

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. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. 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. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. **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. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. **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 saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. **And God said**, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the creature that moves along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind, and all the animals that live on the ground according to their kinds, and all the birds of the sky according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

AND GOD SAID

GENESIS 1-11

Santa Barbara Community Church
Winter 2020

had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Adam and Eve This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. Now 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, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then 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. Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The LORD God made all kinds of

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This study guide was written by Erik Anderson. Graphics and layout are by Carolee Peterson.

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AND GOD SAID

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Welcome to Homegroups at SB Community Church!

Homegroups have three essential elements:

- Bible study
- Prayer
- Community building

How to thrive in a homegroup:

To build community and trust, we all make every effort to be prepared, be present, and be real.

- Expect to spend 45 minutes to an hour preparing for your homegroup gathering. You can split this time up into shorter daily segments. Spend time reading and pondering the passage. Consider the questions and mark any that you particularly want to discuss during homegroup. Come ready to contribute and also to listen to others.
- Try to come each week—this honors the rest of your group and contributes to building the trust and connections that will help us all to grow. Arrive on time if possible. Set your phone aside. Notify your leaders if you won't be able to attend.
- We all long for authentic relationships, and homegroups can be a place where we are truly known and loved. Keep information shared by others confidential.
- If you're comfortable speaking out in a group, or talk a lot, regulate yourself. Leave space for others to talk. Ask questions to draw out others.
- Respect others' views, do not argue, do not interrupt. As trust grows, be willing to build relationships and to encourage each other.

The prayer of our pastoral staff is that each homegroup grow spiritually, personally, and in community life as we study the bible together. May you engage in and enjoy the riches of God's word each week!



What Is Involved?

- Each homegroup is scheduled to provide childcare helpers approximately for a total of 2-3 times between September and June.
- This is strictly a helper role where you are assisting children's ministries leaders as they care for and lead the children.
- Be ready to be flexible and serve at a service time you don't normally attend!
- Helpers are placed in the following groups: Nursery, Toddlers, Preschool, and a very few Elementary (and one female Bathroom Monitor at all three services).
- You can request an age group and a service time, but Elementary spots are very limited and hard to accommodate.

Why Do We Do This?

Our church philosophy is that everyone in our church is part of our church family and the larger family of God. We believe it is our privilege and responsibility to care for our church family, including the very youngest members. As you minister to the children in our family, we hope that in the process you would:

- Meet members of your church family you might not otherwise meet.
- See God in unexpected ways and places.
- Find a role you may enjoy and in which you might like to serve more regularly.
- Enjoy yourself!

Substitutes:

- If you can't serve one of the Sundays your group is scheduled, you are responsible to find a sub for yourself.
- Carolee Peterson is a great resource if you need help finding a sub or working out a switch with another group (carolee@sbcommunity.org).
- All subs need to be someone who attends SBCC regularly and should be in high school or older.
- We really do need every person scheduled every week!

The Day You Serve:

- MOST IMPORTANT! Please check in at the Info Table 20 minutes before the service starts.
- Report to assigned children's area right away. (Don't stop and talk.) Kids are arriving!
- Sick at the last minute? Call or text Rhonda DuPar at (805) 895-4274 or Carolee at (805) 895-4064.

Exemptions:

- Those who currently work as a Youth Leader or Children's Ministry Leader are exempt.
- Exemptions are not given for the important ministries of Worship, Sound/Projection, Info Table, Greeters, etc. since those serving are not out for all of the adult service when they serve in those capacities.
- We do give exemptions for health reasons or if there are other reasons where it wouldn't be appropriate for someone to care for our children (psychological issues, felony, etc.). We ask that if you fall into this category, please let your homegroup leader know so we can exempt you.

CAROLEE PETERSON

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES PASTORAL ASSISTANT

(805) 895-4064

CAROLEE@SBCOMMUNITY.ORG

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AND GOD SAID

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Introduction to Our Study of Genesis 1-11

In the beginning... these first words from the first verse of the Bible may be some of the most recognizable. We know how the book starts (or at least how this verse starts). But in most stories or books, having a good grasp of the beginning is critical to understanding what follows. And this is no less true of Genesis, the Old Testament, and the Bible.

Genesis 1-11 is often referred to as the "Primeval History" – the story before the story, what fans of comic books or comic book movies call an "origin story." Genesis 1-11 is the story of how we got here; it's the story that introduces the main conflict and plot line of the Bible, and therefore the main drama of all of human history. For believers, these eleven chapters are central to understanding our salvation and how it is that we even came to be in need of it. As the Bible Project writes: *It's these first chapters that set the plot in motion for God to respond to human evil with his redemptive plan.*¹

But talking about "the story" can sometimes sound as if what we are discussing is a fairy tale or a myth. What exactly is this primeval history? Does it have a genre that is comprehensible to us as 21st century readers? One commentator writes,

The Primeval History, in contrast to what follows in Genesis, cultivates a kind of narrative that is fable-like or legendary, and sometimes residually mythic....The style...often aspires to the dignity of poetry, [and] invites us to hear the echo of epic poetry in its cadences.¹

One goal of our time in these chapters should be to enjoy the reading! But these chapters are more than just a compelling story—they are also true. We should not let the literary aspects of the passages lead us to conclude they are myth or merely legend; they tell us of real things that happened in time and space.

Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke writes,

Unlike a geometry textbook that may aim to be only didactic, *Genesis* is literature because it communicates doctrine in an artful way; it is ideological art. The narrator uses words not as a stick but as a web. He teaches by telling stories. ...he narrator of Genesis has selected the particular stories of Genesis to explain what it means to be the people of God.

Through his discourse the narrator leads his audience ...to absorb his world and life views. He motivates the audience to surrender its own thought system and life forms in order to enter God's world and to be carried along by the flow of his interpretative report. By inviting the readers to become insiders, the narrator teaches implicitly more than explicitly; he catches the readers off guard and exposes them to thoughts and world views that might otherwise be met with hostility.²

1 Alter, xlv

2 Waltke, 31-39.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **And God said**, “Let there be a vault between the earth and the water.” So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

8 GENESIS 1-11

So as we dive into this story and perhaps get caught in its web – what are some of the major themes or theological arguments that might challenge our modern assumptions?

God - the Creator is Lord of History

Genesis begins with God and creation. The story opens with God’s work of taking chaos and disorder and bringing about order and beauty in creation. The author will use two names for God, and scholars have noted that each name is associated with different aspects of God. When the author uses the name *Elohim* (translated God), God’s transcendence over the world is highlighted. When the author uses the name *Yahweh* (translated the LORD), we often see God’s special relationship and closeness with his chosen people. “When the narrator combines the two names, he makes a bold assertion that the Creator God is the Lord of Israel’s history.”³

Think about what that means for us. The one who made the world and humanity, is also the one pursuing us through trial and rebellion, and is also the one providentially directing history that we might be restored to a relationship with him. Quite a challenge to those of us who live as though we are the *master of our fate, the captain of our soul*.⁴

Humanity – God’s Tainted Handiwork

As the crown of creation, humans are formed and appointed to participate in God’s divine rule of the universe. But on page two, these humans who are meant to be in a covenantal relationship with this God rebel against him and “choose to define good and evil on their own.” This rebellion will get repeated throughout these first several chapters, as will the destructive results as “chaos and disorder are brought back into God’s good world.”⁵

In an age marked by identity politics, the perspective of Genesis 1-11 stands in stark relief. In these chapters we learn our true (and tragic) identity. When we live in accord with our creation, we find life and salvation; when we try to forge our own identity apart from God, we lose ourselves in sin and death. Our inability and unwillingness to do the former sets the stage for our next theme.

Redemption – God’s Relentless Pursuit

Genesis 3 introduces the main conflict of the whole of Scripture and the whole of human history. But what comes in chapters 4-11, follows a similar pattern forged in the story of the Fall in chapter 3. In each episode (Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, and the Tower of Babel) we find sinful rebellion and God’s judgment of sin. But as Longman notes,

Even in the context of judgment of sin, God also extends a token of his grace (a mark on Cain, the preservation of Noah and his family, languages) as he did to Adam and Eve (clothing). In these initial stories, humans show themselves to be addicted to sin and God shows that he will not give sin a free pass, but will judge sin. But, equally significantly, through the token of grace God shows that he will not give up on us.⁶

3 Waltke, 34.

4 These words are from a poem entitled *Invictus*, by William Ernest Henley.

5 Bible Project, Genesis 1-11.

6 Longman, 2.

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AND GOD SAID

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What we will find in our last study, in Genesis 12:1-3, is the redemption plan set in motion in response to chapters 1-11. The story of the Bible is the story of God's relentless pursuit of his sinful people. We will see it in these chapters, yet they are merely the prologue, the origin story to the story of stories.

As modern readers accustomed to considering our journey with God, our pursuit of God, or our search for God – we may be surprised to find in these pages the God who pursues his own people.

And God Said...

Finally, one thing we will see is the theme of speech or language framing how the story unfolds. Creation begins with God speaking the world into existence. God commands certain actions and forbids others. Drama unfolds as the first humans question what God has said, and are forced to decide, will they listen to the snake or to God? Each passage and each narrative is punctuated or hinges on the God who speaks. As we study, look for how this theme will arise again and again.

So, Santa Barbara Community Church, let's enjoy this story. Let's pray that we might be caught up in its web, shaped by its world view, and find in these pages the God who calls us, finds us and speaks to us. And let us labor to listen to what God has said.

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GENESIS 1-11

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AND GOD SAID

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Study One (Personal Study)

The Glory of God

Genesis 1:1-2:3

*Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

- Moses, Psalm 90:2

On Sunday, we kicked off another calendar year by putting the glory of God at front and center. As is our habit, we began the year trying to keep the main thing the main thing – and that thing is God. He was, he is, and he is to come. Genesis 1-11 sets the stage for the whole drama of the Bible, and what we find in verse one of chapter one is God. The Bible begins with God. Before anything was made – there was God.

And God said, *Let there be...* It is this eternal God who created everything: *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* (Romans 11:36)

As we kick off our spring study in Genesis, let's begin where the Bible begins: with God. As you read this account of the creation, ask: who is this about? And marvel at what you find.

—“MEDITATE”—

STOP and PRAY – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 1:1-2:3

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **And God said**, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate the water above from the water below.” So God made the vault and separated the water above from the water below. And God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 1 GENESIS 1-11

“ CONSIDER ”

Reflect on verse 1 – *In the beginning, God...* There have been those who have called this the most offensive verse in the Bible because of all that it implies.

1. What does it mean that God was there in the beginning? What implications does that have for reading Genesis? For your life?

2. Respond to the following quote by Michael Reeves –

Single God, Non-smoker, Seeks Attractive Creation with Good Sense of Humor... Imagine for a moment that you are God. I'm sure you've done it before. Now think: Would you in your divine wisdom and power ever want to create a universe and, if so, why? Because you feel lonely and want some friends? Because you like being pampered and want some servants? It is one of the profoundest questions to ask: If there is a God, why is there anything else? Why the universe? Why us? Why might God decide to have a creation?¹

And God said... The world is created through God speaking. Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke writes –

Each day begins with an announcement: “and God said.” Much of the detail of the account is framed in narration, but it is the direct speech of God, however brief, that drives and forms the account. Thus Hamilton rightly concludes, “God is the soloist; the narrator is the accompanist.” The hero of creation is God. Each event occurs according to God's expressed will and through the agency of his word. Speech signifies that God is intimately bonded to his creation. (Waltke, 56)

¹ Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 39.

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AND GOD SAID

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It is not surprising that the psalmist would turn that around and listen to creation for what God has said.

3. Read Psalm 19. What do we “hear” about through the creation? What else does that psalm say about God’s word?
4. Are you making space in your life to listen to God’s voice? If so, how?
5. Read Revelation 4:11. What does this suggest is the right response to the creation and our Creator?
6. How do your unbelieving friends or family view the world differently than what we find in Genesis 1?
7. How could this passage inform the ways you speak of God to those who don’t yet believe in him?

“PRAY”

End your time this week in prayer. Consider meditating on Psalm 19 or Psalm 90. Rejoice in the glory of God. Repent of the ways you have de-centered God in your life. Request that this God speak into your life again.

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STUDY 1 GENESIS 1-11

“SERMON NOTES”

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Study Two (Personal Study)

The Image of God

Genesis 1:26-31

You have made [us] a little lower than the heavenly beings...

- Psalm 8:5

Genesis 1 contains not only the God-centered account of creation, but the amazing truth that God created humans as the "crown of creation." It is at the end of the chapter that we find out the amazing truth that we have been made in the *image of God*. This phrase has been debated for centuries, but believers of all traditions have seen in this idea the foundation for almost all Christian ethics.

Last Sunday, we again considered the Sanctity of Life and this next Sunday we will consider Racial Reconciliation. One thing that brings these two important issues together is how they relate to the Image of God in all humans. We will meditate on this theological idea this week.

“MEDITATE”

STOP and **PRAY** – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 1:26-31

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“CONSIDER”

1. There are many repeated words and phrases in these few verses. What do the following words suggest to you? What do they say about us?

Make/Create

Image

Likeness

Waltke has a clarifying reflection on this. He writes,

God is not Anthropomorphic; humans are theomorphic – made like God so that God can communicate himself to people. He gave people ears to show that he hears the cry of the afflicted and eyes to show that he sees the plight of the pitiful. (Waltke, 65)

Accordingly, the Psalmist writes, *He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?* (Psalm 94:5)

2. What can we learn about God from his image bearers?

Commentators have noticed the difference in language used for humanity’s creation that sets them apart from the animals (even as they are created on the sixth day with the animals). The animals are created *according to their kinds*, but humanity is in God’s image. Furthermore, “Only in the creation of humanity is the divine intent announced beforehand. The formula ‘and so it was’ is replaced by a threefold blessing. In these ways, the narrator places humankind closer to God than the rest of creation.” (Waltke, 64)

3. Read Psalm 8. How does the Psalmist understand the distinct nature of humanity?

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AND GOD SAID

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4. Read Genesis 9:6. How does the author of Genesis apply the image of God to ethics?
5. Consider our two sermon topics of Sanctity of Life and Racial Reconciliation. How could our reading of Genesis 1:26-31 influence how we think about these two issues?
6. How could this doctrine shape how we treat other image bearers when we discuss these issues?

This doctrine of the image of God influences more than just what we should not do; it's also a help to us in what we should do. John Calvin points us to this aspect of the doctrine.

7. Respond to this quote by Calvin. Is there a person in your life who comes to mind as you read? If you sense a "nudge" from God here, pray about it.

Assuredly there is but one way in which to achieve what is not merely difficult but utterly against human nature: to love those who hate us, to repay their evil deeds with benefits.... It is that we remember not to consider men's evil intention but to look upon the image of God in them, which cancels and effaces their transgressions, and with its beauty and dignity allures us to love and embrace them. (Calvin, *Institutes*, III.vii.6)

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“PRAY”

As we finish this study, consider the many ways we can pray.

Rejoice in the way God has created us.

Repent...

...for the ways you have ignored the image of God in others.

...for the ways our society denigrates the image of God.

...for the sins of racism and abortion.

Request that God would move in us to honor the image of God in others, to love our neighbor, and to work for the protection and dignity of all image bearers.

“SERMON NOTES”

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AND GOD SAID

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Study Three

The Image of God

Genesis 1:24-31

In studying Genesis 1-11, we are invited to explore some fundamental questions about God, the world and humanity. Our passage this week gets at some of these: *Who are we? Why were we made? What are we here for? What is our purpose?*

Whether or not you realize it, how you answer those questions has a tremendous effect on how you go about your daily life. It is like an operating system or software running in the background of all you do – impacting the choices you make, your experience of the world, and your relationships with other people.

Having spent two weeks considering the implications for humans having been made in the “Image of God,” we come now to a third implication: *Work*.

Our verses are the climax of the entire chapter of creation, so read the whole chapter slowly. Enjoy its poetry, cadence and rhythm. Then as you approach verses 24-31, slow down even more and pay attention to what you find. We’ll be looking at those verses in particular in this study.

—**MEDITATE**—

STOP and **PRAY** – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 1:1-31

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

STUDY 3 GENESIS 1-11

“CONSIDER”

Look again at verses 24-26. Animals and humans are both made on the sixth day, and yet there is something unique about humans.

1. What difference is there between the animals and humans in how they are made?

2. What do we learn about our identity and God's purpose for us from verse 26?

Many commentators and Bible scholars call verse 28 the “Cultural Mandate” – a divine command to create, cultivate, and work. Before we get into the specifics of that verse, we should stop and consider how this command fits with the fact that humans bear the image of God.

In verse 26, God speaks his intention in creating us, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*”

3. Read Genesis 2:1-3. These verses describe or summarize all that God did in the first six days with a single word. What is it?

4. Put it all together. What do we learn about God? What do we learn about ourselves?

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AND GOD SAID

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In chapter 1, God creates by taking what is formless and empty, and he forms and fills it. The primordial earth is described in Hebrew as *tohu wabohu*, which is translated *without form and void*. The picture is of a God who fashions and fills: he takes what is shapeless and chaotic and gives it structure and order, and then he takes what is empty and fills it with life!

Look back at the days of creation:

- Day 1 – separates light and dark → Day 4 – fills the expanse with sun, moon, and stars
- Day 2 – separates waters with sky → Day 5 – fills the water and sky with teeming swarms
- Day 3 – separates land from the sea → Day 6 – fills the earth with animals

Along the way, he also establishes authorities to rule or subdue: the sun and the moon (v. 18) over the day and night, and humans over all animal life and the creation (v. 26 and 28). Indeed, Genesis 2:15 reads, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Bruce Waltke writes:

Man is appointed king over creation, responsible to God the ultimate king, and as such expected to manage and develop and care for creation, this task to include actual physical work. (Waltke, 66)

5. What implications does this have for how we view the environment and God's created world? What responsibility do we have?

6. *Subdue* and *dominion* are words often associated with oppression or violence. But this is before sin enters the world. What could a sinless expression of these look like?

Now look at verse 28.

7. What are humans commanded to do?

8. How does this command reflect what God does?

9. Think about your own work and how you are reflecting God's image in what you do. Consider using the categories of verse 28: multiply, fill, subdue. Are there ways in which you are bringing structure, order, or shape to your sphere of influence? How are you filling up or causing life to flourish?

It is again worth noting in all of this that work is modeled by God and given to humans *before* the fall and the introduction of sin into the world. Work was part of the original good creation! Work was not intended to be toil.

This gives us both tremendous dignity and greater responsibility in our work as it is a way to reflect a holy God as his image bearers.

10. What are some ways this vision of work is similar or different to how the world views work? How does it compare and contrast with your own experience of work?

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Timothy Keller has a great book on work. Respond to what he writes:

We were built for work and the dignity it gives us as human beings, regardless of its status or pay. The practical implications of this principle are far-reaching. We have the freedom to seek work that suits our gifts and passions. We can be open to greater opportunities for work when the economy is weak and jobs are less plentiful. We no longer have any basis for condescension or superiority; nor is there any basis for envy or feelings [that a job is below us].¹

As we consider the whole story of the Bible, we've only looked at the first "chapter" in this study. But the topic of work is affected by all that follows as well.

12. To finish this study, as a homegroup, try to put together a simple theology of work according to these categories:

What is God's design for work?

How is work affected by the fall?

How can Christ redeem our work?

“PRAY”

How can your homegroup pray for you this week when it comes to your work?

¹ Keller, *Every Good Endeavour*, 53.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 above the vault from the water below the vault. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 3 GENESIS 1-11

“SERMON NOTES”

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

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Excursus 1 – Creation Care

As we saw in study 3, Genesis 1:28 is often called the “Cultural Mandate.” The idea is that God established the world and gave us the raw materials, and we are called now to cultivate it – to make culture. Our job is not to create *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), but to rearrange the materials God has given us to cause life to flourish.

Many Christians today see the link between this mandate and our stewardship of the created order. This call to steward God’s world is firmly rooted in the first chapters of Genesis. John Stott¹ writes,

The Bible tells us that in creation God established for human beings three fundamental relationships: first to himself, for he made them in his own image; second to each other, for the human race was plural from the beginning; and third, to the good earth and its creatures over which he set them. Moreover, all three relationships were skewed by the Fall. Adam and Eve were banished from the presence of the Lord God in the garden, they blamed each other for what had happened, and the good earth was cursed on account of their disobedience ...

Tremper Longman adds,

Both creation accounts place humanity at their apex. The narrative makes it clear that God cares for his human creatures in a special way. However, humanity’s favored status does not mean that the rest of creation does not matter. ...

The status of ruler and subduer over creation is not that of an exploiter but of a protector (1:26-28). That God will care for the animals primarily, though not exclusively, through human agency may be seen in God’s charge that Adam name the animals (2:19-20). That humans are to care for and protect the environment may be seen in the divine command to “work” and “take care of” (or better “guard/protect”) the garden (2:15).

Stott and Longman both point out we have a high calling as those who bear God’s image to represent him in the world and to steward all that he has made. This includes caring for the environment in such a way that life flourishes. Or to put it more simply, Christians are called to care about the environment.

We find in the Psalms two complementary truths: *The earth is the Lord’s* (Psalm 24:1), and *The earth he has given to humankind* (Psalm 115:16). When held together these two affirmations frame our understanding of our environmental concern. Stott writes,

For the earth belongs to God by creation and to us by delegation. This does not mean that he has handed it over to us in such a way as to give up his own rights over it, but rather that he has given us the responsibility to preserve and develop the earth on his behalf.

¹ John Stott has a wonderful chapter entitled “Creation Care” in his book *The Radical Disciple*. All Stott quotes (and many of the ideas for this excursus) come from that chapter, pages 49-53.

He then offers three implications:

1. **We will avoid the *deification of nature*.** This mistake acts as if nature is god. He writes, “The Christian realization that nature is creation, not Creator, was an indispensable prelude to the whole scientific enterprise and is essential to the development of the earth’s resources today. We *respect* nature because God made it; we do not *revere* nature as if it were God.”
2. **We must avoid the *exploitation of nature*.** This mistake is the opposite extreme and acts as if we are god over nature. “It would be absurd to imagine that he who *created* the earth then handed it over to us to be *destroyed*. No, the dominion God has given us should be seen as a *responsible stewardship*, not a destructive dominion.”
3. **The correct relationship between human beings and nature is that of *cooperation with God*.** “For what God has given us is *nature*, whereas what we do with it is *culture*. We are not only to conserve the environment but also to develop its resources for the common good. It is a noble calling to cooperate with God for the fulfillment of his purposes, to transform the created order for the pleasure and profit of all. In this way our work is to be an expression of our worship since our care of the creation will reflect our love for the Creator.”

Clearly, there is an invitation for Christians to participate in efforts to promote environmental care, even as there is a mandate to live in such a way that models good stewardship of the world God has made. We should consider our buying habits, our consumption practices, and how the way we live impacts the created order.

But one more note needs to be made. As Christians, we need to avoid certain rhetoric and reform efforts that misplace the crux of the issue. Those who do not share a biblical worldview often blame humans for all the world’s ills, with overpopulation being a common culprit. This was the mistake of the ancient cultures as well, as many Ancient Near Eastern creation or flood narratives present the gods in a struggle with the overpopulation of humans. The Bible does not see it that way, as the problem is presented not as human *overpopulation*, but human *wickedness*. Humans are not the problem, but the problem is in every human.

When the problem is misplaced, human dignity is violated and human life is often denigrated. Christians have a unique witness that both affirms the goodness of God’s creation, but also our high calling as image bearers and the unique dignity we possess.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Study Four

Sabbath

Genesis 2:1-3

For awhile the hobbits continued to talk and think of the past journey and of the perils that lay ahead; but such was the virtue of the land of Rivendell that soon all fear and anxiety was lifted from their minds. The future, good or ill, was not forgotten, but ceased to have power over the present. Health and hope grew strong in them, and they were content with each day as it came, taking pleasure in every meal, and in every word and song.

- JRR Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*

Pastor Mark Buchanan points to the passage above from Tolkien as a great literary description of Sabbath, in which "the future, good or ill, was not forgotten, but ceased to have power over the present."¹ Imagine such an experience of rest: to take a break from all anxiety or anticipation, to experience reprieve from your buzzing mind and heart and breath, and to enjoy the present.

Some reading this are already fantasizing about their next vacation when they can try to achieve this!

Well, this vision did not originate with elves, hobbits or Tolkien, but rather comes from a Biblical worldview, formed in part by what we come to this week in Genesis.

Our passage, though numbered to begin in chapter two, is actually the conclusion to chapter one and the account of creation. So we will again read the whole chapter. And again, enjoy its poetry, cadence and rhythm. As you approach verses 2:1-3, slow down even more and pay attention to what you find. We'll be looking at those verses in particular in this study.

“MEDITATE”

STOP and PRAY – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through His word.

READ – Genesis 1:1-2:3

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

1 Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*.

STUDY 4 GENESIS 1-11

“ CONSIDER ”

Verses 1-3 in chapter 2 round out the creation account in chapter 1, not just in content but also in their intricate literary structure. Wenham points out that the Hebrew word order “he created,” “God,” and “heavens and earth” in 1:1 reappear and are reversed as “heavens and earth” (2:1), “God” (2:2), and “created” (2:3). This pattern provides a neat bookend to the whole section. (Wenham, 5)

Not only this, but several commentators have noted how the number seven dominates this whole creation account in different ways, including sentence structure (how many words in a sentence), vocabulary (how many times a particular word is used in the passage), and verbal formulas repeated seven times over the seven days (e.g. “And God made” and “God saw that it was good”). So also in verses 1-3. The number seven is stamped and emphasized as these verses contain 35 words (7 x 5) and three appearances of the seventh day, each time in a sentence of seven Hebrew words.

So the Hebrew reader, having their attention focused around the number seven, would then be pointed to this seventh day. Pause there for a moment.

1. What observations (simple and obvious or deep and profound) do you have of these 3 verses? What do we learn about God? About the day?

Surprisingly, while our attention is drawn to this seventh day as the conclusion of the other six, there are some striking differences.

2. Look back at the structure and formulas of the other days. Compare and contrast the days of creation with the seventh day. What similarities or differences do you see?

By observing the design of creation, we can learn much about God and ourselves. In verse 2, God “rested” (Hebrew: *shabbat*), which later becomes the proper name for this observed day: Sabbath. The idea of Sabbath, scripturally, begins in the action and activity of God. It is something God does before we are ever commanded to follow suit.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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3. What do you think is the significance of an omnipotent God resting?

Wenham writes,

Though the seventh day is not called the Sabbath, God “blessed” it and “hallowed” it. These are striking terms to apply to a day. Biblical usage generally restricts blessing to animate beings—God, men, animals and so on... which leads to fruitfulness and success. ...Similarly, it is unusual for a day to be “hallowed,” that is, made or declared holy. ...God is holy. Anything else that is described as holy in the OT derives its holiness from being chosen by God and given to him in the correct prescribed manner. The seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in Scripture, to acquire that special status that properly belongs to God alone. (Wenham, 36).

4. Respond to the above quote. What is your understanding of the Sabbath? What is it? What does it mean for people to “hallow” it?
5. Think about your rhythms of work and rest. Do you have set-aside predictable times for stopping your work and resting? What does that look like? Share with your homegroup.

Derek Kidner notes, “The significance of the week is explicit in the sabbath-hallowing (2:3; cf. Ex. 20:11; 31:17) which makes man’s proper rhythm of work and rest a reminder and miniature of the Creator’s.” (Kidner, 56)

STUDY 4 GENESIS 1-11

Bruce Waltke adds,

A person who feels inclined to work seven days a week should examine what god he or she worships. ...Those who find their security and significance in [money] or professionalism find community worship on the first day of the week a burden. (Waltke, 71)

As Christians, our understanding of Sabbath is shaped and developed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

6. What is your understanding of how a Christian should honor the Sabbath? How does it relate to God’s design in creation?

7. Read Matthew 11:28-12:8. How does Jesus interpret (and fulfill) what we find in our passage?

Judith Shulevitz has a great insight into the historical habits of Jewish and Christian Sabbath keeping:

Most people mistakenly believe that all you have to do to stop working is not work. The inventors of the Sabbath understood that it was a much more complicated undertaking. You cannot downshift casually and easily, the way you might slip into bed at the end of a long day. As the Cat in the Hat says, “It is fun to have fun but you have to know how.” This is why the Puritan and Jewish Sabbaths were so exactingly intentional, requiring extensive advance preparation—at the very least a scrubbed house, a full larder and a bath. The rules did not exist to torture the faithful. They were meant to communicate the insight that interrupting the ceaseless round of striving requires a surprisingly strenuous act of will, one that has to be bolstered by habit as well as by social sanction.²

² Judith Shulevitz, “Bring back the Sabbath”, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/magazine/bring-back-the-sabbath.html>. At the time of writing, Shulevitz was a non-practicing Jewish journalist for the New York Times.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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8. Is there any way you'd like to rethink your habits and practices related to rest and Sabbath? Be specific about any intentions and share with your homegroup.

“PRAY”

Think back on this study, and spend some time praying individually and as a homegroup about Sabbath rest. Let what you learned inform your prayers. Rejoice, repent and request.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 4 GENESIS 1-11

“SERMON NOTES”

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Study Five

Creator and Creature

Genesis 2:4-17

Man is obviously made to think. It is his whole dignity and his whole merit; and his whole duty is to think as he ought. Now, the order of thought is to begin with self, and with its Author and its end. Now, of what does the world think? Never of this, but of dancing, playing the lute, singing, making verses, ...fighting, making oneself king, without thinking what it is to be a king and what to be a man.

- Pascal, *Penseés*, 2.146

Nearly all the wisdom which we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.

- Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*

As we continue our study in these foundational chapters of Genesis, we again find profound depictions of God, of our design and identity as humans, and of the nature of the relationship between the Creator and what he creates. The implications for what we find here are far-reaching: what does it mean to be human? What is our purpose? What is the nature of good and evil? How do we know? The author of Genesis wants us to answer these questions in this book and in relationship to the God who made us.

This week, we come to Genesis 2:4 and we arrive at the second creation account in our Bibles. The narrative has a distinctly different feel to chapter one – which has led some to call it a “synoptic” account. Just as the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John paint different portraits of the same events, this passage can be seen as a complementary account of creation to chapter one, with a different purpose.

Before reading our passage, remind yourself of where we have been in chapter one. Look at the literary structure, note the writing style, consider reading it out loud so you can hear it. Then turn and enjoy our passage in chapter two.

“MEDITATE”

STOP and PRAY – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through His word.

READ – Genesis 2:4-17

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **And God said**, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate the water above from the water below.” So God made the vault and separated the water above from the water below. And God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 5 GENESIS 1-11

“ CONSIDER ”

As noted, chapters 1 and 2 have different styles. Stop and describe what you found.

1. What did you notice about the voice, the style and the feel of our passage compared to chapter 1?

Consider what Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke writes:

Like the creation account, the account of the heavens and the earth has historical solidity. The story is based on events in time and space, a real Adam and Eve. But it is not merely a historical account. The style is artistic and figurative rather than scientific and literalistic. The scenes of creation are painted as an artist might envision them: God, as a potter, forming the man; as a gardener, designing a garden of beauty and abundance; and as a temple builder, raising the woman from the rib of the man. (Waltke, 80)

2. Look at all the verbs in the passage. Who is doing the action? Who is this passage about? How does that alter or reframe how you read this passage?

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

3. What does it mean to you that God made us out of the dust? What about the fact that he "breathed life" into us?

Many commentators notice the stark contrast between Genesis and the creation narratives of other ancient Near Eastern people groups. Those are notable for their dramatic depictions of cosmic battles, racy and violent relationships among gods and goddesses, and cataclysmic forces beyond human control. Genesis tells a humbler story, and yet holds a higher view of humanity. We are not slaves to capricious gods, nor made merely to satisfy their human-like desires.

4. Think about your friends and neighbors. According to what modern "myths" or stories are they living? What do they think it means to be human? Is there high dignity or not?

5. How is the garden described in verses 9-14? Think about the imagery of the rivers and the precious gems. What do we learn about God from this description?

In verse 9, we read that within the garden are two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The presence of these trees has often confounded thoughtful believers. Why are they there? Why did God put them there? But before pondering those questions, it is helpful to consider what they represent.

The trees are a literary depiction of God’s provision. God is both the giver of life and the only one who knows comprehensively the limits and extent of good and evil. The phrase, “*good and evil*, [represents] all moral knowledge: the capacity to create a system of ethics and make moral judgments.... Only God in heaven, who transcends time and space, has the prerogative to know truly what is good and bad for life.” (Waltke, 86)

With all that in mind, consider God’s first words spoken to Adam in verses 16-17.

6. Look at verse 16 – *and the Lord commanded the man...* What comes to mind when you hear the words “command” or “commandment?” What associations do these words carry for you?

7. How would you read verse 17 differently if you read it in isolation versus reading it at the end of 4-16?

John Sailhamer points out:

The inference of God’s commands in v. 16-17 is that God alone knows what is good for man and that God alone knows what is not good for him. To enjoy the “good,” man must trust God and obey him. If man disobeys, he will have to decide for himself what is good and what is not good. While to modern man such a prospect may seem desirable, to the author of Genesis it is the worst fate that could have befallen him. (Sailhamer, 45)

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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8. How is this message of Genesis different from how other people you know might understand right and wrong, good and evil?

Consider these two quotes from theologians:

"In the literature of Scripture, wisdom is, broadly speaking, the knowledge of God's world and the knack of fitting oneself into it ... The wiser person *gives in* to creation and to God."¹

The wise person acts in accordance with the way things are, which means in accordance with what God says. This is also the way of freedom, for to live wisely means living along the grain of the created order."²

9. How does this message from Genesis convict or encourage you?

Many Christians have times in their discipleship when they wrestle with God's commands, but more specifically his authority. When particular ethical or moral questions arise in culture, believers struggle with God's authority or "say-so", asking why God gets to determine these things or make these rules.³ The author of Genesis grounds his authority in creation itself. As we close our study, notice the similar connections made by the psalmists in the following passages.

10. How do these passages reflect, expand or riff off what we find in Genesis 2?

Psalm 19

1 Bruce Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, p210.

2 Cornelius Plantinga Jr. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, p114.

3 Kevin Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, p47.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 5 GENESIS 1-11

Psalm 33:1-9

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, 24

“PRAY”

Let the words of these psalms lead you into worship and prayer.

“SERMON NOTES”

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

Study Six

Marriage

Genesis 2:18-25

Marriage is not a human invention; it is a divine revelation. Its design never was our own made-up arrangement of infinite malleability. It was given to us, at the beginning of all things, as a brightly shining fixity of eternal significance. We might not always live up to its true grandeur. None of us does so perfectly. But we have no right to redefine it, and we have every reason to revere it.

- Ray Ortlund, *Marriage*

Reading the first eleven chapters of Genesis can at times feel strange as we move slowly from topic to topic. But consider what we have seen already and how it sets the stage for the rest of the storyline of scripture:

- **Creation** and the rhythm of time provides the backdrop for a whole world meant to worship God, demonstrated through the festivals and feasts of God's people.
- The divine calling to **work** plays out throughout the scriptures as the theme of work, food and famine drive major plotlines and the movement of God's people.
- **Sabbath** is established and then craved to the last page as God's people toil in their sin and long to be put at rest.
- And the theme of **authority** and humanity's wrestling with God, as well as our sinful desire to be autonomous from God, runs through every book of the Bible, setting up the stage for the Cross.

Likewise, this week will see the first marriage and consider what God intended for it from the start. But marriage is not an isolated topic or interesting tangent, but rather a theme that pops up over and over again in the pages of Scripture. The struggle between man and woman, between husband and wife, the connection between marriage and worship (or idolatry) – all demonstrate the foundational theme that marriage plays in the storyline of Scripture.

So whether you are single, married, divorced or widowed, this passage lays essential groundwork for understanding the rest of scripture. As we study these verses, let's work hard to see the ideals that God has established before we jump to reflecting on our personal experience or dissonance with what we find.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 6 GENESIS 1-11

“MEDITATE”

STOP and PRAY – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 2:18-25

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“CONSIDER”

1. Remind yourself what we discussed last week. How would you summarize the message of what came before?
2. How does last week’s passage set the stage for our passage this week?

Verse 18 is an astonishing statement when read in light of chapter one. In the first creation account, the reader finds God making, and then declaring that what he made was good. We hear God’s judgment that *it was good* seven times in chapter one. But then we get to chapter 2; Adam is alone and God says, *It is not good*.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Within these verses there is also a subtle connection to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. John Sailhamer writes,

The inference of God's commands in v. 16-17 is that God alone knows what is good for man and that God alone knows what is not good for him. ...[T]he author turns in the remainder of the chapter to set forth a specific example of God's knowledge of the "good": the creation of the woman. (Sailhamer, 45)

Consider specifically what God says is *not good*.

3. What does this tell us about God? What does this tell us about ourselves as humans?

God then declares that he will *make a helper fit for him*. These are loaded terms that are worth unpacking.

Commenting on the word *helper* (*ezer*, in Hebrew) Carolyn Custis James writes:

The word *ezer* appears in the Old Testament twenty-one times—twice for the woman in Genesis 2:18 and 20, three times for nations Israel turned to for military assistance when they were under attack, and sixteen times for God. ...God is His people's helper, defender, deliverer, sword and shield. He is better than chariots and horses. He keeps sentry watch over his people and with His strong arm overthrows their foes.¹

Tremper Longman adds,

In military contexts, the word *ezer* is well-translated "ally." Indeed, since we will see that there are threats to the garden (the serpent), ally may work well for this context as well. This ally is "suitable to" or "corresponding to" him. The emphasis is on equality throughout the description. (Longman, 50)

4. What do these observations add to your understanding of the relationship between the man and the woman?

¹ Carolyn Custis James, <https://carolyncustisjames.com/2005/12/06/the-return-of-the-ezer/>

We can find some humor in verses 19-20: having declared man’s need, God delays his provision. This creates some narrative tension.

5. What is the narrator doing here? If God knows what he is ultimately going to do, why does God parade all the animals in front of Adam in search of a helper?

6. Describe a time in your life when you experienced the truth that it is not good to be alone?

Finally, God makes a woman from Adam’s rib. The Hebrew word for *made* in verse 22 is *built*. “Though this may seem an odd term for the creation of woman, it complements the potter’s term, *fashion*, used for the creation of first human, and is more appropriate because the Lord is now working with hard material, not soft clay.” (Alter, 9)

As Longman points out, “The point of this figurative description of the woman’s creation is clear. The woman is not created from Adam’s head as if she is superior or from Adam’s feet as if she is inferior, but from his side showing mutuality and equality.” (Longman, 50).

When Adam awakes from his sleep to find his wife-to-be, he breaks out in song. These are Adam’s only recorded words before the Fall. Up to this point, the narrator has consistently referred to the man as Adam, but here Adam renames himself even as he names God’s gift of a helper.

With poetry, he celebrates the bond and equality of man and woman. In naming her “woman” (*'issa*) he also names himself “man” (*'is*). The narrator names him by his relation to the ground (*adamah*), but Adam names himself in relation to his wife. (Waltke, 89)

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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7. What do you make of the creation of woman? What could this passage suggest to us about how women and men are to relate to one another?

In verse 24 we find what many point to as both the first marriage, and a summary of God's ideal for marriage. It comes in three parts, each with profound implications.

8. What do you think is implied by each statement? What do we learn of God's intentions for marriage?

A man shall leave his father and his mother...

...and hold fast to his wife...

...and they shall become one flesh.

9. Consider the whole picture of man, woman and marriage in our passage. How have you seen this ideal lived out well? Where have you seen it break down?

STUDY 6 GENESIS 1-11

10. *God created them male and female.* How do you understand this verse? If we try to set aside cultural stereotypes, what does it mean to be male? What does it mean to be female? How can we pursue and disciple Biblical views of gender?

As we noted at the beginning, marriage (and its breakdown) is a theme that arises often throughout the Bible.

11. Think of the storyline of scripture. How does aloneness versus relationship, and the theme of marriage, get reflected throughout the drama of the Bible?

In Ephesians 5, Paul says some striking things about Genesis 1:24.

12. Read Ephesians 5:25-32. What is the profound mystery? How is Paul interpreting this verse from Genesis?

13. What does this passage say to you personally? Consider your own relational status – what do you think God wants you to hear from these verses?

“PRAY”

As we conclude our study, pray for your church. Pray for the single, the married, the widowed and divorced to be encouraged and strengthened by these truths, and ask God to impress upon all of us the truths of the Gospel.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Excursus 2 – Historical Adam?

Throughout this study we've reveled in the literary art seen in the composition of these early chapters of Genesis. For the most part, we've left off discussion related to the intersection of science and the text, choosing instead to focus on the message of each passage.

But... what about science? In different sectors of our society, the debate over the extent of evolutionary biology and how it relates to the origins of humanity continues. Besides asserting that the origin of the universe lies in a creator God, how can Christians approach the world of science with a commitment to the authority of God's word when there appear to be tensions or conflict between the two? Are there limits to what Christians can believe and still be faithful to scripture?

There is not room in this brief aside to cover what is often debated in very large scientific and theological volumes. However, we can offer a brief introduction to one question and its implications for our faith: were Adam and Eve real historical figures, and thus, how should we understand what we find in Genesis?

Here are four possible answers put forth by those who still claim a Christian perspective:

1. No. The Adam the Bible presents never existed. Evolutionary creation asserts that God created the universe and life, including humans, through an ordained, sustained, and intelligent evolutionary process. Humans descended from pre-human ancestors, and the image of God and human sin were mysteriously manifested at some point in the evolutionary process. This is called the Evolutionary Creation View.
2. Maybe. The Adam and Eve in the Bible are archetypes for all humanity, but not necessarily the first humans or the parents of the entire human race. The important thing is not how they were made or where they came from; the important thing is what is being taught about the function of humans based on their roles as archetypes. From Genesis, we learn what humans are and what they are supposed to be, not how they came to be. This is called the Archetypal View of Creation.
3. Yes. But they were not strictly formed from the dust the way Genesis 2 describes. Humankind is one family with one set of ancestors for us all; God acted specially (supernaturally) to form our first parents. And our first ancestors, at the headwaters of the human race, brought sin and dysfunction into the world. Evolution is able to fit into this scenario as long as God supernaturally acts at some point in the evolutionary process to set apart a particular hominid as the first man, bestowing upon him the "image of God." This could be called the Old Earth Creation View.
4. Yes. Adam was created in the way Genesis 2 describes his creation. God took actual dust from the ground, formed a human being from it, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. God took a rib from the side of Adam and created Eve. These two were the first human beings, and from them all humanity has descended. This view attempts to have the most literal reading of the text.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **And God said**, “Let there be a vault between the sky and the water.” So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

So what are we to think or believe? Here are a couple of things to consider:

- The author of Genesis makes no distinction between the narratives of Adam and Eve and the Patriarchs, as if one is mythical legend and the other history. They are presented the same way.
- The Royal Genealogy—the biblical account of Jesus’ lineage— runs from Adam to Abraham to Judah (in Genesis) to Perez to David (in Ruth) all the way to Jesus (in the NT).
- Both Old and New Testament authors assume the historicity of Adam and Eve: the Chronicler (1 Chronicles 1:1); Luke, who emphasizes historical accuracy, (Luke 3:23-38); Matthew quoting Jesus (Matthew 19:4-5); and Paul (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; and 1 Timothy 2:13-14).

Not only that, but the theology of the New Testament when it comes to our salvation and hope for resurrection through Jesus fundamentally break down without a historical Adam. Jesus is the “second” Adam who undoes the effects produced by the sin of the first Adam, and was raised from death, giving life to a new humanity.

Tim Keller writes,

[Paul] most definitely wanted to teach us that Adam and Eve were real historical figures. When you refuse to take a biblical author literally when he clearly wants you to do so, you have moved away from the traditional understanding of biblical authority. ...If Adam doesn’t exist, Paul’s whole argument—that both sin and grace work ‘covenantally’—falls apart. ...If you don’t believe what he believes about Adam, you are denying the core of Paul’s teaching.¹

To attempt a brief summary, while there seems to be room for speculation around the details of Adam’s creation, the fact of his existence is crucial to New Testament teachings on salvation. A belief in some form of a historical Adam seems necessary if we are to make sense of our guilt, sin and salvation, and those who don’t hold to a historical Adam need to consider how they would square this perspective with the NT’s teaching.

For more on the debate over the Historical Adam see:

- Kevin DeYoung, “10 Reasons to believe in a Historical Adam” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/reasons-to-believe-in-a-historical-adam/>
- C. John Collins. *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*

¹ Found in *Christianity Today*, June 2011, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/june/historicaladam.html>

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

Study Seven

The Fall

Genesis 3:1-13

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

- Alexander Pope

I fear we do not sufficiently realize the extreme subtlety of our soul's disease. We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colours, saying, "I am your deadly enemy, and I want to ruin you forever in hell."

- JC Ryle, *Holiness*

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Genesis 3 to the storyline of the Bible. The fall of Adam and Eve into sin and their subsequent banishment from the garden and the presence of God is *the* main conflict in the drama of the scriptures. As such, we will be taking two weeks to unpack these seminal passages.

Genesis chapter 3 can be broken up into three sections:

- Verses 1-6 - Temptation and Sin
- Verses 7-13 - Shame and Blame
- Verses 14-24 - Curses and Hope

We will read the whole chapter, but then focus in on the first two sections.

MEDITATE

STOP and **PRAY** – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 3:1-24

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“ CONSIDER ”

Temptation and Sin – Verses 1-6

As chapter 3 opens, we are thrust into a battle for which we may feel unprepared as readers. But the narrator has laid groundwork for what will come. In 2:16, the man is put in the garden *to work and to keep it* – that latter word suggesting watching over and protecting it. And as we learned last week, God gives the woman to the man as a *helper*, or ally, which is a word most often used in military contexts.

This couple, though given the blessing of romance and marriage, find themselves in a fight for their lives right from the start.

Now the serpent was more crafty... Robert Alter notes, “In the kind of pun in which the ancient Hebrew writers delighted, *‘arum*, “cunning,” plays against *‘arumim*, “naked,” of the previous verse.” And the serpent shows his craftiness in the way he gets the woman tangled in God’s words.

Look back at 2:16-17.

1. How does the serpent twist and change God’s words?

2. How does Eve adapt and change God’s words?

This story of temptation is certainly historical and literal (it really happened and tells us how sin entered the world), but it is also archetypal as it illustrates every temptation. We find ourselves in the story.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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3. Think about the serpent's tactics. How does this depict temptation? How does it reflect your own experience of temptation?

In verse 5, the serpent promises that they *will be like God*. The irony of this line of temptation is stark. After all, we've already been told that Adam and Eve were made in God's likeness.

4. Look at the text and compare 1:26 with 3:5. How might you explain the difference between being made in God's likeness and being "like God" according to the serpent?
5. What areas of your life betray a desire to be your own god? Where in your life can you let go of the desire for omnipotence and let God be God?

In verse 6, the dialogue gives way to rapid fire action, and in a single verse the storyline of the whole Bible, and the fate of all of human history dramatically shifts.

While the disobedience to God's command is often the clearest transgression – there is yet more going on. One crucial element to the drama is wisdom and the knowledge of good and evil.

Longman explains:

We must realize that Adam and Eve already had a kind of knowledge of good and evil. They knew that it was wrong to eat from the tree and that it was good to refrain. ...The point is that by eating of the fruit Adam and Eve actually partake in evil. They also assert their own moral independence from God. In essence, through their act, they say to God, "we will not allow you to define what is right and what is wrong, but we will make our own ethical judgments."

Sin is seen here as not just doing good or evil, but also asserting the right to define good and evil.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **And God said**, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate the water above from the water below; and it was so. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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6. How does this intersect with the moral relativism of our culture, which says, “what is right for you is right for you, and what is right for me is right for me”?
7. Verse 6 says that the fruit appealed to the woman’s senses, and she followed her senses instead of God’s instruction. Where do you see the conflict between your senses and God’s instruction in your life?

Sadly, Eve not only eats of the fruit herself, but *she gave* it to Adam who was with her. In sharing the fruit, she “says “be as I am” and seeks to force the world into her own image.”¹ While sin is destructive and despoiling it is also “remarkably generative: sin yields more and more sin.”²

8. How have you seen the sinful impulse to invite others into sin? Why do you think we have that impulse?

One of the most surprising aspects of verse 6 is that we discover at the end of the verse that Adam was there the whole time! He doesn’t speak, he doesn’t defend her, he doesn’t argue with the serpent – he just caves in without much of a fight. Not only is he equally culpable in his own sin, but he is also partly responsible for Eve’s, as he completely abdicated any responsibility for her spiritual or moral well-being.³

1 Walter Wangerin, *As for Me and My House*, p65.

2 Walter Wangerin, *As for Me and My House*, p69.

3 Cornelius Plantinga Jr. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 53.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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9. Do you see yourself as having responsibility for the moral or spiritual wellbeing of others? Why or why not? What does that look like?

Shame and Blame – Verses 7-13

The results of their actions are immediate. Where before they were “both naked and were not ashamed”, now Adam and Eve must cover themselves. Their relationship is fractured. To be seen in their sin, even by each other, is too much to bear.

As the narrative continues, we learn that the rupture in their relationship with each other and their self-alienation is a result of the break in their relationship with God. Accordingly, when they hear the sound of God walking in the garden they hide themselves from him. (Longman, 65)

10. How have you experienced the effects of your sin in your relationships with others? With God?
11. In verse 10, Adam hides. He knows he is guilty before God says anything. What is the relationship between shame and guilt? How have shame and guilt affected your relationship with God and others?
12. Re-read verses 9-13. How do you hear God’s voice in this dialogue? Is he a harsh judge or prosecutor? A sleuthing detective? A gentle parent?

Notice Adam’s response to God in verse 12. Alter notes,

you gave, she gave – the repeated verb nicely catches the way the first man passes the buck, not only blaming the woman for giving him the fruit but virtually blaming God for giving him the woman. She in turn of course blames the serpent. God’s curse, framed in verse, follows the reverse order, from serpent to woman to man. (Alter, 13)

Adam’s response is tragic even if it feels familiar and real. Any parent can tell you how from a young age even “innocent” children respond this way to shame and guilt. Wenham points out, “The divisive effects of sin are splendidly portrayed: setting man against his dearest companion and alienating him from his all-caring creator.” (Wenham, 77)

By now we should be seeing and feeling the ugliness of our rebellion, what one Puritan called the *Sinfulness of Sin*.⁴

13. As hard as it may be, why might it be helpful to dwell on the nature of sin and the poisonous effects it has?

As we will see next week, the story goes on and includes some hope for this fallen couple. But even here in our passage there are hints of the Gospel. When God calls to Adam and Eve, he is pursuing them. Rankin Wilbourne writes,

Where are you? That may be the best three-word summary of the Bible in the Bible. The whole rest of the book is the unfolding narrative of God’s relentless pursuit to restore humanity, now banished from God’s presence by the presence of our sin, to God’s original intent—unbroken, unhindered communion with him and with one another and with all creation.⁵

“PRAY”

As we close, spend some time in confession. Acknowledge to God not just your sins, but your Sin, and your tendency to replicate what we find in this passage. Then rejoice in the grace we have in Christ.

Consider praying through Psalm 51 as a homegroup.

⁴ Cf. Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*.

⁵ Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ*, 82

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Study Eight

The Curse

Genesis 3:14-24

Totally explaining one's crime would be tantamount to explaining away his or her guilt and to seeing in him or her not a free and responsible human being but a machine to be repaired. Even criminals themselves abhor this treatment and prefer to be held responsible for their deeds.

- Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Learning lessons is not God's first priority for his children. Transformed character is. ...God may, in his providence, bring good from my past, but the good that comes is not because of the sin, but in spite of it. If we believe that God uses sin as a creative way to bring wisdom and insight into the world, we are telling Jesus that his pain matters nothing to us.

- Rosaria Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*

The fruit eaten, eyes opened, line of transgression crossed and rebellion committed, we left Adam and Eve in shame before their maker and one another. The harmony and beauty of chapters 1 and 2 has been overturned, and the peace and paradise will give way to struggle and brokenness.

This is now our second study in Genesis 3, which is integral to understanding the literary structure of the whole Bible, but more importantly to understanding the moral, spiritual and physical state of all of humanity. As a reminder, Genesis chapter 3 can be broken up into three sections:

- Verses 1-6 - Temptation and Sin
- Verses 7-13 - Shame and Blame
- Verses 14-24 - Curses and Hope

We will read the whole chapter, but then focus in on the last section in this study.

MEDITATE

STOP and **PRAY** - ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ - Genesis 3:1-24

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS - begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“ CONSIDER ”

Before we dive into the text, take some time to cast yourself in Adam and Eve’s shoes. There are profound theological truths embedded in these words, but they are not distant or far off from us. We know them in our experience sometimes before we understand them conceptually.

1. When was a time you were caught having done something wrong? Describe your experience of shame and guilt and then the aftermath. What happened next? How did it resolve?

It is notable that as we pick up the story in verse 14, having questioned the man and the woman, God wastes no time interrogating the snake. In verses 14-19, we see the curses for humanity’s rebellion and the effects they will have on the entire created world. Sin has changed everything.

These judgments flow in the same order that the characters appear in verses 1-6, and the reverse order of how God addresses them in verses 7-13. Wenham notes,

“To curse” is the antonym of “to bless” (cf. Genesis 12:3). In the Bible, to curse means to invoke God’s judgment on someone. ...What is striking is that here God himself pronounces the curse: its effectiveness is thus completely guaranteed. (Wenham, 78)

2. Make a list of the specific consequences of sin upon each of the characters involved.

The Serpent

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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The Woman

The Man

3. Why do you think each character receives these particular consequences? What does each mean?

Consider the storyline of Scripture. Every time we encounter a famine or drought, we are seeing the curse played out. Every time we find a difficult pregnancy, infertility, or a closed womb we see the curse. Conversely, every miraculous birth in the scriptures is a sign of hope – God overcoming the curse!

4. Make a list of some stories you may remember from the Bible that call to mind the curses listed in Genesis 3:14-24. How does the curse show up across the scriptures?

Wenham points out,

It should be noted that neither the man nor the woman are cursed: only the snake (v.14) and the soil (v.17) are cursed because of man. The sentences on the man and woman take the form of a disruption of their appointed roles. (Wenham, 81)

While they aren't specifically cursed, man and woman now live with the consequences for their sins, but they also live in a world dominated by the curse of the snake (our war with sin) and the curse of the soil (our struggle with the now broken natural order).

5. Describe life for humans in a "Genesis 3 world". What are some manifestations of the curse we see in the world today?

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6. Read Romans 8:18-25. How does Paul describe this dual struggle? How does this help your understanding of life this side of the curse?
7. What about you personally? How are you experiencing life under the curse?

Our passage is not all bad news; there are glimmers of hope within it. Verse 15 is said to contain the first glimmer of the gospel to be revealed in Jesus Christ. God promises *enmity* between the snake’s seed and the woman’s seed. Sailhamer explains,

The snake on the one hand, and the man and the woman, on the other, are as two great nations embarking on a great struggle, a struggle that will find its conclusion only by an act of some distant “seed” or “offspring.” (Sailhamer, p. 55)

Genesis is the story of how the woman’s seed survives despite the struggle with the seed of the serpent, while the rest of the Bible is the story of how the woman’s seed eventually defeats the seed of the serpent.

8. Read the following verses. How does Paul see Christ as the fulfillment of “the seed” and the answer to Genesis 3?

Col 1:21-22

Col 2:13-15

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Verses 20-24, serve as a kind of epilogue and wrap up many of the themes that we have seen in our passage so far.

- Adam names Eve, pointing to the hope of offspring despite coming death.
- God clothes Adam and Eve, showing care and covering their shame.
- God removes Adam and Eve from the garden because of their new found "knowledge".
- God places an angel to guard the entrance, demonstrating the new separation between God and humanity.

In each of these we can see both the sting of punishment and death, as well as God's tender care and glimmers of hope and good news.

9. How have you observed God's care for you in spite of your disobedience?

“PRAY”

As a homegroup, spend some time praying about your hope. Consider praying the words of the hymn Joy To The World:

No more let sin and sorrow grow - Nor thorns infest the ground:

He comes to make his blessings flow - Far as the curse is found.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 above the vault from the water below it. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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“SERMON NOTES”

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

Study Nine

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1-26

The farmer and the cowman should be friends,
Oh, the farmer and the cowman should be friends.
One man likes to push a plough, the other likes to chase a cow,
But that's no reason why they can't be friends.

- Rogers and Hammerstein, *Oklahoma*

In the land of Nod that lies east of Eden—the land of wandering, the land for envious exiles—the sons and daughters of Cain have multiplied and spread across the world. Now everywhere is east of Eden, and everywhere the green faces of envy keep glowing.

- Cornelius Plantinga Jr, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*¹

Life outside the garden, away from intimacy with God and the accompanying blessings, proves to be hard. And what we will see in our study—from now until our last week in Genesis 12—is a cycle of sin with a downward trajectory. The further away from the garden we get, the further humanity unravels, spiraling downward.

This week we come to the first generation outside of the garden, and as we will see, things get bad quickly. But as we have seen previous weeks, this story presents a kind of paradigm, or a pattern that will appear again and again in Scripture where God chooses surprising people for his purposes—often the last person you might expect.

Genesis chapter 4 can be broken up into three sections, each beginning with a verse about procreation:

- Verses 1-16 - Adam knew Eve → Cain and Abel
- Verses 17-24 - Cain knew his wife → Genealogy down to Lamech
- Verses 25-26 - Adam knew Eve again → Seth

As we read, consider the trajectory of humanity's fall, but also the intervention of God.

¹ Alvin Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 162.

—**MEDITATE**—

STOP and PRAY – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through His word.

READ – Genesis 4:1-26

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

—**CONSIDER**—

Cain and Abel (Verses 1-16)

As the first section opens, the reader is given hints of what is about to come through the naming of the first two sons. Abel [Hebrew. *hevel*] means “breath” or “vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). So Psalm 144:4 says, *Man is like a breath [hevel], his days are like a passing shadow*. Wenham notes, “Abel’s name thus alludes unwittingly to the fate in store for him, that his life will be cut short.” (Wenham, 102)

Similarly, there are literary cues given in the naming of Cain.

Eve’s naming-speech puns on the verb *qanah*, “to get,” “acquire,” or perhaps, “to make,” and *qayin*, “Cain.” (Alter, 16)

Although acknowledging the Lord’s role in procreation here, the naming betrays a synergism (“God does his part; I do mine”). Essentially Eve says, “I have done this.” The reader is signaled to expect problems in the life and line of Cain. (Waltke, 96)

Before we jump into the drama of the story, pause and consider Eve’s boast.

1. Describe an instance in which you have been tempted to take credit for things that would be rightly attributed to God’s provision.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

2. Verses 3-5 present the event around which the drama will unfold. What do we learn about Cain? What do we learn about Abel?
3. Why does God "have regard" for Abel's offering and not Cain's? This question has troubled many readers. Do your best to try to answer the question from the text itself.

In verses 6-7, the Lord enters the story and meets Cain in the midst of his anger, before he sins. Interestingly, while God questions Cain, in this first interaction Cain doesn't answer. His actions do the talking.

4. Has God ever intervened or met you prior to sin? What happened? Did you avoid sin or go through with it?
5. How have you experienced "sin crouching at the door" in your life?
6. Read Romans 7:15-25. What does it say about the battle we as Christians are in? What hope do Christians have in combatting sin?

7. Cain doesn't answer God's first question. Why do you think this is? Why was Cain angry and why was his face fallen?

Our familiarity with this story may dull its shocking nature: by page 4 we have the first murder. The bliss of Genesis 1-2 seems so distant by this point. Notice the escalation from Adam and Eve's fall in chapter 3 to Cain's sin² in chapter 4: from covetous transgression, to envious murder.

8. Respond to the following quote by Alvin Plantinga Jr. How do you see envy in the story of Cain and Abel?

To covet is to want somebody else's good so strongly that one is tempted to steal it. To envy is to resent somebody else's good so much that one is tempted to destroy it. The coveter has empty hands and wants to fill them with somebody else's goods. The envier has empty hands and therefore wants to empty the hands of the envied.³

Going beyond Adam and Eve, Cain doesn't just blame others for his sin, but he lies to God.

9. How have you been tempted to cover your sin, or add denial or lying to your sin?

² Interestingly, this story contains the first use of the word *sin*.

³ Alvin Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 162.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Even Cain's judgment is an escalation from Adam and Eve. As we noted last week, in Genesis 3, humanity is not cursed—only the ground and the serpent—so cursing Cain is a serious development.

10. Look closely at Cain's punishment. How does his judgment correspond to his occupation? To his sin? How does it compare to what you saw last week with Adam and Eve?

Lamech (Verses 17-24)

Before wrapping up the accounts of Adam's children, we get an interlude with Cain's descendants, which tells of the further spiraling downward of sinful humanity.

What follows are the genealogy of Cain and the accomplishments of his descendants. The genealogy is linear: seven generations, counting Cain, are segmented at the end into four children of Lamech. His lineage gives us the first metallurgy, the first poetry, and the first cities. His lineage is symbolic of human culture with great civilizations and no God. (Waltke, 99)

But then we get the poetic boast of Lamech that points to the unraveling of humanity in sin. We can first note that Lamech *took* two wives. The sinfulness of this polygamy is seen in both its deviation from the "two-becoming-one" of Genesis 1; but also in that word *took*. In Hebrew, it is the same word used for when Eve *took* the fruit and ate.

But then we read Lamech's poetic and barbaric boast. He riffs on God's promise to protect Cain, and turns it into proudly declaring his unbridled vengeance. He essentially says, *You think Cain was bad, check me out!* Later Jewish readers would see in this a wild and violent tendency meant to be restrained by the Law of Moses. As Wenham notes:

Lamech claimed to have killed a man for bruising him ...Exodus 21:20-25 says "eye for eye...bruise for bruise, hit for hit." Without the protection of the law, Genesis 4 implies, even the able-bodied, let alone the weak, will be at the mercy of men like Lamech. (Wenham, 117)

Seth (Verses 25-26)

In this final scene, the story circles back to Adam and Eve and their now third son, and we are given an epilogue in which we are told of a Godly remnant. Despite the downward spiral of humanity, there is hope.

11. What does Eve say about Seth’s birth? How does it compare to what she says about Cain in verse 1?

Notice that Eve uses the word *offspring* (or seed) for her child. This helps frame the whole chapter in light of Genesis 3:15, where God promises that the *seed* of the woman would be at war with the *seed* of the serpent. Cain has been cursed, like the serpent, and now Seth (and by association, Abel) is called the *seed*. The battle of 3:15 is on, and despite Cain’s murder of Abel, there is again the hope of the *seed*.

12. How does the struggle of Genesis 3:15 still exist today? As Christians, where do we see ourselves in that story?

13. Read 1 John 3:13-15. How does John apply Genesis 4 to our lives?

At the end of our passage, the hope is in the continued line of Eve, who now *call on the name of the Lord*.

“PRAY”

As a homegroup, take some time to *call on the name of the Lord* in prayer. Praise God that he is faithful to his promises. Ask him to assist you in your fight against sin. Rejoice in the victory we have in Christ.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

Excursus 3 – Genealogies

Those who regularly read the Bible will often confess that certain portions of scripture are maybe a little harder to read than others. Genealogies throughout the Bible are often some of these troublesome passages that feel tedious or laborious for us to “get through.”

Often we are used to approaching the text looking for nuggets that we can tape to our mirrors or live out in our day or week. There is a whole category of “Life Application Study Bibles” published to help readers with this very thing. So when we come to these more challenging passages, we scratch our heads wondering what we are to do with it. We think, *why exactly is this here?*

In the book of Genesis (and in the Bible as a whole) the genealogies are often carefully crafted and placed for a purpose. While this brief aside cannot exhaust all of the reasons for each list, the hope is to point out a few helpful notes.

Some scholars have called Genesis a book of genealogies, because of the pervasive use of that literary structure throughout. But there is a reason for this: the book is all about the survival of the “seed of the woman” in their struggle against the “seed of the snake” (see Genesis 3). Every time a genealogy is listed, the reader is cued into this generational struggle, but also the hope of this promised seed to come!

Genealogies also serve to organize the book of Genesis into ten sections. In the ESV, these sections begin with the words, *These are the generations* (Hebrew: *toledot*) of __. The outline looks like this:

1. The generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26)
2. The book of the generations of Adam (5:1-6:8)
3. The generations of Noah (6:9-9:29)
4. The generations of the sons of Noah (10:1-11:9)
5. The generations of Shem (11:10-26)
6. The generations of Terah (11:27-25:11)
7. The generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)
8. The generations of Isaac (25:19-35:29)
9. The generations of Esau (36:1-37:1)
10. The generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **And God said**, “Let there be a vault between the sky and the water, so that I may put the water under the vault and separate the water above the vault from the water below it. And it was so. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

Contrary to what we might expect, the account that follows each *toledot* is not essentially about the person named but about his descendants. For instance the accounts of the generations “of Terah, of Isaac, and of Jacob are principally about their offspring: Abraham, Jacob and the twelve sons of Israel, respectively.” (Waltke, 18)

Interestingly, when the account of Abraham wraps up in Genesis 25, Isaac does not get a set apart narrative. We would expect a section entitled “the *toledot* of Abraham,” yet it is glaringly absent. Scholars see this gap as intentional and therefore an implicit judgment against Isaac “for giving himself over to sensual pleasures at the expense of spiritual discernment.” (Waltke, 41)

In addition to the main genealogy of each *toledot* section, there are also other lists of descendants spread throughout these major sections. So genealogies in Genesis can also function in other important ways:

- They can highlight key relationships by tracing the lineage of certain figures back to a common and important ancestor. The Table of Nations in chapter ten expresses the kinship distinctions between Israel and the nations, with God’s people emerging from the nations and destined to bless them (Genesis 12:3).
- They can push the story forward with continuity over long stretches of time without lengthy narrative.
- They can highlight great moments in history and key figures by creatively schematizing their genealogies. For instance, the narrator sets the Flood as the great divide between Adam and Abraham by using two genealogies of ten generations before and after the flood. Though there are other lists of descendants within those chapters, these two lines are highlighted by their tight structure to trace the chosen line from Adam through Noah down to Abraham.

The last point above should be notable to us as Christians as Matthew similarly structures his genealogy of Jesus and tells us so: “all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to [the Exile] fourteen generations, and from [Exile] to the Christ fourteen generations.” (Matt 1:17)

Why fourteen? Well, seven is an important number for completion, as is three. But more importantly it is because in Hebrew each letter has an associated numerical value. What is the total value of the letters in the name David? Fourteen.

So while genealogies can be difficult reading, they are by no means unimportant nor lacking theological value. With a little help, we can see the author’s intent and rejoice in what is being expressed.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

Study Ten

Noah

Genesis 5–6

By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

- Hebrews 11:7

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear; and grace my fears relieved...

- Amazing Grace

Hollywood knows there is huge money in the end of the world. For years now, the disaster flick has traded on the familiar human emotions of fear and hope elicited by such movies. But Hollywood neither created these feelings, nor the genre of entertainment, but merely tapped into the very real emotions shared by all people.

This week we find in the early pages of scripture the introduction to the first cataclysmic disaster: the Flood. Here we see not only the storyline of scripture moved forward, but also reflections of some of our most profound nightmares as well as our deepest longings.

As Bruce Waltke notes in his *Old Testament Theology*,

The flood narrative's story of a universal natural disaster and the drama of the divine preservation of one family ...speaks to the deepest fear and hope of humanity. ...In the face of hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, people wonder and fear, worried about a judgment from a God whom they refuse to acknowledge publicly. But there is also hope in the flood narrative, reflecting the human desire to see the world remade, formed into a place where the injustices of the past and the prejudices endowed by history are erased so that humanity can truly live in peace and harmony. The flood narrative addresses the soul's deepest stirrings of fear and hope.¹

We will be studying Noah and the Flood over the next two weeks, and focusing in on Noah in this study. As is true through so much of scripture, the author has woven into his account numerous allusions to what we have already seen in just the first four chapters of Genesis. As you read, look and listen for allusions, quotations, arrows and themes that point to what we have already covered.

¹ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 284.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 above the vault from the water below it, and it was called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 10 GENESIS 1-11

“MEDITATE”

STOP and PRAY – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 5–6

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“CONSIDER”

Most of chapter 5 is a carefully crafted genealogy, tracing the lineage of God’s people from Adam to Noah: ten generations tightly organized with a repeated formula. The author is attempting to draw a close connection between Adam and Noah; indeed, we will see throughout the flood narrative numerous parallels to Genesis 1-3. In addition to this, there are also notable contrasts to Cain’s genealogy in chapter 4. Many names are similar to the sons of Cain, but where Cain’s line was presumably evil, Seth’s line is not.

1. Look at verses 1-2. What allusions can you find to Genesis 1?
2. Verse 3 says that Adam fathered a son *in his own likeness, after his image*. Why might it be significant that the *image* is passed down to successive generations?

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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3. Quickly scan 5:1-31. How many times can you find the phrase, *and he died*? In what way is Genesis 2:17 fulfilled?

In the midst of the reign of death we find one exception: Enoch (5:22-24). There is a notable departure from the formula in these short verses about Enoch: he doesn't just *live*, he *walks with God*, which results in another notable exception. We are not told of his death, but instead discover *he was not, for God took him*. Sailhamer explains,

In Enoch the author is able to show that the pronouncement of death is not the last word that need be said about a man's life. One can find life if one "walks" with God. For the author, then, a door is left open for a return to the tree of life in the garden. Enoch found that door in his "walking with God" and in so doing has become a paradigm for all who seek to find life. (Sailhamer, p. 74)

4. What do you make of this? How could the verses about Enoch give you hope or encouragement in your life? What does it look like for you to *walk with God*?

The genealogy functions in Genesis to bring us to the narrative of Noah. But some unique things are said about Noah in verse 29 that create a particular hope for the reader. First, the name Noah sounds like the Hebrew word for rest. Second, Noah's father expresses hope that Noah will provide relief from their work and painful toil. There are loud references here to the curses of chapter 3. Alter explains,

Most translations render this as "our toil, our work," or something equivalent. But the second term *'itsavon*, does not mean "labor" but rather "pain" and is the crucial word at the heart of Adam's curse, and Eve's. ...Noteworthy is that the word *'itsavon* appears only three times in the Bible—first for Eve, then for Adam, and now for Noah. (Alter, 25)

Noah is being cast as a "new Adam" and possibly the seed of the woman who will put an end to the curses!

STUDY 10 GENESIS 1-11

5. Look again at the following verses. What parallels do you see between Noah and Adam?

6:9

6:20

9:1

9:7

Having laid the foundation for the entrance of Noah into the story, the author then turns and sets the context for the story with the rampant evil in the world. Interpreters have struggled with 6:1-4. The confusion revolves around the identity of the “sons of God” in 6:1. Scholars see three possibilities:

1. Some see these as fallen angels.
2. Others see this as a reference to the inter-marriage of godly men from the line of Seth with the ungodly daughters of Cain.
3. Still others see these as demon-possessed or demon-influenced kings of old.

What is clear from these verses is the complete moral degeneration of humankind.

6. Look at verse 2 carefully. What parallels do you find with Genesis 3:6?

7. Look at verses 5-6. What do you make of God's regret and grief?

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Given the sinfulness of the world, and God's intent to administer judgment, verses 8-9 jump off the page: *Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord...* Amidst a crooked and overwhelmingly sinful generation, Noah stands out as a faithful witness.

Read again verses 11-22. Consider the time it would have taken to hand mill all of the lumber and construct such a large vessel. Consider the wickedness of Noah's neighbors as they watched him build.

8. Try to put yourself in Noah's shoes. What would life have been like during his preparation for the flood?
9. Look at verse 22, Noah does *all that God commanded him*. How is Noah being pictured as a new (and better?) Adam?

New Testament writers look back to Noah as both a model of faith and evangelistic witness. The writer of Hebrews says,

By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

But prior to that he defines faith in a helpful way: *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1) Andy Davis helpfully points out how Noah perfectly models this:

The warning produced in Noah's heart a "holy fear" which resulted in powerful actions, everything needed to save his family in the ark. Every piece of lumber sawn in two, every nail driven, every stroke of the brush with tar, was motivated by Noah's faith in "things not yet seen" (the impending flood).²

² Andrew Davis, *The Infinite Journey*, 157.

10. How can Noah be a model to you? In what area of your life right now would you like to trust God’s Word more than what your eyes can see?

Peter sees Noah as an example of a faithful witness or evangelist to a hostile people.³ Elliot Clark writes this about Peter’s example of Noah,

It seems reasonable that Noah would be the perfect reference point for Christian exiles in first-century Asia. Peter had called them to faithfully declare with authority the praises of Jesus. And Noah’s experience as a forsaken preacher would’ve easily resonated with them—because news of an executed Jew from the Galilean backwater now establishing a kingdom of priests from every nation sounds just about as believable as forecasts of an impending and catastrophic flood on a cloudless day in Mesopotamia.⁴

11. Do you ever feel like Noah: a faithful witness amidst a hostile generation? If so, how?

We will see next week that Noah, as a new Adam, fails like the old Adam in the end. The hope for the Seed of the Woman is pushed forward, and the reader longs for one to come who will finally provide rest from their toil. On this side of the Cross, we know the reader is left longing for Christ.

“PRAY”

Spend some time as a homegroup praising God for Noah, and all the more, for Jesus.

³ In 2 Peter 2:5 Noah is called a *herald of righteousness*, and 1 Peter 3:19 seems to suggest that through Noah, Christ preached to those who were disobedient. However, that latter passage is notoriously difficult to confidently interpret.

⁴ Elliot Clark, *Evangelism as Exiles*, 99.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

Study Eleven

The Flood

Genesis 7-9

For if God did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.

- 2 Peter 2:4-9

The dreadful secret of the world revealed in the first chapters of this old Book is that man is capable of renouncing and cutting himself off from this very grace which holds in check the power of destruction.

- Helmut Thielicke, *How the World Began*

This is now our second week in the Biblical account of the Flood. As we saw in the introduction last week, "the flood narrative addresses the soul's deepest stirrings of fear and hope."¹ Whether it is natural disaster, nuclear apocalypse, superbugs or zombies, we are terrified by the thought of the end of the world. Simultaneously, we long for the world to be set right – for evil to be purged, for restoration and reconciliation. "*Imagine!*" says John Lennon, though his vision is far from biblical.

Yet the world recoils at the thought that our greatest fear and deepest longing could come together in a single event of divine judgment. But that is what the account of the flood teaches us. We will be looking at a lot of text this week, but our passage can be easily broken up according to chapter:

Chapter 7 – The Flood

Chapter 8 – God Remembered Noah

Chapter 9 – New Adam, New Fall

Again, the author has woven into his account numerous allusions to what we have already seen in the first four chapters of Genesis. As you read, look and listen for allusions, quotations, arrows and themes that point to what we have already covered.

¹ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 284.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **And God said**, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” So God made the vault and separated the waters above the vault from the waters below it, and it was called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 11 GENESIS 1-11

—**MEDITATE**—

STOP and **PRAY** – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 7-9

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

—**CONSIDER**—

The Flood (Ch. 7)

We left off chapter 6 with Noah having done *all that God commanded him*. The boat is built, the animals readied, the promised flood about to come, and God tells Noah to get in the boat.

1. The author includes quite a bit of detail in these verses. Which details are notable or stand out to you? Why?

In verse 4, God again announces his intention to judge the world with a flood. Verse 11 gives us some specifics of the start of the flood: *the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell*. Water comes from above and below!

2. Scan verses 17-24 and note any words or phrases that get repeated a lot.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Alter draws attention to how this act of judgment is an upheaval of God's ordering in creation,

The surge of waters from the great deep below and from the heavens above is, of course, a striking reversal of the second day of creation, when a vault was erected to divide the waters above from the waters below. (Alter, 32)

3. Consider the following verses. How do they connect God's judgment with the reversal of creation?

Isaiah 24:18

Jeremiah 4:23-26

Amos 7:4

4. How do you make sense of God's judgment? Is he just/ fair to send the flood? Why or why not?

5. Consider other occurrences of judgment in the Old Testament: Sodom and Gomorrah, Israel's wandering in the desert, the conquest of the Canaanites in Joshua, and the Exile. How do these add to your understanding of God's judgment in the Bible? Is he just in these situations? Why or why not? Is he just to judge today?

6. Consider and respond to this long quote from Helmut Thielicke:

The first thing God the creator does is to create order. He separates the waters ...he establishes boundaries and wards off chaos from the dwelling place of his children. ...If ever the boundaries between the waters, if ever the firmament which God established should disappear ...the damned-up chaos on the margin of the world would break loose and pour in upon us. And this is just what happened in the Flood when the floodgates of heaven opened...

...We live solely by the grace of God, who has fixed the bounds of destruction. The dreadful secret of the world revealed in the first chapters of this old Book is that man is capable of renouncing and cutting himself off from this very grace which holds in check the power of destruction.²

7. Read 2 Peter 3:5-7. What connection does Peter make between the flood and the coming judgment?

God Remembered Noah (Ch. 8)

The story of the Flood does not end with wrath but contains grace to a remnant as well: there is salvation through judgment. Indeed, the narrative is written to place in the forefront the salvation of Noah and his family.

Consider again the details that are included in chapter 7—but then consider what is *not* included. The majority of the details are about who is saved, not who is lost. “There is no wallowing in fantasies of horror, as the medieval painters still loved to do. Here there are no farewell scenes before the great deluge, no weeping mothers, no descriptions of the terrors of drowning.”³

John Sailhamer points out,

What is most apparent in the description of the onset of the Flood is the focus of the author on the occupants of the ark. ... It is first and foremost this picture of Noah’s salvation that the author wants his readers to take a long look at. (Sailhamer, 88)

8. With that in mind, what stands out to you about chapter 8? How do you see God’s hand in Noah’s salvation?

² Helmut Thielicke, *How the World Began*, 238-239.

³ Helmut Thielicke, *How the World Began*, 242.

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Noah is saved through judgment and is therefore a symbol of all of our experience.

9. The question is often posed, not “why are some judged?” but, “why are any saved?” How and why are you saved?

10. Think about those in your life who don't believe. How would you try to explain judgment and salvation to them?

New Adam, New Fall (Ch. 9)

Finally, the narrative will bring us back to the macro-story of the generations after Adam leading down to Abraham and the Patriarchs. And in this final scene there are many allusions to Noah as a new Adam, but sadly he also will have a similar fall.

The word for *wind* that blew away the waters in 8:1 is the same Hebrew word for Spirit found in Genesis 1:2. God's Spirit/breath/wind is again hovering over the waters and then he divides them to bring forth dry land. And in 9:1, we get the familiar words, *Be fruitful and multiply!*

11. Summarize Noah's fall from chapter 9. What happens and why?

12. In what details do you see the recapitulation⁴ of Adam's story?

⁴ Recapitulation is a fancy word that points to the repetition of certain themes or actions played out again. While we don't use it very often in normal conversation, it is a super helpful term for interpreting the many repetitions we find in Scripture.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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. God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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13. Besides telling us of something that happened, why does the author tell us the story this way? What is the point of drawing similarities to Adam?

14. Think back over the last two studies. What stands out to you the most from these passages of scripture? What is God teaching you through Noah and the Flood about your life and faith?

“PRAY”

As we finish this study, pray about what you are learning.

“SERMON NOTES”

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

Study Twelve

Marriage

Genesis 10:1–11:9

Imagine there's no countries - It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for - And no religion, too
Imagine all the people - Living life in peace
You may say that I'm a dreamer - But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us - And the world will be as one

- John Lennon

Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.

- Proverbs 18:16

As we move through the "Primeval History" of Genesis 1-11 we have one final stop before the author brings us to Abraham, and the beginning of Israel's history with the Patriarchs. The story of the tower of Babel is a carefully crafted piece of literature that intentionally follows a genealogy that shares many key terms and themes.

10:1-32 - The Table of Nations

11:1-9 - The Tower of Babel

The two key words to look for are *language* (lit. "tongue" in chapter 10 and "lip" in chapter 11) and *land/earth* (same Hebrew word in both chapters). Additionally, both sections have the same conclusion, signaling to the reader that they should be read together.

“MEDITATE”

STOP and **PRAY** – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 10:1-11:9

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 12 GENESIS 1-11

“ CONSIDER ”

The literary structure of the Tower of Babel story is brilliantly put together; its format participating in the message of the passage. Indeed you could say of this passage, “the medium matches the message”.

1. Try to outline these 9 verses. What structure do you see? How does what you find add to the message of the passage?

2. What are repeating words and phrases? Who uses them or to whom are they applied?

One way of reading the passage is to see two halves to the story contrasting the words of man with the words of God, asking whose words will prevail? The answer is obvious. Alter says that the passage has a “symmetry that embodies the idea of ‘man proposes, God disposes.’” (Alter, 47)

In the Hebrew there is even wordplay between the people’s intentions—*Come, let us make bricks (hava nilbenah)*—and God’s intention to stymie their plans—*Come, let us confuse (hava... nabelah)*. “The prose turns language itself into a game of mirrors.” (Alter, 47)

3. Read Proverbs 16:1-9. How might these proverbs expound on what we find here in Genesis 11?

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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4. Temperamentally, some people are more wired to be planners than others, but that is neither a sign of holiness nor sinfulness. How do you approach making plans? How does your faith inform your planning?
5. Think again about the people's intentions in verses 3-4. What good human longings do we see? What might be wrong? What does God say about it?

Commentators note the similarities of this passage with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), and the "sons of God" (Genesis 6) in the ways they attempt to transgress the boundaries between God and man. So here, the tower is an attempt to use new technologies to *be like God*.

We are bombarded with similar impulses today. Technology offers us the illusion of divine attributes. We can be everywhere (omnipresence) with Facetime and Skype, text messaging and email; we can know everything (omniscience) with Google and Wikipedia; we can do anything (omnipotence) with online banking, shopping, etc. not to mention virtual reality or video games.

6. How might you be tempted to buy into the illusion that technology offers? Is that wrong? Why or why not? What might be the danger in doing so?

Another notable aspect of this story is that it takes place *in the land of Shinar*. This city and tower are an archetype for other major evil cities that will show up in the Scriptures. There is a clear connection to chapter 10 and the mention of Nimrod, a mighty warrior and city-builder. In 10:8-12, we find out that Nimrod built Babel/Babylon and Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.¹

¹ Some translations see "Assyria" not as a place but a person, "Asshur" (the founder of Assyria). In this view, inspired by Nimrod, Asshur goes and builds his own godless Empire/City in Nineveh. Either way, the connection between the tower and these two cities remains. See the KJV for this translation.

7. What do you know about Babylon and Assyria? What role do they have in the Biblical story? What was their reputation? (Use Google or Wikipedia if you are new to the Bible).

These two nations tried to “unify” the world through brutal conquest and oppressive rule. The tower on its face seems harmless enough, but is in fact a foreshadowing of world powers based on human strength and domination. In 11:6, God says, *Behold... this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose will be impossible for them.*

8. What attempts do you see today of humans trying to “unify” the world apart from God? How do you think it will go? What similarities can you draw to the tower?

The city in our passage is transliterated Babel (Hebrew *babel*) as a play on “babble” and the confusing of languages. “However, the Hebrew word *babel*, which occurs over two hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, is almost always translated into English as “Babylon.” Remarkably, in the whole of the Old Testament there are generally only two exceptions to this rule. These are Genesis 10:10 and 11:9 ...Babel should be called Babylon.”²

In the storyline of Scripture, Babylon not only plays a major role in Israel’s exile from the land, but the city also becomes an image of the “anti-God” city. Indeed, the book of Revelation uses the image of Babylon, the great city, as the antithesis of everything that God desires.

9. Read Revelation 18. What do we learn about Babylon? What categories of sin do you find? Anything shocking from this passage? Any hope?

2 T. Desmond Alexander, *The City of God and the Goal of Creation*, 28.

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AND GOD SAID

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10. If seen as bookends to the Bible, what role does Babel/Babylon play in the story?

Layered on top of this story of the Tower is the "Table of Nations" we find in chapter 10. There we see the peoples divide, seemingly by normal human means, spreading out over the world into 70 nations (a number symbolizing completeness). But holding these two accounts together we see that God is in fact sovereign over human history.

11. Read the following passages. What do they say about God's hand in the spread of nations?

Deuteronomy 32:8

Acts 17:26

The *number of the sons of God* mentioned in Deuteronomy 32 could be a reference to the end of Genesis when Jacob's family travels down to Egypt – 70 people in all! As we will see next week, God's intention for Abraham's family is to bless *all the nations*.

12. What role do "the nations" play in the storyline of the Old Testament? How is chapter 10 laying a foundation for what will come?

13. When we get to the New Testament, there is a clear invitation to the nations. Read the following passages. How do they relate to Genesis 11? What connections do you see?

Matthew 28:16-20

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 above the vault from the water below it. And God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 12 GENESIS 1-11

Acts 2:1-13

14. Think about your own heritage. Where do you fit in this story? What difference does it make to you to know this part of the story? What encouragement do you get from this passage?

“PRAY”

As a homegroup spend some time praying for the nations and praying this passage. Rejoice. Repent. Request. Pray with confidence to the God who is sovereign over human history.

“SERMON NOTES”

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. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

AND GOD SAID

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Study Thirteen

Abram

Genesis 11:10–12:3

You and I, Sam, are still stuck in the worst places of the story, and it is all too likely that some will say at this point: 'Shut the book now, Dad; we don't want to read any more.'

- Frodo, *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*

Finally, after thirteen weeks in this primeval history we come to Abram. If we're honest, the reading thus far has been mostly dark – as successive generations have spun off into greater degrees of sinfulness, spiraling downward through chapter eleven. Human depravity has been on full display. But everything changes in chapter twelve: this is the start of the rest of the Bible.

From this point on, the story in Genesis slows down considerably: the first eleven chapters cover twenty generations, the latter thirty-nine cover three men and their families. "In chapters 1-11, the book of Genesis recounts God's good world and humanity's repeated rebellion. How will God restore blessing to the world? We find the answer in the family of Abraham."¹

As in the previous two weeks—with Noah and Babel—we will see the author use genealogies to take us from one seminal story to the next. Here's what we will see:

- 11:10-26 - The Generations of Shem
- 11:27-32 - The Generations of Terah
- 12:1-3 - The Call of Abram

We will look at a few things in the genealogies, but focus most of our time in the first three verses of chapter twelve.

MEDITATE

STOP and PRAY – ask God to reveal himself and to speak to you through his word.

READ – Genesis 11:10-12:3

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS – begin with your own reading and mark down what stands out.

1 The Bible Project, <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/genesis-12-50/>

“ CONSIDER ”

Looking at *the generations of Shem* in 11:10-26 we may be reminded of the similar formula used in *the generations of Adam* in chapter 5.

1. Compare and contrast these two lists. What similarities do you see? What differences do you notice? Anything else stand out?

As we get into the story of Abram’s family, we find out some shocking things before we get to his call. In 11:28 we learn they are from *Ur of the Chaldeans*. This apparent tidbit of geography takes on great significance as the biblical drama unfolds. Later, the prophets will link the Chaldeans with the city of Babylon.

Isaiah 13:19 *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans....*

2. Consider where we were last week. Why is it so striking that Abram was from *Ur of the Chaldeans*? What does the author want us to see?

The next shocking piece of information comes in 11:30. Note the stark repetition. *Sarai was barren; she had no child.*

3. Consider the numerous genealogies we have seen so far. Why would this little sentence jump out to the reader? How does this serve the storytelling?

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Let's look carefully now at Abraham's calling. In these three short verses there are several connections to what we have already seen in chapters 1-11.

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation...

In chapter ten we saw the spread of the peoples and the repeated refrain: *by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations*. Abram is being called out of "the nations" to be something special.

4. What is God calling Abram from? What is he calling him to?

5. Read 1 Peter 2:9. As a Christian, how are you similarly called?

Specifically, Abram is called to leave behind his father's house, which would include his father's household gods and worship practices.

6. Read Joshua 24:2-3. What does this tell us about Abram's family?

Consider your own family. Some of us, like Abram, are called out of families that do not worship the one true God. Others have grown up in Christian homes, yet still are called to embrace God on our own. None of us can have intimacy with God by virtue of our parents' faith.

7. What is your story? From what context has God called you to follow him?

...and I will bless you...

In these three verses the word “bless” appears five times. Unsurprisingly, in chapters 1-11, the word “curse” appears five times. Through Abram, God is doing something about the human problem of sin and the curse.

8. Consider Paul’s commentary on Abram in Rom 4:18-19. How do you see the reversal of Genesis 3 in God’s promised blessing to Abram?

... and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing...

Last week we saw sinful people try to build a tower to *make a name for themselves*; here God promises to *make a name* for Abram.

9. What is the contrast the author is drawing? What do you think he is saying?
10. These promises to Abram are seen to be the marching orders for the people of Israel, Abram’s family that would come. What does Isaiah 62:2 add to this?

... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

God promises to bless all the families (Hebrew: *mishpachah*) of the earth through Abraham (12:3), which is a direct reference to 10:32 where we read all *the clans (mishpachah) ... spread abroad on the earth*. Abram is to reach all of the nations listed in chapter ten: God’s plan to reverse the curse and save the whole world is found here in this promise to and calling of Abram. The rest of the Bible is about God fulfilling this promise!

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 saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called**

11. We are approaching Good Friday and Easter, the times when we remember Christ's death and resurrection. How does God's redemption plan laid out here find its resolution in Jesus and what we'll celebrate?

12. How does Paul understand this promise to be fulfilled? Read and grapple with the following verses:

Galatians 3:16, 26-29

Ephesians 2:11-22

Romans 4:16

13. What about you? If these are the marching orders for the people of God, how might God want to use you to fulfill these promises to Abram? How is he calling you to bless the nations?

14. This is our final week in this study on the first 11 chapters of the Bible. As you think back over our time – what has stood out to you most? What do you think God was teaching you in this season of church life?

“night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. **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 above from the water below. And God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. **And God said**,

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STUDY 13 GENESIS 1-11

“PRAY”

Spend some time giving thanks as a homegroup for God’s Word, particularly these first several chapters of Genesis. Praise him for how he has revealed himself. Rejoice, repent and request in light of what you learned about God, humanity and the world.

“SERMON NOTES”