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In the Beginning

GENESIS 1:1–3, 6–7, 9, 11, 14–15, 20–21, 24, 26–27, 31 | In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. . . .

And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. . . .

And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. . . .

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. . . .

And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. . . .

And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it,

according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. . . .

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. . . .

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, 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."

So God created mankind in his own image,

in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them. . . .

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Consider This

So there they were, a teenaged girl named Mary, a virgin, who had a baby in her tummy put there by God, and a young man named Joseph who was to be her husband. Their bags were packed and the donkey loaded and ready. They were leaving Nazareth on the way to Bethlehem. A long trip lay before them.

So what did people do before iPads and Candy Crush to pass the time on long trips? They talked to each other. They told stories. They reminded each other of the history that held them together. One of the ways friends and families and communities grow stronger is to work at staying together in

the same story line. I'm imagining that happening between Mary and Joseph on the road to Bethlehem. Now the Bible doesn't tell us any details, but here's how I imagine their conversation going:

MARY: We've got a long trip ahead of us, Joe. What do you think we should talk about?

JOSEPH: I know, Mary. How did we get here anyway?

MARY: Well, Joseph, we have to go all the way back to the beginning. Do you remember how the Torah begins?

JOSEPH: Hang on. I memorized this as a kid. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

MARY: Yes, and do you remember how God created everything?

JOSEPH: Yes, I think so. He created the whole world by speaking words. I remember hearing the Torah read as a child. It kept saying, "And God said . . ." and after everything he said, the Scriptures said, "And it was so. And God said . . . and it was so. And God said . . . and it was so."

MARY: I get it. I get it, Joe! Everything we see came to be because of God's word.

JOSEPH: Yes, and still—God's word is so much bigger and more powerful than the world. Remember how the great prophet Isaiah wrote, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (40:8)?

MARY: God's word creates light and creates life and creates love and it never fails.

JOSEPH: Yes, Mary, maybe that's what Isaiah meant when he compared the word of God to rain and snow falling from heaven to the earth and bringing life. He said that God's word accomplishes everything he sends it to do (Isaiah 55:10–11).

MARY: That's what's so astonishing about the way God spoke his word to me through that angel, and look at me now. I'm going to have a baby!

JOSEPH: Yep. You can say that again. Pretty astonishing.

MARY: Oh my goodness! It just hit me. The angel's exact words to me were, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). It's just like what happened when he created the world. The Spirit of God overshadowed the formless deep! Do you get it, Joe?

JOSEPH: The Spirit of God spoke the word of God into your very body. It's like creation is happening all over again. It's like a new "In the beginning"! Mary, this is huge! Oops! Not you, Mary—but the word of God.

MARY: Joe, speaking of huge, I think this donkey is getting pretty tired. He needs to be overshadowed by a few trees. We'd better give him a break.

JOSEPH: Okay, Mary, I think I see a rest stop just over the hill.

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (Isa. 40:8). In our family, we practice the Word of God through short litanies. For instance, I will say, "The grass withers and the flowers fall," and my children will respond, "but the word of our God endures forever." It makes for a great way to gather for a meal or to say as I take

them to school or before they go to bed at night. We work to find everyday, ordinary ways to lace our days and lives together with God's Word.

PEOPLE, GET READY. JESUS IS COMING!