



In the Beginning



SERMON SERIES DISCUSSION & STUDY GUIDE

In the Beginning

Week 1: Creation

Genesis 1

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Every story has a beginning, a middle and an end. But a really good story—one that captures and captivates your imagination—has so much more. Genesis 1 is the opening chapter of the greatest story ever told, with God taking bold and decisive steps as He brings order out of chaos. It is here we get our first glimpses into God's nature and character.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

Have you ever brought order out of chaos? Well, if you've ever washed a sink full of dirty dishes, cleaned a messy bedroom, or mowed a lawn bursting with growing-out-of-control grass, then you have imposed order on a chaotic situation. In this first chapter of Genesis, God brings order to His creation that was in a serious state of disorder.

- Discuss times or situations in your life when you have encountered chaos and worked to bring a sense of order and peace to the situation. How did you do it? What was the result? How did other people react? And how did you feel when you saw the results?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Creation or evolution? Old Earth theory or young Earth theory? Maybe something in between?? No matter how much we want definitive answers on the "how" of creation, the Bible is not a science text. Many of the mysteries of Genesis 1 will remain mysteries until God sees fit to reveal the answers. As you read the references below...

- What attributes of God's nature and character can you see in creation?
- What does God want us to know about Himself?
- How do these revelations help us relate to Him?

Genesis 1:2—Psalm 104:30 and Isaiah 45:18

Genesis 1:3—Psalm 33:9 and Psalm 104:5-9

Genesis 1:6-8—Job 38:8-11

Genesis 1:9—2 Peter 3:5

Genesis 1:26-27—Psalm 8:3-9

Genesis 1:28-30—Genesis 9:1-2, 7

MAKING APPLICATION:

Genesis 1:28-30 is sometimes referred to as the "cultural mandate." Consider this observation: "To 'be masters over' [or subdue] something is to have absolute authority and control over it. God has ultimate rule over the earth, and He exercises His authority with loving care. When God delegated some of His authority to the human race, He expected us to take responsibility for the environment and the other creatures that share our planet. We must not be careless and wasteful as we fulfill this charge. God was careful how He made this earth. We must not be careless about how we take care of it." (*Life Application Bible NLT*)

- When Adam and Eve fell, did that negate God's command in verses 28-30? Or does His command still apply to us today?
- After reading how God brought order out of the chaos, how can you do the same in one area of your life?
- How can you do this while still reflecting God's nature and character?
- Do you feel up to this cultural mandate? Does it sound like too much work? What steps can you take that will help you fulfill your Genesis 1:28-30 calling?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

As members of your group have shared their struggles as they try to bring order to areas of life that are in chaos, take time to pray for each of those people and their struggles. Remind them of the strength that comes from depending on God and depending on each other, and the power that comes from sharing our burdens with one another.

MEMORIZE THIS VERSE:

"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God." Romans 1:20



In the Beginning

Week 2: God's Opus

Genesis 2

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 give us two perspectives of God: One where God is magnificent and beyond us (Ch.1), and another where God is near and involved with us (Ch.2). In this lesson, you will focus on Genesis 2, observing God as restorer, creator, potter, gardener and matchmaker, and consider how God has been involved in your formation and wants to be active in your life today.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

"At times, we will experience God as near us and with us, supporting us and giving us strength in our endeavors. At other times, we will experience God as far beyond us and incomprehensible, having an agenda far larger than ours, doing things we do not understand. As much as we would like to, you and I do not control which experience we will have when." James Chatham, *Creation to Revelation*

- At this time in your life, which is your experience of God? Which experience of God do you find most meaningful? Explain.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

1. Read Genesis Chapter 2 together. Read it a second time, this time taking note of everything God does in this chapter. After you finish, read the list of actions God takes. What do you learn about God from His involvement with His creation?
2. This second creation account highlights the creation of humankind. Reread Genesis 1:26 – 27. Compare the two descriptions. What do you notice in your comparison?
3. After God created Adam, He formed the animals and paraded them before Adam. What do you suppose His purpose to be? How would Adam have felt after he named all the animals and discovered that "there was no helper just right for him"?
4. The word helper in Hebrew is the word *ezer*. Read Genesis 49:25 where the same word is used. What do you learn about its meaning? *Ezer* means "helper or deliverer." How did Eve help Adam or from what did she deliver Adam?
5. God created Adam from the earth and Eve from Adam. Why do you think God did it this way? What impact did it have on Adam and Eve? Consider Adam's response and verse 24. The narrative ends with the statement, "Now the man and his wife were both naked but they felt no shame (vs. 25)." Why do you suppose the chapter ends with this thought?

MAKING APPLICATION:

After observing this active, personal and involved God who forms and nurtures human life, read Psalm 139:13 -16. Have you ever thought about God making the delicate inner parts of your body, knitting you in your mother's womb, watching you while you were being formed in utter seclusion, seeing you before you were born? Take a moment and imagine God involved in the act of creating you. How does that affect the way you think about yourself?

Read Colossians 3:7 – 10. In what way does knowing your Creator make you want to live differently? What is one important step for you to take in getting to know your Creator better and becoming like Him?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Turn in pairs and pray Psalm 139:14 over each other: "Thank you for making _____ so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous" and I see it in the way you have made _____ (name things you have seen in this person that you love and appreciate.) Amen.

MEMORIZE THIS VERSE:

"Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him." Colossians 3:9-10



WHITE RIVER CHRISTIAN CHURCH

LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS

In the Beginning

Week 3: Evil/Redemption

Genesis 3

DISCUSSION GUIDE

It only takes a small spark to begin a fire that is large enough to burn hundreds of acres to the ground. What powerful imagery to a very simple premise. Yet time after time in almost every arena of life, we often mistake just how big of an impact one small choice, decision, action, thought, or word could be. Taking a look, not looking; stopping to help, not offering to help; Saying yes; not saying no. What hangs in the balance of one small moment in time is our health, our relationships, our future, our reputation, our eternity. The race is often won or lost in the first few steps. In the beginning of history, Adam and Eve made a choice. This choice has impacted the human race ever since. We have all been impacted by their choice and the world has never been the same. Watch closely as this moment unfolds in the Garden of Eden and take notice of the powerful impact of every moment of life.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

Getting started often takes great patience and discipline. Great effort and preparation are required to undertake any endeavor, project, or task. The end truly is dictated by the beginning.

- Share about a positive experience where some simple yet significant aspects of the “start” influenced the “end”. (ie, gathering all the ingredients first prevented missing something necessary for the recipe)
- Share about a negative experience where some simple yet significant aspect of the “start” influenced the “end”. (ie, forgetting to open the garage door caused damage by the car crashing into it)
- What often causes us to rush or be impatient as we begin? What are the advantages and consequences of starting quickly?
- What wisdom would you offer someone who is beginning the following: starting college, getting married, having a baby, buying a home, planting a garden, beginning a new career?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Adam and Eve had the privilege of being the first humans created by God. They were blessed in so many ways. They also had the responsibility of initiating the human race to the rest of God's creation. God placed them in a wonderful environment fully equipped to be successful in beginning life together with Him and each other. Their instructions came with clear commands and consequences. **Read Genesis 3.**

- What prior understanding do you bring to the account of the temptation that Adam and Eve faced in Genesis 1-2?
- What strikes you as significant about the serpent? About Adam and Eve? About their environment or experiences?
- Why did God give Adam and Eve such clear instructions? What wisdom is in His explanation of the consequences?
- How difficult is it for Eve first, then Adam, to see the temptation from the serpent as dangerous?
- What are the ramifications of their choice to disobey? How has their choice impacted humanity from then until now?
- Who seems to receive the greatest consequences: the serpent, the woman, or the man?

MAKING APPLICATION:

Adam and Eve exchanged the privilege of walking with God in the cool of the day with being banned from the Garden of Eden through one simple choice. The temptation offered them something immediate that was intended by God to protect them. The same thing has occurred throughout history through sin entering the world.

- How are your environment and experiences similar to Adam and Eve? How are they different?
- Why does temptation often come to us so clearly, yet so difficult to withstand?
- How does the Bible explain temptation? (read Matthew 4:1-11, Matthew 6:13, James 1:13-18, Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corin. 10:13)
- How can you prepare yourself for withstanding temptation?
- How can you respond when you've fallen to temptation?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

If we do not learn from history, we are often capable of repeating it. Therefore, we must constantly appreciate the privileges of God's blessing and remember the responsibilities of being His child. Prayer allows us to do both.

- Thank God for the fellowship and blessings of being His creation and adopted as His child.
- Ask God for wisdom in facing temptation and strength for withstanding temptation.

MEMORIZE THIS VERSE:

“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”
1 Corinthians 10:13



In the Beginning

Week 4: The Rise and Fall

Genesis 4 & 5

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Isn't it exciting to see a new baby? As you hold this precious miracle of life, your heart is often filled with joy and hope as you think about the future of this child and all he will experience. But a lump can quickly form in one's throat when you consider the responsibility of raising this child, providing for his/her needs, being responsible for the nurture and care, and being held accountable for the spirituality of his/her heart and life (sounds like good birth control, eh?).

With creativity and in love, God created not only a world but a people. His creation was not complete without making man in His own image, and man was instructed to populate the earth. Adam and Eve were "fruitful" and gave birth to sons and daughters, though the Bible only records the names of their 3 sons. (Since the sons married and had children, there must have been some sisters somewhere!) God's desire was for His creation to live in fellowship with Him. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, but continued to help carry out God's plan to create humanity. The result of their procreation was not just a multiplying population, but the continual spread of man's depravity as seen throughout the generations.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

We are all recipients from the generation before us: physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Genetics pass on to us the physical characteristics of our parents. We also are conditioned by the environment and influences of the previous generation, creating social norms and establishing values by which we live our lives.

- What physical characteristics do you have from your parents?
- What habits or traditions do you hold to due to the influence of your family or environment?
- What social norms or values have influenced the way you live your life from the previous generation(s)?
- What do you hope to pass onto the next generation (physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually)?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

While we are not informed of the physical characteristics of the "first family" in the Bible, we get a clear sense of the spiritual influence that Adam and Eve had on their children and their grandchildren. **Read Genesis 4.**

While our society does not encourage personal responsibility, it is clear from the study of Scripture that each person is held responsible and accountable for his/her actions. The Bible also clearly indicates the powerful influence parents play in the shaping of their children spiritually, both positively and negatively.

- What Godly attributes do you notice in Adam and Eve's children? How would you presume these were nurtured?
- What ungodly attributes are revealed about these children by their actions? Are the parents responsible in any way for these?
- What are the consequences to the ungodly attributes?
- What consistent themes of influence do you notice as you read the genealogy of Genesis 5?
- What characteristics do you notice that you would desire being reflected in your life or your children's lives?

MAKING APPLICATION:

It can be a treasured blessing to receive good attributes and influences from our ancestry, and it can also require large amounts of therapy and strength to face the dysfunction. We can cherish the influence or resent the neglect. All the while, we each take our turn in creating and influencing the generation after us ("so go the days of our lives").

- What Biblical responsibilities do we have to the generation after us (physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually)?
- How can we fulfill these responsibilities with God's help? What are the consequences if we fail to do so?
- Describe the potential you see in the next generation. Are you hopeful or hopeless anticipating the years to come?
- What are you currently doing to help create a God-honoring influence in the life of our family, community, and world?
- How could you increase in your Godly example and influence to the next generation?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Throughout Scripture, parents blessed their children, asking God to protect and provide, to guard and guide their life. Without His help, we are left to our own devices and could never shoulder the responsibility to raise the next generation to love and serve Him.

- Thank God for each person in your family and for those who you have the opportunity to influence for God
- Ask God 1 specific request for each person in your family in helping them grow to love and serve Him.

MEMORIZE THIS VERSE:

"Through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see - such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through Him and for Him." Colossians 1:16



In the Beginning

Week 5: Starting Over

Genesis 6-9

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The story of Noah and the Flood is a well-known story of the Old Testament. It's amazing to consider a man-made structure large enough to house 2 (or 7!) of every earthly creature, and it's horrifying to consider a flood obliterating every human and animal on earth. Such a story line fits right in with some of the doomsday, high-budget fiction movies that play on the big-screen today. But in between the drama, our God makes bold statements about obedience, second chances, and His power. We need to remember that we serve and worship the same big God who has loved us enough throughout time to discipline us when we disobey and most importantly to give us a 2nd chance, whenever we need it!

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

Humans, by definition, are imperfect, will make mistakes, and are sinners. It is inevitable, though in varying degrees, that we will disappoint and be disappointed. In fact, sometimes 2nd chances are not enough and we can find ourselves in need of a 3rd, 4th, or even 10th chance.

- Can you think of some areas in your life where you've needed a 2nd chance? (diet, exercise, saving money, breaking a bad habit, etc.) What are some emotions you experienced during those times?
- When was a time you were in a position to grant a second chance? What were your emotions during that time? How hard or easy was it to move on to the 2nd chance following an offense, disappointment, or mistake?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Read Genesis 6-9 As you read, pay close attention to God's emotions and purpose, as well as Noah's actions and obedience.

- In Chapter 6: What was the condition of the heart of man? How does this seem to compare with the condition of man's heart in today's world? How do you think God feels about this today? What was the purpose of the flood?
- In Chapters 7-8: What does this catastrophic event reveal about God's power? About His mercy?
- In Chapter 9: Why do you think God chose a flood as His means of destruction. Why do you think He chose a rainbow as a symbol for His promise to us to never flood & destroy the earth again?

Read John 18:15-26 and John 21:15-19 Simon Peter was a disciple and friend of Jesus. Simon Peter loved Jesus and felt protective enough of Him that when guards came to arrest Jesus, he drew his sword and cut the ear off of one of the high priest's guards...a pretty good show of loyalty. As Jesus Christ was on earth, he experienced emotional torment leading up to the time of His crucifixion and at times asked his friends to stand by Him, if even just to watch while He prayed. He knew what He must endure at the hands of the Romans, and also experienced betrayal from trusted friends.

- Do you think Simon Peter, a disciple who loved Jesus, believed it was possible that he would ever truly betray Jesus? What do you think was going on in Simon Peter's head as he denied knowing Christ?
- Have you ever been betrayed? How did you feel? Were you able to forgive and move past the offense?
- How do you think Simon Peter felt after Jesus still treated him as a friend, without bringing up a record of wrong?

MAKING APPLICATION:

Noah was a man who was blameless and walked with God. He obeyed God in a time where everyone around him was doing their own thing and following the sinful desire of the flesh. By choosing obedience, Noah, although not perfect, found favor with God.

- Does your life reflect obedience to God, or do you follow everyone around you? What are some things you do to overcome the ungodly influence of the world today?
- After destroying the sinful generation in Noah's time with a flood, God promised never again to destroy all living creatures. What 2nd chances and promises has God given you that you need to be reminded of? What are some symbols of those promises?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

- Thank God for all the second chances He's given you. Be specific in your praise, acknowledging His mercy.
- Ask God to show you areas where you need to offer a second chance or mercy.
- Ask Him for the strength to obey and follow Him unconditionally, to build your ark if He asks.

MEMORIZE THIS VERSE:

"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."

Colossians 3:13-14



WHITE RIVER CHRISTIAN CHURCH

LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS

In the Beginning

Week 6: All Nations will be Blessed

Genesis 12

DISCUSSION GUIDE

God loves you. He has desired a relationship with you since the beginning of time. That's not to say too much about you and I, as much as it is to say how great and awesome is God! In the story of Abraham, we see that God's desire was to not only build a great nation of people who would seek Him, but that all of the world would be blessed by this nation!

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

As a group, spend some time discussing the following questions:

- 1) How has God blessed you?
- 2) As you think about your relationship with God, how would you rate it? (1 to 10 scale)
- 3) Does anyone in your group know the song "Father Abraham"? If so, sing it!!

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Read Genesis 12:1-9

- 1) What did God ask of Abram? How would this have been difficult?
- 2) What did God promise Abram?
- 3) How old was Abram? What promise does God make in verse 7 that seemed impossible? Why?

Read Genesis 15:1-6

- 1) What words did God use to encourage Abram?
- 2) What concern does Abram express?
- 3) What does God promise? What was Abram's response to the promise?

MAKING APPLICATION:

As God chose Abraham to begin this great nation of peoples, God was faithful in His promises. The struggle that you and I have is that we continually try to place God on our terms. Our timing? Look at Genesis 15:6 again. Even in the midst of what seemed impossible...he what?

- 1) If you could do anything for God, with no impossibilities, what would you do?
- 2) Is there something that God has called you to in the past that you simply ignored, or felt it was impossible and didn't risk it? What was it?
- 3) What are some of the promises from God that sustain you today? (if you can reference scripture, that would be great!)

Read Galatians 3:6-14, 26-29

How are the promises to Abraham fulfilled according to this passage? What does that mean for us?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

What are some promises that we heard tonight that really spoke to you? Break up into groups of 2 or 3 and share those promises and perhaps a need and simply pray for each other.

MEMORIZE THIS VERSE:

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:2 & 3



Sermon Schedule

Date	Series	Key Event	Scripture
2/14/2010	in the beginning	Creation	Genesis 1
2/21/2010	in the beginning	God's Opus	Genesis 2
2/28/2010	in the beginning	The Beginning of the End	Genesis 3
3/7/2010	in the beginning	The Rise and Fall	Genesis 4-5
3/14/2010	in the beginning	Starting Over	Genesis 6-9
3/21/2010	in the beginning	All Nations will be Blessed	Genesis 12



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