with people who bear the image of God.
- To discover the scientific laws God built into his creation, to make responsible applications of these laws that would benefit man and to protect God's wonderful creation.
- To manage God's creation, but not to lord it over other people.

### 2:2-3. The Day of rest

One Day of rest out of every seven days of the week has been instituted by God in Exodus 20:8-11. The purpose of the Day of rest was: to rest from one's daily work and get refreshed (Exodus 23:12) and to meet (God and one another) in a sacred assembly (Leviticus 23:3). God made that Day 'holy' (i.e. he set it apart for a special purpose) and his blessing rests on it.

At his first coming, however, Jesus Christ fulfilled *the ceremonial aspect* of the Sabbath day, namely, *not to do any work on the seventh day: i.e. from FriDay evening to SaturDay evening* (Exodus 20:9-10; Matthew 5:17) by teaching that one Day every week is *for man* (besides getting refreshed and meeting in a sacred assembly) to do good works and save lives (Mark 2:27,28; 3:4)!

The seventh divine creation Day (Genesis 2:2-3), however, has no end, because it is not followed by another 'evening and morning' (cf. Genesis 1:31b). 'God's Sabbath-rest' has a beginning, but no end! There is a

Sabbath-rest for the people of God. Anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his (*Read Hebrews 4:1-11*). 'God's Sabbath-rest' is entering eternal life by coming to Jesus Christ: first on earth (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:2-3), then in heaven (Revelation 14:11,13) and finally on the new earth (Revelation 21:3-5)!

### VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

*Pray* with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

*Pray* with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

### VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

*Hand out* the preparation for the next gathering.

