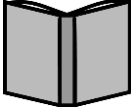









Small Group/ Reflection Notes

Session 4:		Let there be lights in the sky – Day 4
 Read	Genesis 1:14-19	 Listen again ChesterRoadBaptist.org.uk/Talks
 Discuss	<input type="checkbox"/> What is your favourite time of day? Season? Why? <input type="checkbox"/> How do you create a rhythm for your life? And your faith? What works for you? <input type="checkbox"/> Why might being better connected to the land/ Creation help our relationship with each other? God? <input type="checkbox"/> There are 200-400 billion stars, each with their own planets, in our Milky Way galaxy. And two trillion galaxies. What does that say about you? Us? God?	
 Go further	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 8:3-4: <i>What</i> is humanity that You are mindful of [us], human beings that You care for [us]? What does this mean? Why does God care for us? <input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 19:1-6: How do the heavens declare the glory of God? What do they say about the cosmos? Us? God? You? <input type="checkbox"/> Why did God use a star to direct people to Jesus? How can astronomy (studying stars, not to be confused with astrology) still help people find God?	
 Reflect	<input type="checkbox"/> Which one verse stands out to you? Why do you think it grabs your attention? <input type="checkbox"/> Which verse(s) will you need to think more about? Why? <input type="checkbox"/> Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: What time or season do you identify with at the moment? How has that changed over time? How might it change again in the future?	
 Do	<input type="checkbox"/> Look up at the night sky. Use an App to identify objects within the solar system. Read Psalm 19:1. Try and count the stars. God, who created the whole ever-expanding cosmos, created and knows you too. <input type="checkbox"/> What 'next step' could you take to reduce 'light pollution'?	
 Pray	<p><i>Dear God, You are bigger than I can comprehend. You are without limit. Forgive me when I have thought I was the centre of the universe. When I look up to the sky and consider its vast scale, I want to say to You _____. Thank you that nothing I or others face is too big for You. Thank you that You continue to both create within the universe and re-create new life within me. Amen</i></p>	
 My question:		



If you're not yet in a small group, why not join one!

Check out: ChesterRoadBaptist.org.uk/SmallGroups

Can't see a small group that suits your availability/ interest? Why not start one!

Email: SmallGroups@ChesterRoadBaptist.org.uk

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Background

Genesis 1:14-19: Day 4 - God said, "Let there be lights in the sky"

On Day 1 God separated light from darkness. Now, on Day 4 God declared both night and day to be good. Night is good, a gift from creative God. It provides rest, sleep, and cooler temperatures.

Ancient religions thought the stars controlled human destinies. Genesis 1 radically declared, 'In the beginning God..' - one God, not multiple gods. The one *and only* God created the stars, sun and moon. Like us, the stars and planets are under God's control. We worship Creator God, not the stars and planets.

There is rhythm in Creation. Night follows day with precision. We have learnt to 'tell the time', breaking into days, hours, minutes, seconds... All calculated on the time it takes for the moon to travel round the earth. We strive to do more with our time, using it better, but we can't create more of it. God has created a rhythm. Likewise, the seasons (autumn, winter, spring, summer) are sequential. We can't fast-forward from autumn to spring or press pause on summer. They teach us patience, provide beauty and variety and, crucially, are core to the process of planting, growing, and harvesting that we so depend on.

With electricity and central heating we have become less connected to the rhythm of Creation. We create our own rhythms, but these are not always healthy. Working excessive hours, stress, with inevitable environmental damage caused by ever more power generation. What if we were to accept more of the natural rhythms of life, orientating ourselves around God's Creation, instead of fining ever more ways to orientate God's Creation around us?

Some 'days' remind us of God's intimacy and attention to 'nano' detail. Day 4 reminds us of God is beyond limits. God, who knows each hair on your head, is the One who created the entire cosmos. Looking up at the sky can make us wonder, "What is humanity that you are mindful of [us], human beings that you care for [us]?" (Ps.8:3-4) Sometimes it's healthy to be reminded that we are not the centre of the universe.

Earth is one planet within a solar system. Our sun is just one of between 200-400 billion stars (suns) in the Milky Way galaxy. Our earth is just one of 100 billion planets. And all this is just one galaxy. There may be two trillion galaxies! So when God told Abram he would have more future descendants than there are stars in the sky (Gen 15:5) and later said he would have more than there are grains of sand on the earth (Gen.22:17), God was obviously using hyperbole to make a point. (There are far more stars than grains of sand!)

What's more, the universe is continuing to expand. Creator God has not stopped creating. He continues to create mass/ matter ('stuff'), just as He is continuing to re-create new life in us today. The hands that 'flung stars into space' are the same hands 'to cruel nails surrendered'. Jesus is the Bright Morning Star (Rev.22:16). Fitting that Jesus' birth was signposted with a distinctive star. The story might have been missed altogether if 'wise people' hadn't been curious about the solar system or their sight obscured by today's light pollution.

Light pollution is caused by inefficient or unnecessary use of artificial light; too many bright lights trying to beat off the natural darkness. Far more serious than restricting our view of the night sky, it seriously damages the eco-system and adversely affects our health. Baby turtles hatched on the beach find themselves drawn to the dangers inland by artificial lights, instead of to the relative safety underwater by the natural light of the sea. As a direct consequence of light pollution, many die from dehydration, predators, or traffic. Light pollution places havoc with migrating birds' natural SatNav, communications, and reproduction.

Switch off garden solar lights; when lights are necessary, better focus them or use less bright lights; use motion-sensors as an alternative to leaving lights permanently on; rein in your Christmas outdoor lights...

