



Created or Uncreated

**An exercise in clarity of thought about the relationship
of God and his Creation**

Learning Community Experiential Activity

Draft 2.1

Created and Uncreated

Purpose:

1. To listen to the audience and hear where there might be confusion about foundational areas of theology (Where there is confusion there will be a lack of conviction and a source for doubt).
2. To have a discussion that will bring some clarification of these basic ideas
3. This exercise should help the group discover and examine clichés in order to provide meaning.
4. The exercise sets the scene for discussion on the nature, character and attributes of God.

Assumptions about the audience:

1. We evangelicals often know the facts of theology but do not know the meaning of those facts. This exercise allows for some exploration of meaning and connections of the foundational ideas of the faith.
2. There is much confusion among young Evangelical Christians and also among honest seekers concerning the relationship of God with his creation
3. Unclear mental models get in the way of understanding Biblical truth and result in “reading into” the text when reading the Bible. This clash of mental models arise from the materialistic and evolutionary ideas absorbed from being in society, ideas picked up in Sunday school and the Biblical Revelation. Some of these are platonic some or materialistic and some are pure speculation. This can include modernistic or post-modern or consumerist assumptions and values that have been absorbed, In any group there will be many different views.
4. These ideas are then read into the biblical text and become part of the lens through which reality is perceived.
5. Evangelicals of our generation tend to emphasize the personal in God but do not think much of God as the infinite. This lack of balance makes God appear small and powerless but nice .(God is my best friend or Our God is a consuming fire)
6. This confusion affects our understanding of God's freedom and our freedom, of how we live in this world, how we view the self.
7. There is much confusion about what it means to be human and what happens to humans when we die. Is the Body a problem in itself or is our rebellion the problem.

Outcomes

1. To help people see that only God is uncreated and that all that is in God is part of the uncreated. As God is Trinity there is communication and Love and all other attributes of God.

2. That there is a permanent distinction between God as the uncreated and His creation. (Otherwise we drift towards panentheism¹ or pantheism)
3. That God has created and that the creation is good. But we are fallen and the earth is cursed. (distinction between being fallen and being curse)
4. Reality is God centred and not me centred. (Many young people have an view of knowledge that is based in their experience. If it feels good it must be true.) This can be explored.
5. The Creation Story means that I exist because God wants me to be. This is liberating for those who have not experienced the love and acceptance they need to feel at home in life.
6. That we will always be created , that even after death we remain part of the creation – There is often confusion about the nature of the afterlife.
7. To help people accept reality as it really is.
8. To teach perspective and proportion of the real world
9. God is big and we are small (but wanted)
10. A renewed sense of the proportions of reality (God is large Infinite and I am small/ finite) should act as the foundation of our humility
11. That Christ enters into the creation as mediator between God and man. He who has seen me has seen the father.
12. God desires the creation; it is his idea, and God wanted it.
13. That our problem is not in our createdness but in our rebellion and pride.
14. Sin did not take God by surprise.
15. To reveal participants mental models of the interaction with God and the creation.
16. The activity can be used to set up discussion and teaching on Trinity, the purpose of creation, incarnation and what it means to be human.

Length of Time:

1 – 2 hours. Minimum time 45 minutes. If it is used as part of a longer session it can be shorter as there will be more time to discuss the issues raised. To be effective on its own more time needs to be taken in order to cover the issues raised.

This exercise will raise many questions in the participants it is not necessary to clarify all of them. It is helpful as a listening exercise for the facilitator to raise the issues at other times. It would be impossible to discuss all the issues raised in one session.

Location:

Anywhere with a board on which to write so that everyone can see. This can also be done in a café with a piece of paper but I often forget the words!

Activity:

1. Each person is given paper and asked to draw a line down the middle of it.
2. On the top of the paper they have to write "Created" on one side and "Uncreated" on the other.
3. You may also suggest that people make a third column for "Don't know" It is quite possible that you do not know all the answers. Some listed here are really speculative and it is good to make the point that we may not know all the answers
4. They are asked the following question and write the answers on their own paper.

"In which column does the following word belong: a) before the creation or b) after creation or c) don't know. If you think it might go in a. and b. put it in the column where it first appeared. Each word should appear in one column only

5. A list of words is read out loud and people are asked to write them in the appropriate column.
6. Take your time and allow people to wrestle with the issues. A little Silence is good for thought. It is important that people do not talk allowed or shout out the answers at this stage.

List of Words:

- a. Communication
- b. Gravity
- c. intelligence
- d. Intimacy
- e. time
- f. Paradise
- g. Sequence
- h. Wisdom
- i. Language
- j. Heaven
- k. Earth
- l. Relationship
- m. Heavenly bodies
- n. Trust
- o. Universe
- p. Hell
- q. knowledge
- r. Personality
- s. Devil
- t. Angels
- u. Jealousy

• How these are done depend on if we are doing research on the answers. If we are doing research then the first activity has to be done by asking people to write the answers down on paper and then hand it in.

- v. Stars
- w. Soul
- x. God
- y. action
- z. Law
- aa. Music
- bb. Ethics
- cc. speech
- dd. Friction
- ee. Faith
- ff. Beauty
- gg. Fear
- hh. Spirit

Stage 2: (See following diagram) The answers are discussed in small groups if there is time and then listed on a board for a large group discussion. If there is not time then go directly to the large group discussion.

7. This discussion should reveal the confusion on central issues of the a biblical understanding of reality.
8. It is very important that that people are not challenged or ridiculed when they speak out. There will be plenty of mistakes. When people make mistakes it is helpful to suggest reasons why we all make mistakes in our thinking and use the opportunity to challenge people about the importance of thinking about the meaning of words and concepts we use.
9. It is not always possible in daily life to take time to think these issues through to their conclusion. This is because of time or access to material or because we “go with the flow” or do not see the importance of clarity in our thinking. The modern consumer society steals lots of time from us as we take time to survive and make the endless choices of daily life.
10. The issues addressed here are often surprisingly basic but foundational and motivational.

Stage 3: (See the following diagram): Indicate the size of the creation which includes the whole Universe. Write in on the one side Universe, stars, Milky way, earth. This can be funny.

The following points maybe usefully made:

- God is infinite and personal, but we are finite and personal. People in our times do not emphasize the infinite in God or think about what it means.
- God is infinitely good.
- God initiated the act of creation for his purposes. To share existence with us.
- God is involved - Immanent but separate from the creation. He is also transcendent.

UNCREATED

God
Trinity and everything that this means and contains.
Relationship
Communication / language
Love
Spirit
Morality
Ethics
good
Beauty
action
beautiful
knowledge
Music
intelligence
Anger
Trust
Wisdom
Intimacy
jealousy
speech
sequence (not static or passive)
action
speech
God is who he is. He does not change to adapt to our desires for reality.
God does not lie.
God does not change (but is not static)

This side is made larger to indicated that God is larger that his creation.

Of course within God we are talking about things on the edge of our understanding. We understand only in the context of creation categories.

CREATED

Universe
Gravity
Heavenly bodies
Soul
Friction
Faith
Fear
Heaven
Earth
Devil
Body
Stars
Angels
Stars
heavens and the earth
time
Paradise
Hell
Law

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Stage 3: One can draw the universe, the stars and the Milky way and then the earth within it and note how small we are against the stars. And how much smaller we are against God.

It is helpful to point out the meaning of Transcendence and immanence.

God initiates creation
God knows
God enters into his creation through the son who is incarnate forever to represent the Father to the world and to mediate the people to the father.
The son represents the people to God.

Don't Know

Helpful Bible Texts and Theological points to include in the discussion:

- 1 Tim 6: 16 which talks about the God we cannot and will not see: How can one see the infinite: another reason why the incarnation was and remains so important. **BUT** “He who has seen me has seen the Father” John 14:9

Some texts to ponder about the nature of the unseen reality

- Acts 17 v 28 : the God in whom we live and move and have our being.
- Genesis 28v 12 + 16: Jacob’s ladder: “This is the meeting place of God with me”. “God was here and I did not know it.”
- Luke 9: Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah are visible to Peter
- Christ the first born of the new creation. His resurrection body an indication of our future (See the last chapter of Luke and the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles) And Revelation Chapter 1
- References to the resurrected Christ eating food and walking through walls in Luke’s Gospel.
- The incarnation as a permanent feature of Christ’s condition – His present reality and the extent of his humility
- “God set eternity in their hearts” Ecclesiastes
- Eternity in the context in which creation happens. We are always in Eternity.
- Our eternal life is sustained by God. We have no life within ourselves.
- We do not cross the line to become uncreated when we are converted or when we die.
- We are always created and we were created for relationship with God and for his pleasure. He desires to share himself with us.

Some useful discussion or lecture topics to follow on.

The discussion should expand peoples understanding of the nature and person and proximity of God. God is not far off.

Exploration of the relationship of the persons of the trinity. What does this mean for the relational foundation of all of reality and how does this reflect our central need as human beings for relationship and our pain when these go wrong. What does the fact of the Trinity mean for our individualistic western societies or our communal eastern societies?

The attributes of God exist within the Trinity. How do the persons of the trinity relate to each other? Our God is a jealous God and an angry God what does this mean? What do we mean when we say he is loving?

¹ **Panentheism** holds that the universe is a part of [God](#) and that Nature is thus an aspect of divinity. Unlike [pantheism](#), it does not say that the universe is synonymous with God; it maintains that there is more to God than the material universe. In panentheism God maintains a transcendent character, and is viewed as both the creator and the original source of universal morality. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panentheism>