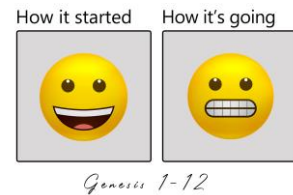


How it started, how it's going \* Genesis 1  
September 19, 2021 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone



If you've spend any time on social media in the last year or so, chances are good that you've seen 'the how it started, how it's going' meme. The idea here is that you tell a story with two pictures – one showing 'how it started' and one showing 'how it's going.'

Some examples have been really quite uplifting – you'll see a picture of a little leaguer under 'how it started' and then 'how it's going' - a picture of a major league ball player. Or you'll see a happy couple on a first date under how it started and then a picture of that same couple at their wedding. There are neat examples of things starting well, going well.

At the same time though there are also some less happy examples – stories where things started well, but then went sideways by the second picture. In one example, you see a picture of a nurse, I think from a graduation photo, looking fresh and young and idealistic – how it started – the how it's going picture shows that same nurse after a long hard shift, looking beleaguered and tired, with red marks from her mask all over her face.

How it started, how it's going.

I want to use that framework to look with you at the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Genesis 1-11 tell us 'how it started.' and as we go through these first chapters of the Bible, we're going to look at some very foundational ideas to Christian faith – who we are, who God is, what this world is and the point of it all – that's 'how it started.' And then we're going to think about 'how it's going,' pulling what we've learned in Genesis forward into our own lives to see how it lines up with what God intended, in the beginning.

My hope for this series is that it will help you to develop a Christian worldview, to be able to see ourselves and the world according to Genesis and to give you a vision for 'how it started,' so that, with Jesus' help, we can make 'how it started' and 'how it's going' line up.

So, today, let's start at the beginning, because, as Julie Andrews says, that's a very good place to start.

Genesis 1:1 – the first verse in the whole of the Bible – tells us where it all began - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

In the beginning, there was only God. He existed before all things, He has always existed. All-powerful and self-sufficient, not needing anything. Before anything was, God was there. And when the heavens and the earth came into being, it was God who called them into being.

And verse 2 tells us what it was like when He did that. 2 'Now the earth was formless and empty, [there was nothing there] darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.' Was there literally water? I don't know – but I do know that water is a symbol of chaos in the ancient near eastern worldview so I think that this is just a picture of chaos – formlessness and emptiness, darkness and chaos and yet the Spirit of God was hovering over it, holding it all in place.

Now before we go any further, I want to do a little cross-referencing with you, because even if you can't see it, the whole of the Trinity is at work here. We've got God here – the Father – you've got the Spirit – what about the Son?

Think about John chapter 1. John copies and pastes the opening lines of the Bible and says –

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 He was with God in the beginning [when God created the Heavens and the earth].
- 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

That means that even if He is not named in Genesis, Jesus was there. All things were made through Him and nothing exists that wasn't made through Him. Just keep that on the back of your mind as we go through – each day of Creation, Jesus was there, actively creating the world that He knew He would have to die to redeem. I think that shows how gracious He truly is. He was there in the beginning and knew even before He made us that He would have to die to redeem us – and He still went ahead and made us. That shows I think just how much He loves us. Something to chew on.

Back to Genesis – look at the way the world is described in verse 2 – the earth was 'formless and void.' There was nothing there – just empty nothingness. And the Hebrews had a phrase to describe it - tohuwabohu. Very Dr. Seuss-esque. Tohu – formless – wa/and – bohu empty.

In the beginning, the earth was tohuwabohu but that just wouldn't do – it couldn't support life - and so God did something about it. First – He deals with tohu and gives the world form and then He deals with bohu and fills the emptiness. Let me show you what I mean.

Verse 3 - 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.

In the beginning, there was darkness. But then God created the light and put light and darkness into their place – day and night. God gave it form. God gave it structure. And God looked at it and called it 'good.'

(Now if you're wondering how there can be light when the sun doesn't get created until day 4, I think that again, John 1 answers that question. John 1:4 says of Jesus – 4 'In him was life, and that life was the light of men.' Revelation 21:23 says the same thing - 23 "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light." The light that existed on day one came from God Himself).

And so light and dark were given form – alternating duties for day and for night – and that's day one of Creation.

Day two – verse 6 - 6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse 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. (Gen 1:6-8 NIV).

Here, God shows His power over the waters of chaos – He tells them what to do and forms it into water and sky. The seas and the heavens. Day two.

Then day three - 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. (Gen 1:9-13 NIV).

Having separated the waters from the heavens on day two, God separated the land from the water on day three. So now you've got the sky and the sea and the land. God is giving form to the chaos. And then He put plants and vegetation of every kind on the land to prepare it for what would come later. And again, God looks at it and calls it good. Day three.

Now I want you to see what God has done here. In the beginning, there was chaos. Formlessness and void. Tohuwabohu. The first three days of Creation though, God forms the formlessness. He deals with the tohu. He takes the chaotic randomness of darkness and water and gives it shape – day and night, sky and sea, earth and everything else. He brings form out of formlessness. And now, having formed the world, on the next three days of Creation, He's going to fill it. In a sense, it's like He's put out muffin cups on days one through three and then days four through six, He's going to fill them.

Day four - 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 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.

(Gen 1:14-19 NIV).

Day one – He gives form – evening and morning – day four – He fills it – sun and moon. And notice, to the people around Israel, the sun and the moon are gods. Israel's neighbours worshiped the sun and the moon, they thought their lives depended on them – and yet the creation story says – 'no, no, God made them. God controls them. In fact, the sun and the moon SERVE our God – governing the day and the night, marking seasons and days and years.' There's an argument built right into day four to say no one is greater than God. God is sovereign over all things. So day 4, God fills morning and evening with sun and moon and it was good.

Day five - 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 (Gen 1:20-21 NIV). [What's He doing? He's filling the waters and the sky that He created on

day two]. (Gen 1:22-23 NIV). So day five, God fills the waters and the skies and it was good, then day six

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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. [He's filling the land that He prepared for them back on day three].

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, [let US make man in our image – remember that the whole of the Trinity is at work here – Father, Son, Spirit] 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. [The diversity of the Trinity is reflected in the duality of male and female].

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."

Now this is important. Up to this point, God has been creating things 'each according to their kind.' Birds look like birds, fish look like fish but then in verse 26, God does something different. He says 'Let us make human beings in our image, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the beasts of the fields.'

This says two very important things about who we are as human beings. First, we are made in the image of God. And second, we are made to steward Creation.

Let me unpack those one at a time.

First, we are made in the image of God. Everything else looks like itself, but we are made in God's image. That means that who we are as human beings is a reflection of who God is. His spiritual essence is expressed in our physical bodies. We are moral beings because God is a moral being. We have the capacity to think and to love and to feel because God has the capacity to think and to love and to feel.

We are reflections of who God is and that gives us immense intrinsic value. 'Black lives matter' because they are made in the image of God. 'Every child matters' because they are made in the image of God. All human beings, no matter who they are or what they do, are intrinsically valuable because they are made in the image of God.

But not only that – we were made to be stewards of God's creation. That's my second point. He made us to take care of all that He had made. That's why He says to the first human beings in verse 28 – 'Be fruitful and multiply – rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.' He made us to take care of all that He made, to steward the rest of His Creation as His representatives on Earth. I think that's clear from chapter one but it's even more explicit in chapter 2. Chapter 2, verse 15, 15 "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Gen 2:15 NIV).

We are made in the image of God to care for all that He has made.

And so having done that, verse 31, 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.'

After a week of work, God looks over all that He had made and says 'Well done. That's a very good world.' Like Louis Armstrong said – What a wonderful world. And 2:1 - NIV Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

What started as tohuwabohu – formless and void – God formed and filled. He made day and night, sea and sky, land and vegetation and then populated them with sun and moon, birds and fish, beasts and critters and then us to take care of it all. And then, on the seventh day, He rested. Not because He was tired, but so that He could pause and look back on work well done.

Verse 3 - 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 (Gen 1:31-3 NIV). So what was formless and void gets formed and filled and God moved the world from chaos to rest in the span of seven days.

That's how it all began - God made all things and then made us in His image to care for it all.

Let's stop now and think about what it all means for us and I'm going to use that idea to give form to our discussion - God made all things and made us in His image to care for it all.

First, God made all things. He is the creator. That means He is all powerful, all knowing, worthy of honour and obedience. Everything you see in the natural world is the way it is because God made it that way. The sunset, the soil, the way strands of silk turn into ears of corn – it's that way because God made it like that.

And the care and attention that He put into making the world He put into making you. I was interested this week to see Tim Tebow, the football player, tweet – "One thing is certain. You were created for a reason. You are not here by accident. It is by design that the Creator of the universe designed you exactly as you are. He created you in His image, with love, in love, and for Love."<sup>i</sup>

And he's absolutely right. You are not the accidental outcome of evolutionary processes; you are here because God the Creator made you exactly as you are. And He loves you and cares for you and is just as committed to you now as He was in the beginning.

God made all things. He is the Creator; we are the care takers. He made us in His image to care for all that He has made. He gave us the responsibility of taking care of His creation, of using its resources for our own wellbeing, and for seeing to it that the world works in an orderly way. All of you who are farmers are directly involved in taking care of God's creation and I hope that you can see all that you do as an act of worship, honouring God by caring for all that He has made.

And even if you're not actively working the land, you are still a steward of creation. Certainly that means having an interest in environmental issues, but not only that – remember that we ourselves are created beings. So that means then that taking care of Creation includes taking care of one another. We are caretakers of all God has made, including one another, so it is a part of our Creation mandate to care for other people. Every person, regardless of their colour, class or creed, is made in the image of God, and so intrinsically valuable, and it's part of our job as creation's caretakers to care for them too.

We are made in God's image to take care of all that He has made.

So let's wrap this message up with one final question. If we are made in the image of God to care for all He made the way He would, it begs the question - whose image do people see when they look at you? Do they see the character of God - the gracious, creative, redemptive character of God in you? Or do they see the world reflected back to them? Without Jesus, the world is still in a sense tohuwabohu – people chasing after whatever it is that they think can fill the emptiness in their hearts that only God can fill.

But when we follow Jesus, when we are born again, He forms and fills our hearts so that we can overflow with the love and grace of God that we were made to express in the first place. Reflect God's character to the world. Let them see Him in all you do. God created all things and made us in His image to care for His Creation.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://twitter.com/TimTebow/status/1437044513852252160?s=20>