

Genesis 2:4-9

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no-one to work the ground, ⁶but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

2:15ff

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Luke 8:22-25

One day Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' So they got into a boat and set out. ²³As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

²⁴The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!'

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵'Where is your faith?' he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.'

The Natural History Museum website tells us that: Stars that go supernova are responsible for creating many of the elements of the periodic table, including those that make up the human body. Scientists think that the universe began 13 or 14 billion years ago, with the Big Bang. At that point only the lightest elements existed, such as hydrogen, helium and minuscule amounts of lithium.

Elements are matter that cannot be broken down into simpler substances. On the periodic table, each element is distinguished by its atomic number, which describes the number of protons in the nuclei of its atoms.

The [first generation of stars](#) formed as lumps of gas that drew together and eventually began to combust. This would cause a nuclear reaction in the centre of a star. The first stars that formed after the Big Bang were greater than 50 times the size of [our Sun](#). 'Inside stars a process takes place called nucleosynthesis, which is basically the making of elements,' says Dr Ashley King. 'The bigger the star, the faster they burn their fuel.'

The first stars burned their fuel quickly and were able to make only a few elements heavier than hydrogen and helium. When those stars went supernova — exploded powerfully — and expelled the elements they had produced, they seeded the next generation of stars.

The next generation of seeded stars were then able to produce other, heavier elements such as carbon, magnesium and nearly every element in the periodic table. Any element in your body that is heavier than iron has travelled through at least one supernova.

'So it's very likely that there are a whole bunch of different stars that have contributed the elements we see in our own solar system, our planet and those found within you,' concludes Dr King.

There you have it. You are not just anyone. You are made of stardust — and humble you and I contain atoms formed in the hearts of stars and supernovae.

On the other hand, Genesis is keen to point out that you are but dust from the ground, and it is God's breathing life into you that makes you special. All the rest of earth, from the rock you stand on to the water you drink and air you breathe has been formed in stars. What marks you

out is God's inspiration, his breathing Spirit and life into you. As Christians, we don't need to dispute scientific theory around the origins of the universe, the elements, and the stars. But we can say that they have purpose. God made these things, and central to his purpose were love and relationship.

I often think that there are things which we accept calmly when we read them in the gospel that would have really freaked us out if we had been there. Not least is Jesus calming the storm. 'Who is this?' The disciples ask, incredulous. 'We knew he was someone, but even the wind and the water obey him!'

Why do the wind and the water obey him? Because the word was there at the beginning, speaking creation into being.

If we speak of God creating the heavens and the earth out of nothing — speaking the Big Bang into action — it stands to reason that this creativity is of another order to our creativity. Without wishing to belittle the creativity of Shakespeare, Beethoven, Michelangelo or any other great creative: what they achieved comes from what was already created. It is a response to creation. A good number of the greatest artists understood that and were humble about their achievements.

Creativity for them, and for us, begins with delight, and gratitude and wonder at what is, including what is within us.

How do you characterise God, and what makes us humans special? What makes us the crowning achievement of creation — even allowing that humankind's moral failures have blotted so much of that specialness? For me it is two things — love and creativity.

To reiterate, we find both these qualities in Genesis 2. God has created us, and created us to be creative. God made us in love, and made us to love. The simple point of this story in which Eve is made from Adam's rib is that man and woman are very alike and very close. They are intended to be intimate, and to love each other. Genesis 2 has far more to say for love and intimacy than it does for chauvinism or dubious notions of male priority over women.

And creativity — if we are creative, it must be for some purpose beyond ourselves. Occasionally we exercise creativity in a way no one will know but the remarkable fecundity of our imaginations — for problem solving, innovating, truth-seeking, for art and craft, for agriculture and husbandry — and even playing games is *for others*. Creativity, essentially is inspired by love, and expresses love in some way, I think.

It would be very easy to conclude these few thoughts on creation with something a little trite — a bit, 'go forth and do likewise'-y. I'm sure I am often a bit trite: it can be very hard to seek the face of God in scripture, explore the ideas, and then come to some ready conclusion.

Perhaps it is best today if we do not. Perhaps it is best if *you* choose how you respond:

In what way do you respond to the thought that you are both stardust and just plain dust?

How do you respond to God's creativity with your own?

Do you see your place in God's world differently, or God's place in your world differently?

If love is part of your response to creation, how is this shown?

Amen.