

**Sideroads: Stepping deeper into reflections of our Journey with God**



## **Sideroads**

**Stepping Deeper into Reflections on the Journey with God**

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## Preface

The Sideroads series is based on the book, Engaging the Journey. Each section of “Engaging” contains a high level reflection on the content of that section. The Sideroads contains the content of that section, but focuses on scripture passages that pertain to that section, to deepen one’s study.

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## Anticipating the Journey

**Genesis 1:1-3** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering (brooding<sup>1</sup>) over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

**Genesis 1:26-28** *God said, "Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them rule the fish, the birds, and all other living creatures." So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. God gave them his blessing and said: Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.*

You look at the news and wonder where things are headed to. Sometimes you look at your life and wonder the same thing. Where is God? What's His plan for the world - for the church - for you? Then you pick up the Bible and read the stories and wonder how they all fit together. Then you look at the church - well, churches, there are *so many* of them - and wonder why it's so complicated and messy and wonder if anybody's got it right. And then what about me, my story, my mess? How do I fit into it all that?

Well it is complicated - and the very first hint of how complicated it is starts with the first sentence in the Bible (more on that later), but God has been working through and intervening in the lives of many people through the years. It's through those stories that we can at least begin to understand what the Big Story<sup>2</sup> (the story that helps us make sense of the world) is, and our story is. As we begin to explore those stories, we can discover that:

- we don't have to figure everything out by ourselves,
- the stories (the Big Story and ours) are not over yet, they are in process, and
- we're invited to join in that process, that journey, and participate with the God of the universe in bringing His story and our story to the end that He has already planned out - or we can just be a spectator and wonder what's going on.

The fun in the journey comes from realizing that while we don't have everything figured out, He does. Furthermore, while we can actively take part in the journey, the results are not dependent on us but on Him, who is working through us<sup>3</sup>. As much as we may mess things up, He is able to redeem all our messes and bring us to the destination He has chosen, ultimately restoring us and the rest of creation<sup>4</sup>, making us all into what He had intended from the beginning<sup>5</sup>.

Among all the creatures that God created, we are uniquely made, even if we are not the center of the universe as some people may have thought at one time. Through the pursuit of science, we now have instruments that make it very clear that we are not physically at the center of everything, not that we can prove anyway. We are only specks on a small planet spinning around a star in an apparently random solar system in an apparently random galaxy in a universe we cannot even see the edges of. Although we don't know where the center is, the universe seems to have been created

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<sup>1</sup> "Genesis 1:2," *Biblehub*, <[biblehub.com/genesis/1-2.htm](http://biblehub.com/genesis/1-2.htm)>, Date of access 22 Aug 2018

<sup>2</sup> The Big Story is the meta-narrative behind all the stories we tell. One helpful way to tell someone what the Big Story is from the Christian viewpoint is illustrated in Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup> John 14:12; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:35-39

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 29:11; 1 Peter 5:10; Acts 3:21

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with us in mind.<sup>6</sup> The properties of the universe, the physical constants, the atomic structures, were all created such that it would support our existence. Interestingly, although we are creatures made of the stuff of the universe, not only can we study and reflect on the properties of that stuff, we can also study and reflect on, and even reflect, the one who created us.

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### *Reflection 1:*

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- *How do you feel in comparison to the immense size of the universe?*
- *What does it mean to you, that the universe was designed with you in mind?*

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<sup>6</sup> Slezak, Michael. "The human universe: Was the cosmos made for us?" *New Scientist*, 29 April 2015. [www.newscientist.com/article/mg22630190-400-the-human-universe-was-the-cosmos-made-for-us](http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22630190-400-the-human-universe-was-the-cosmos-made-for-us), Accessed 5 May 2018

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### Scripture to reflect on

*Read each of the Scripture passages below, answering each question*

1. **Psalms 139:1-24. Jeremiah 29:11.** Think about the comprehensiveness with which the Creator knew you even before He created you before time and is intimate with you during each moment of the day. What kind of confidence does that give you?
2. **Ephesians 2:10.** God not only knows you intimately, but he has plans for you. How do you discover His plans?
3. **Romans 8:35-39. 1 Peter 5:10.** We will encounter difficult things in life. How should we respond to those if we know that God is in control?
4. **Isaiah 45:18. Acts 17:26-28.** Speaking strictly from what we know from science, we seem to be random life forms on a random planet in a random spot in the universe. In that perspective, having an anthropocentric view of the universe seems absurd. But knowing what the Creator of heaven and earth has revealed to us, the universe was designed to be inhabited ... by us! How does that change your view of the universe?
5. **2 Corinthians 4:4.** Some of us can look at the universe and see the “fingerprints of God.” Why do others of us not draw the same conclusion?