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**THE EARTH WILL  
BE FILLED**

A Biblical Theology of  
the Glory of God

**DONNIE BERRY**



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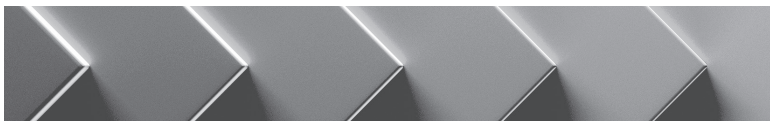
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## Chapter One

# GOD'S GLORY SHARED IN CREATION

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of  
the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*

**HABAKKUK 2:14**

FOR OVER A DECADE, I taught the Old Testament to eighth graders at a Christian school. Barely teenagers, the students were in many ways just beginning to formulate their ideas about God and the world. Each fall, we would begin our journey through the Old Testament in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” And each fall, I would ask my new class of young theologians the same question, “Why?” Most of the students had been taught from the time they were young that God is the Creator of all that exists. Now I wanted them to think about *why* he created.

Without fail, year after year, the students would give the same answers: “Because he was lonely.” Or sometimes, “Because he was bored.” This seemed obvious to them. They knew that before he created the world, there was only God. No one and nothing else existed. All that exists comes from God and was created by God and for God. Students also knew that God created humans in order to have a relationship with them.



But then they made a fatal assumption. If God existed “all by himself,” he must have been lonely, or worse, bored. To an eighth grader, nothing could be more terrible. It made sense to them that God must have created the world so he would have something to do, and he created humans so he wouldn’t be lonely.

At this point, I would enthusiastically exclaim, “No! Wrong answer!” Then I would explain why. I taught them about God’s fullness and how there is no lack in him. I taught them about the Trinity, mysterious as it is, and how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were not alone and bored as the students imagined, but enjoyed wonderful fellowship, eternally delighting in the inward perfections of God. I gave them an alternative “why” to correct their misguided instincts: *God created for his glory.*

### TRIUNE GLORY

When the Scriptures give us a peek behind the curtains of creation into eternity, we find glory. Jesus prays, “Father, glorify me . . . with the glory that I had with you *before the world existed*” (Jn 17:5). The “Father of glory” (Eph 1:17) has eternally shared his glory with his Son, who is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb 1:3). The Father expresses his love for his Son by giving his glory to him: “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see *my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world*” (Jn 17:24).

Before creation, there was a perfect sharing of life, love, and glory between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the source and substance of the joy that eternally characterizes God’s inner life. It is also the antidote to our impoverished imaginations that think of God’s existence before creation as boring and lonely rather than breathtakingly beautiful and full. Fred Sanders, a well-known scholar and author on the Trinity, is instructive here:

This inner life that God lives, in the happy land of the Trinity above all worlds, is a livelier life than any other life. . . . The knowledge that God enjoys perfect blessedness is a great thing. Even if it stays a kind of secret at the back of our minds, as something that we cannot say much about, it nevertheless exerts a tremendous gravitational pull on the rest of our thoughts and affections.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 86-87.

Life within God—in which Father, Son, and Spirit give, receive, and radiate God's glory—is a “lively life” full of joy and delight. It is a life of self-giving love—Father to Son and Son to Father through the Holy Spirit. This is the bedrock beneath the Bible's story and the air from which creation is breathed into existence.

The mysterious and wonderful relations within the Trinity do not come to full light in the story line of Scripture until the Son's incarnation. But it is important to mark from the outset that behind creation stands Father, Son, and Spirit in the fullness of glory. As Sanders asserts, “That life is so full that everything else comes from it, as a small trickle from an infinite plenty.”<sup>2</sup>

### “GOD CREATED FOR HIS GLORY”

Year after year I sought to create categories and conceptions in teenage minds for this fullness of glory that characterizes life in God. His glory, I explained, is all that he is—goodness, love, strength, wisdom, beauty, creativity, joy—all the things that make him infinitely better than every other thing we could imagine or desire. Sometimes I would attempt to adopt the lingua franca of my eighth graders, simply defining glory as “God's awesomeness on public display.” I wanted my students to see that “the God of glory” (Ps 29:3; see Acts 1:7) stands as the fountainhead of creation, and creation flows out of “the riches of his glory” (Eph 3:16).

“God created for his glory,” I would tell them. But that religious phrase is easy to affirm and at the same time have no real sense of its meaning, goodness, or gravity. So I aimed to fill it with meaning. Here's the basic idea I tried to communicate: *God, out of his infinite fullness, created the world to fill it with his glory. And he created humans to see his glory and to delight in it, to share in his glory and to display it. All this so that we and all creation might participate in God's eternal joy.*

This is the why of creation. These are weighty ideas, big for teenage minds, and for the rest of us too. I was never sure whether my students understood the difference between their answers and the one I was giving them, or whether it made sense to them why I was so insistent and passionate about it. But one

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<sup>2</sup>Sanders, *Deep Things of God*, 87.

year, I knew at least one student got it. She raised her hand and said, “So, Mr. Berry, what you’re saying is that God is the bomb. He knows he’s the bomb. And he created the world to share his bomb diggity. Is that right?” Brilliantly right. Out of the mouths of infants and eighth graders (see Mt 21:16).

## THE REVELATION OF GOD’S GLORY THROUGH CREATION

Nowhere in the creation account does the word *glory* occur. But biblical scholars and theologians have long recognized the error of equating words and concepts. The word *glory* does not occur in the early chapters of Genesis, but the *concept* runs rich and deep beneath all God’s acts in Genesis 1–2.

When God creates, he does it by speaking: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen 1:3). There are ten “And God said” moments in Genesis 1 (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28–29). On the first page of the Bible we learn a simple but profound truth. God is a speaking God. He creates through his word:

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
and by the breath of his mouth all their host. . . .  
For he spoke, and it came to be;  
he commanded, and it stood firm. (Ps 33:6, 9)

In the Bible, God’s word is a means by which he reveals himself. When he creates through his word, it is an act of divine self-expression. The apostle John, reflecting on this “In the beginning” act of creation (Jn 1:1), tells us that God’s “word” by which he created the world is a personal word, his own eternal Son, the very one who reveals God’s glory (Jn 1:14) and makes God known (Jn 1:18). In Genesis 1, when God creates through his word, he reveals himself. In creation, he communicates his glory.

The psalmist says of God’s creation,  
The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge. . . .  
Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world. (Ps 19:1–2, 4)

God's creation, spoken into existence, now speaks of him. Creation carries something of God's word—his own self-expression—within it.

This, I think, is why people are so moved by sunsets, mountains, starlit skies, and so many other aspects of creation. They are speaking to us of God's glory, giving expression to aspects of his character and nature—his greatness, his beauty, his creativity, his power, his wisdom, his generosity. There are echoes of God's voice within his creation. Even those who do not know or acknowledge God hear these echoes and are often stirred by them. Creation is like a canvas on which God has painted his glory. The created world is meant to lead us to know and worship and praise the Creator who is the source of this glory.

The apostle Paul understood this about creation. In his letter to the Romans, he says that “what can be known about God is plain to [all mankind], because God has shown it to them” (Rom 1:19). How, we might ask, has God shown it to them? Here is Paul's answer: “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*” (Rom 1:20). God's “invisible attributes” are known and perceived in the things he has created. That's what creation is for—to make the invisible attributes of God visible. Reformer John Calvin captures this idea, saying, “The world was no doubt made, that it might be the theatre of the divine glory.”<sup>3</sup>

While *glory* does not verbally occur in the creation account, the concept is at the heart of creation. Through creation, God makes his character and nature known. He shares himself, “diffusing his own fullness,” to borrow language from early American theologian Jonathan Edwards.<sup>4</sup> In Genesis 1 we first encounter glory in the Bible, as God speaks his divine word of self-revelation and self-expression, making aspects of his invisible glory visible in the things he has made. Creation bears the imprint of the glory of God.

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<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 22:266.

<sup>4</sup>John Piper and Jonathan Edwards, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards, With the Complete Text of The End for Which God Created the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 165.

## HUMANS AS GOD'S LIVING REPRESENTATIVES

It should come as no surprise, then, that human beings, the crown of God's creation, also carry the imprint of his glory. In fact, it is in the creation of humans that God's glory project in the world is set into full motion.

Genesis 1 tells us that God created humans as his own image, an idea that, in the biblical story, is closely linked with God's glory. Here's how the narrative reads:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them. (Gen 1:26-27)

Of all that God makes, only humans are his image. This is the first thing we learn in the Bible about human beings, and it is foundational for understanding who we are and why we exist.

An image, in the Hebrew Bible, is a physical, three-dimensional representation of something else. For example, the Bible refers to idols as "images." Statues stood in temples throughout the ancient world to represent a deity, showing what that temple's god was like. Humans, though, are not inert statues depicting lifeless gods. God created humans to be living, breathing, physical representatives of the living God. He placed humans in the Garden of Eden, God's holy place, as his images who represent him in the world.

## SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD

The image of God was a familiar concept among the cultures surrounding Israel when Genesis was written. It communicated two interrelated ideas: sonship and kingship.<sup>5</sup> Pharaoh, for example, was considered the son of Ra (the Egyptian sun god), who ruled on Ra's behalf. As king, he was like a living statue—Ra's image—who represented Ra on earth. Both of these aspects—sonship and

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<sup>5</sup>Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 226-27.

kinship—*are present in Genesis as well, though in a way that brings correction to the notions held by pagan nations.*

First, to be God's image means humans have a special relationship with God. All human beings (and not just the king) are created to uniquely relate to God as his sons and daughters. In Genesis 1:26, we overhear God's decree: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Just a few chapters later, we are told, "Adam . . . fathered a *son* in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth" (Gen 5:3). To be someone's image is connected to sonship. This is why Luke, in tracing Jesus' lineage, refers to "Adam, *the son of God*" (Lk 3:38). When the text of Genesis tells us that God created humans in his image, it is making a *relational* claim—humans are related to God as Father just as Seth is related to Adam as father. In creation, God makes humans his sons and daughters.

As sons and daughters, humans are able to uniquely know God and also to uniquely represent him. The Father, in creation, brings them into his life, glory, and love.

## **KINGS AND QUEENS OVER CREATION**

This leads to a second aspect of being God's image, which is front and center in the text of Genesis 1–2, a *vocational* aspect. God creates humans to rule as his representatives and to spread his glory throughout creation: "Let us make mankind in our image . . . so that *they may rule* over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen 1:26 NIV).

Psalms 8 is David's ancient and inspired commentary on the creation narrative in Genesis 1. David considers the role God gives to human beings within creation. He acknowledges the apparent insignificance of mankind as he surveys "the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place" (Ps 8:3). Given the majesty of God and of his creation, David marvels, "What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps 8:4). He then makes this grand statement, rendering in his own words the account given in Genesis 1:26:

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
 you have put all things under his feet,  
 all sheep and oxen,  
 and also the beasts of the field,  
 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
 whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (Ps 8:5-8)

When David reads Genesis 1:26, he sees the creation of humans in God's image as a bestowal of status, a crowning with glory and honor. This status, in both Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, is directly tied to their vocation. By creating humans as his image, God bestows on them incredible honor and a distinct vocation in his world. God crowns them with glory and gives them dominion over creation (Ps 8:5-8; see Gen 1:26, 28). Human glory is linked to their vocational status as rulers over God's world.

Significantly, by saying that God crowned humans with glory in what is a clear allusion to Genesis 1:26-28, David verbally links the concepts of image and glory together—an association that will only grow stronger in later Jewish writings, and especially in Paul's letters in the New Testament, where the two are often used almost interchangeably (see, e.g., Rom 8:29-30; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4). This connection between image and glory, and their close correlation to dominion over creation, takes us to the heart of the story that runs through the rest of the Bible.

God alone is king over his creation. Hezekiah declares God's kingship by virtue of his being the Creator of all things: "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, *enthroned* above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth" (Is 37:16).

Similarly, the psalmist exclaims:

For the LORD is a great God,  
 and a *great King* above all gods.  
 In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
 the heights of the mountains are his also.  
 The sea is his, for he made it,  
 and his hands formed the dry land. (Ps 95:3-5)

God created the world, and he is king over his world. Astonishingly, he chose humans—those uniquely related to him as sons and daughters—to exercise

his good rule and reign in the world. God gives them a royal status. He crowns them with his glory (Ps 8:5) and appoints them his representative kings and queens over creation (Ps 8:6; Gen 1:26, 28). At creation, humans, who see and share in God's glory, are tasked with ruling as his images—caring for creation and spreading his glory throughout the earth.

Of course, we live in a world affected by the fall that occurs in Genesis 3 (the subject of the next chapter), and our experience is far different from the picture we see in Genesis 1–2. But we are still able to get a sense of the goodness God planned for his world (and the goodness he intends to restore to it) by going back to the beginning of the story at creation. What we find there is the kingdom of God on the very first page of Scripture—the good, life-giving, joy-bringing rule and reign of God to be exercised through those created in his image, who were to rule in his name and reflect his character, and whom he commissioned to carry his glory into every part of creation they would “fill” and “subdue” (Gen 1:28).

### **A KINGDOM SHAPED BY THE GLORY OF ITS KING**

When I was younger and had ample free time, there were a handful of movies I watched over and over again. One of them was *First Knight*. It's a take on the legendary King Arthur and the kingdom of Camelot. In keeping with the legends, *First Knight* portrays Arthur as a good king, who has built Camelot around humility and service. His knights sit at the round table—a table of equals with no head—and their motto is, “In serving one another we become free.”

Camelot is different from the oppressive, dark kingdoms that surround it. This is because Camelot's king is unlike other kings. Arthur champions justice, brotherhood, and sacrifice. He loves the people of his kingdom and is willing to give his life for them. The inhabitants of the kingdom follow their king and his ways, and so Camelot shines with goodness, beauty, and joy.

When, as a teenager, I watched *First Knight*, it struck a deep chord in me—a longing for a good king and for a different kind of kingdom. I now realize that, however imperfectly (and there are certainly complications in the plot), *First Knight* gave me a picture of what God purposed in creation. Arthur's kingdom reflects the kingdom of God.

God is a king unlike other kings—full of goodness, self-giving love, generosity, and joy. And his kingdom is meant to be shaped by its King, and by its citizens who are like their King and embody his character and heart in all they do, so that goodness, self-giving love, and joy fill the kingdom. This was God’s design for his world and for his people. This is why he created.

To fulfill this vision, God’s images must be like him. There is an *ethical* aspect to their glory. They are meant to embody holiness, righteousness, kindness, generosity, love, wisdom, humility, creativity, and so many other qualities of God’s life, which God grants humans to participate in and display. Humans are not to exercise just any dominion but Godlike dominion—dominion that takes the form of self-giving love. In creation, God invests humans with his glory so they can participate in the joy of being like God, reflecting his self-giving love into every relationship, every task, and every part of creation he places under their care.

## FRUITFUL AND FILLING THE EARTH

These facets of human glory—relational, vocational, and ethical—shine in the biblical story like light refracted from a diamond, filling with color the biblical theme of *God’s glory revealed to and through humanity*. Sons and daughters of God, who are his representative rulers over creation, who reflect his character and nature into the world. Each of these facets is bound up with the creation mandate, which in the biblical text immediately follows the creation of humans as God’s image: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen 1:28).

This blessing and mandate gives inaugural expression to the unified purpose of God that will run through creation, redemption, and new creation. All are the outworking of this commission, a partnership between God and humanity to fill the earth with the glory of God and to extend his good, wise, loving, and life-giving kingship to every corner of creation.

The creation mandate reverberates through the story of the Bible. God blesses humanity, an act by which he enables them to be and do all that he

created them to be and do. Then he invests them with his divine purpose for his people.

First, they are to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” This is not just a numerical project, aimed at populating the planet. It is about filling the planet *with his image*—humans who know God and see his glory, those who rule as God’s image and so will fill the earth with his glory as they increase in number.

That’s what the second part of the commission is about. Humans are to subdue the earth and have dominion over it, extending God’s kingship through self-giving love that reflects his glory and brings the goodness, flourishing, and joy of his reign to everything, everywhere. When we seek the good of others and go low to lift others up, when we express loving care for creation and develop wise and just systems and structures that lead to order, abundance, and life, then we are giving expression to the glory of God.

God’s intention was for his royal images to “expand the borders of Eden to the uttermost parts of the world.”<sup>6</sup> Those who see and share in God’s glory are now called to multiply and fill the earth with God’s dominion, causing his glory, which they carry, to shape every facet of creation.

## A WORLD FILLED WITH GLORY

The themes of Genesis 1:28 run through the rest of the book of Genesis and will shape the biblical story going forward. Especially noteworthy is the way the phrase “fill the earth” is appropriated and deployed by biblical authors. Specifically, there is a shared understanding that this statement from Genesis 1:28 is about the earth being *filled with God’s glory*, an idea that becomes a promise and a prayer in later Scripture. In Numbers 14:21, God pledges that “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.” The psalmists repeat the chorus, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth” (Ps 57:5, 11; 108:5). Similarly, Psalm 72—a psalm that portrays the worldwide rule and reign of the Messiah and also, significantly, ends the prayers of David contained in Books 1 and 2 of the Psalter—concludes with this doxology:

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<sup>6</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 832.

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
 who alone does wondrous things.  
 Blessed be his glorious name forever;  
*may the whole earth be filled with his glory!*  
 Amen and Amen! (Ps 72:18-19)

In Isaiah's vision of the glory of the Lord, the seraphim cry in anticipation of what is to come: "The whole earth is full of his glory" (Is 6:3). And the prophet Habakkuk makes a grand declaration that sums up God's plan for creation: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14).

The refrain of God's glory filling the earth echoes through the pages of the Bible. It expresses God's purpose for humans, whom he created for a unique relationship with him and a privileged role within creation. From creation onward, God has intended to reveal his character to and through his sons and daughters. What God is by nature, he has determined to display on the canvas of creation. Human beings, made in the image of God, are the Artist's brush, designed to paint his glory across the globe.

### SHARING IN AND SPREADING GOD'S ETERNAL GLORY

As we trace the theme of God's glory through Scripture, we will mark its development with the following diagram, which we will revisit at each stage in the story. This will provide us with a simple, visual depiction of the unified purpose of God that runs through redemptive history.

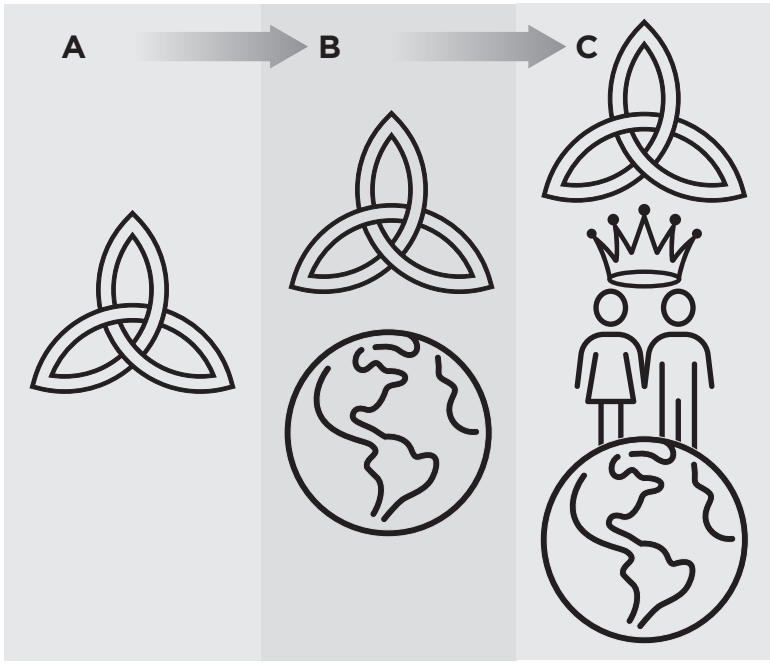
A. (See Figure 1.1) Everything flows from God's wonderful, eternal glory, shared between Father, Son, and Spirit (depicted here with the triquetra, a common symbol for the Trinity).

B. God creates the world as a place to be filled with his glory.

C. And God creates humans as the crown of his creation.

D. (See Figure 1.2) He creates humans for a unique relationship with himself, bringing them into the loving relationship eternally shared between Father, Son, and Spirit. God creates them in his image, to be sons and daughters, those whom he loves and with whom he shares his glory.

E. From this special relationship with God, humans are given a unique role within creation. They serve as kings and queens, glory sharers and glory



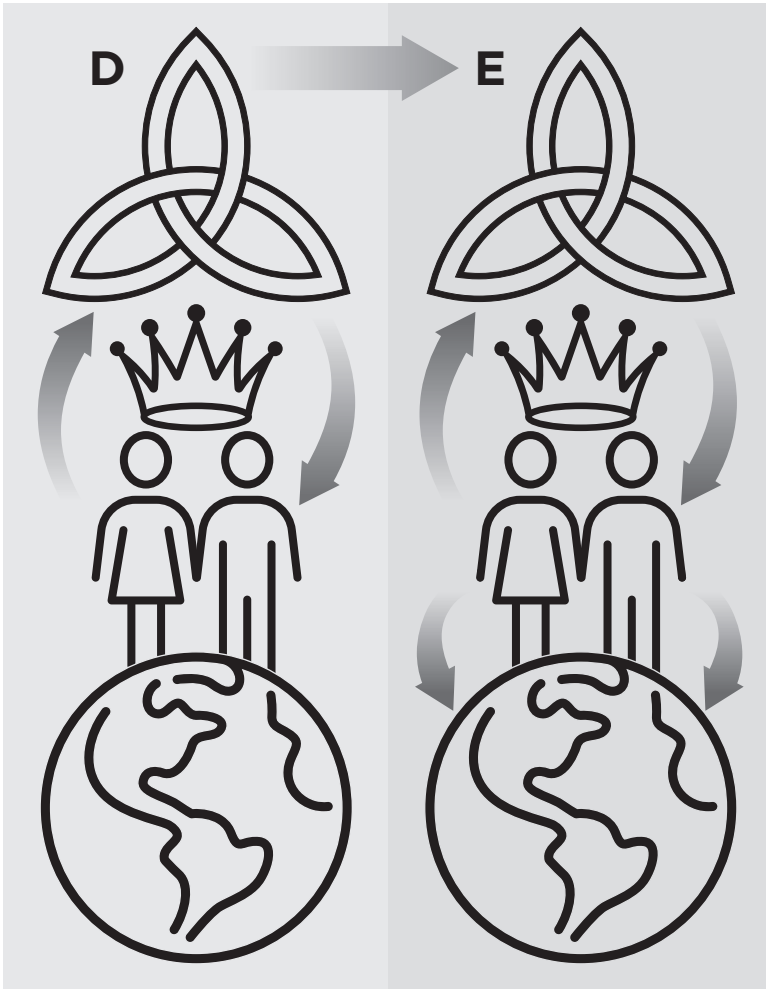
**Figure 1.1.** God creates to fill the earth with his glory

spreaders. They are to fill the earth and leave the imprint of God's glory on every part of his world, so that everything in creation drips with his glory, so to speak. In this way, the whole earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord—with the fullness of his life and love and joy—as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14).

### **BRINGING THE GOODNESS OF GOD'S DOMINION TO ALL CREATION**

This is how the story of the Bible opens. It's a wonderful beginning, appropriately declared "very good" by the author. In fact, there are six "and God saw that it was good" statements in Genesis 1 (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), which culminate in a seventh, exultant affirmation of creation's goodness: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

God's creation was "very good" but not yet all that it would be. We can think of creation as an untamed wilderness, teeming with life and beauty but in need of care and cultivation to draw out that beauty and give shape to



**Figure 1.2.** God creates humans to share in and to spread his glory

its life. For example, at the beginning of the creation account in Genesis 2, the author says that “no small plant of the field had yet sprung up” because “there was no man to work the ground” (Gen 2:5). These “small plants of the field” refer specifically to cultivated grains.<sup>7</sup> The plants could not grow and

<sup>7</sup>Mark Futato, “Because It Had Rained: A Study of Genesis 2:5-7 with Implications for Genesis 2:4-25 and Genesis 1:1-2:3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 60, no. 1 (1998): 4-5.

produce grain without humans to work the ground and draw out the earth's fruitfulness. To meet this need, "the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground" (Gen 2:7) and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work and keep it (Gen 2:8, 15).

We also learn that a river flowed out of Eden, branching into four smaller rivers: "The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there)" (Gen 2:11-12 NIV). These easy-to-overlook details in the text are not insignificant. They tell us that God has embedded within creation wonderful resources. Part of human dominion is discovering, cultivating, and turning the raw materials of creation into objects of usefulness and beauty. God authorizes his royal images to bring the goodness of his rule and reign to the rest of creation, drawing out all the creative potential embedded within God's world and causing the whole creation to flourish and reflect his glory. This looks like growing, caring for, and creating things—gardens, as we see in Genesis 2, but also families, communities, cities, governments, schools, technologies, businesses, art, music, poetry, culinary delights, and much, much more.

Creation was "very good," primed by God to become all he created it to be. He infused creation with aspects of his glory. Above all, he set his sons and daughters over his world, inviting them to work with him to make the world all he intends—each person reflecting aspects of God's character and nature, causing the things they touch to bear the imprint of the king, so that the whole kingdom would shine with God's glory and overflow with joy and praise.

Theologian Michael Reeves writes, "Indeed, in the triune God is the love behind all love, the life behind all life, the music behind all music, the beauty behind all beauty and the joy behind all joy."<sup>8</sup> The royal calling of God's people was to spread God's love, life, music, beauty, and joy, so that it would fill creation and direct the hearts of men and women back to the one who is the source of it all. In this way, all creation would be filled with God's presence

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<sup>8</sup>Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 62.

and glory as his people multiplied and filled the earth with his good rule and reign.

### **WHY WE WORK**

When we understand this, it wonderfully expands our sense of what it means to glorify God in our lives. I served as a college pastor for many years, working with students who spent the majority of their week in classes designed to help them prepare for careers. One of my aims was to help them see all of life in relationship to God and his grand story. But early on, I did not have a place for understanding how their careers fit into the big story of the Bible. Why do we work? How does our work fit into God's plan for his world? What does it mean to glorify God in our work? I mostly saw work as a way to earn money to support the work of the church or missions in the world. If there was anything distinctively Christian and God-glorifying in nine-to-five jobs, it was being moral in the workplace and evangelizing or inviting your co-workers to church. Those are good things, but I was missing a big piece of the story.

Alongside serving as a college pastor, I was doing doctoral studies, exploring biblical theology and especially the relationship between God's image and God's glory in the Bible. When I began to get a sense of God's plan for his world and of his design for humans to participate in his plan, it enlarged my sense of the goodness of our work. The work itself is part of God's plan to fill all creation with his glory. The sphere of work he gives us is a place we get to fill, subdue, and bring God's loving, life-giving kingship to bear. We get to bring order, creativity, love, and flourishing to the spheres of influence God entrusts to us. God shares his glory with us so that we might use our gifts in industries of service, art, education, business, technology, government, and countless others, bringing beauty and blessing to the world through the work of our hands.

The thing we spend the majority of our week doing is not just an aside to the really meaningful stuff of life, as I formerly thought. Our work itself is meaningful, because it is a place into which God has called us to bring his glory.

This is true of our work. It is also true of our families, our communities, our hobbies, and every other part of life. We glorify God by living in

relationship with him and then living as expressions of his glory in every other relationship we have and every task to which we set our hands. Glorifying God is all-encompassing for those who see and share in his glory. At creation, this was his design.

### **CONCLUSION: WELCOMED INTO THE CELEBRATION**

Why did God create? He created for his glory. That simple statement encapsulates what the Scriptures reveal about God's commitment to fill everything with the best of everything—with life and joy, thriving and flourishing, goodness and love. Creation is about his commitment to fill the earth with his glory.

That's where the story of the Bible begins and where it is pointing. It's the story of a great celebration. God the Father, Son, and Spirit, eternally celebrating how wonderful, how happy it is to be full of the glory of God.

It's the story of creation, as God determines to spread the celebration, inviting humans into the wonderful celebration shared between Father, Son, and Spirit. Those he creates as his image now get to participate in seeing and celebrating God's glory. They get to share in the joy of being like him. And they get to join God in spreading his celebration throughout creation, causing the celebration to grow until the whole earth is filled with his glory, and everything in creation redounds with glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, world without end.

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