

The Bigger Story – Beginnings

Week One: Creation

Theme

God is the creator: Ever-living, all-knowing, omnipresent who's very word creates. The only way we can really find out who we are is from Him. We are made by Him, in His image.

Facts & Figures

“Created” (“bara” in Hebrew) means to “create out of nothing” Out of nothing, by His decree, God made the universe.

“God” (“Elohim” in Hebrew) means “Supreme One”

The mission of Jesus was preordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20)

Guiding Verse

“In the Beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

Week's Readings

Genesis 1-3, Matthew 1

Genesis 4-6, Matthew 2

Genesis 7-10, Matthew 3

Genesis 11-13, Matthew 4

Genesis 14-17, Matthew 5

Genesis 18-19

Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31, Psalm 148, Colossians 1:13-20, John 1:1-14

Additional Facts & Figures

The Hebrew word for “Genesis” (“bereshith” in Hebrew) means “in the beginning.”

The preexistence of God: Genesis 1:1

The power of God: Genesis 1:1

The presence of God: Genesis 1:2

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, known as the “Pentateuch” (“Torah” in Hebrew). Jesus confirmed Moses as the writer in Luke 24:44.

Time: Genesis 1:1 - “In the beginning”

Space: Genesis 1:1 - “the heavens”

Matter: Genesis 1:1 - “the earth”

Energy: Genesis 1:3 - the whole spectrum...

Of all that God created, only man was created in the “image” (“tselem”) and “likeness” (“demuuth”) of God.

“Day” means a literal 24-hour day. “Day” (“Yom” in Hebrew) is used over 2,000 times in the OT. Whenever it is attached to a numerical value, it means 24 literal hours.

Specific Questions for Week One

What two foundational truths does Genesis 1:1 declare? What does Genesis one teach us about God? (See Psalm 24:1-2)

What role did Jesus place in creation (See John 1:1-3, 14. Hebrews 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-20)

The Bible asserts God created the world. Why is the truth that God is the Creator of everything so fundamental to the Christian faith? How would you describe your understanding of this truth?

What makes humanity different from the rest of creation? What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

The image of God in us is tainted by our sin. How is this image restored and by whom?

In this first chapter, how many times is God named? What do you think Moses (as inspired by God) is communicating about the world and its founding?

How do you understand time?

Has the created world expanded your understanding of God? His goodness? Creativity? Power? Might? Love?

Discuss the preexistence, power and presence of God.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

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Week Two: Fall

Theme

The Fall (the moment when humans first disobeyed God) brought sin into every human's life (Romans 3:23, 5:12). We are, by nature, sinful and unclean.

All have inherited the effects of the fall. All are tempted with appeals to physical appetites, desires and pride. But God sent Jesus, who was also tempted (Matthew 4:1-11) and was pure (Matthew 15:9), He took our sin and punishment so that we may live.

Word Choice

"Serpent" ("nachash" in Hebrew) also means copper or bronze. He is likely very beautiful, shiny, attractive, crafty (see 2 Cor 11:14)

"Crafty" ("arum" in Hebrew) also means cunning and deceptive.

"Enmity" ("eybah" in Hebrew) means hatred/hostility...to create an army against the Lord.

Guiding Verse

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." Genesis 3:6

Week's Readings

Genesis 20-22, Matthew 6

Genesis 23-24, Matthew 7

Genesis 25-26, Matthew 8

Genesis 27-28, Matthew 9

Genesis 29-30

Genesis 31-33, Matthew 10

Genesis 3:1-13, Psalm 32:1-7 Romans 5:12-19, Luke 4:1-13

Facts & Figures

God's curse (Genesis 3:14-15) impacts snakes (now a symbol of deception) and the ground.

God doesn't curse Adam or Eve, only in the sense that they suffer under the curse of sin, which results in death.

To women, this centers around marriage and motherhood. "Pain" ("iṣṣāḇôn" in Hebrew) also means "sorrow" (physical pain and emotional pain, worries, fears, etc.).

God's design for man was to work (Genesis 2:15) but, due to the fall, work is now toilsome and never ending (Genesis 3:17-19).

Ezekiel 28 says Satan, before his fall, was an angel of the highest rank and prominence, even something of a leader of worship in heaven.

Isaiah 14 tells us Satan's fall had to do with his desire to be equal to or greater than God, to set his will against God's.

Satan tries to get Eve to doubt the *goodness of God*. If God lies to her, how can He be good?

He then tries to get her to doubt the *badness of sin*. If this fruit is something good for her, why doesn't God want her to have it?

Where are you?

- Meant to arouse Adam's sense of being lost.
- Meant to lead Adam to confess his sin.
- Meant to express God's sorrow.
- Meant to show that God seeks after lost man.
- Meant to express the accountability man had before God.
- God came to them with care, coming before the darkness of night.
- God came to them personally, addressing them directly.
- God came to them with truth, showing them their lost condition.

Week Three's Readings: Promise

Gen. 34-35
Matt. 11

Gen. 36-38

Gen. 39-40
Matt. 12

Gen. 41-42

Gen 43-44
Matt. 13

Gen 45-47

Gen. 12:1-3, Psalm 105:1-11, Hebrews 11:1-12, John 3:16-21

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Specific Questions for Week Two

Satan can appeal to the basic human instincts of appetite, pride, ego, eyes (1 John 2:15-16)...he deceives by distorting a proper view of God (Genesis 3:1) and by contradicting the truth of God, calling Him a liar (Genesis 3:4). In addition to introducing doubt and confusion, he can also undermine God's Word, getting us to neglect it.

How can we guard against this?

How is Satan attempting to disarm our culture today, appearing approachable, beautiful, normal? Saying "sin is not bad and God is not good"?

How has the church fallen prey to some of Satan's subtle schemes?

Eve responded to the serpent. **How should we respond?** (See Jude 9, also 2 Cor 11:3, Ephesians 4:27)

Adam and Eve were in fellowship with God when they were deceived. **How can we be aware of the darkness around us?**

Consider: John 10:10, 2 Corinthians 2:11b, Colossians 1:13, Ephesians 5:8-11, 6:10-11, Philippians 1:9-10, 4:8).

What is it that God wants from us?

What He wanted from Adam and Eve... for each of us to take responsibility for our sin and to confess so that we can be in right relationship with Him. **Where are you in relation to God? What are you hiding from?**

Satan attacked God's established order... **Discuss** how Adam was passive and derelict in his duties (as a spiritual leader, protector of Eve), how Eve acted in Adam's role and added to the Word of God (Genesis 3:2-3)

Why did Satan go after Eve first? What does this mean for the world today? For God's established family order?

There is a tendency for wives to repeat the pattern of Eve, which is to rule over their husband. Yet, in this passage, God is calling men to be loving, courageous and masculine leaders in their home...spiritual leaders who will love, protect and pray for their wives. **How can we effectively follow in the roles God designed?**

Discuss: "Take and eat" and compare with the Last Supper) Because of Jesus, verbs of salvation, after He had lived in the cursed world and surrendered to death on a cross *for us*.

Do you see God as an angry tyrant here or as a loving, broken-hearted Father, asking His children questions and calling them to account? **How is blame seen in this chapter?**

Read Genesis 3:15, followed by Galatians 3:13 and **discuss** Christ in this chapter and taking on the curse (Deuteronomy 11:26-28) for us.

Rather than fig leaves, **how can we cover ourselves in Christ?** Consider: Isaiah 61:10, Galatians 3:27, Revelation 3:5, 18, 16:15.

Observational Questions

What does it say?

Why was it written?

Who is the audience?

Who is the author?

What is the historic context of the passages?

How does it fit within Scripture as a whole?

Interpretation Questions

What does it mean?

What does it tell me about God?

Jesus? The Holy Spirit? About humanity?

How does it reveal God's glory?

The Gospel message?

Did other verses come to mind?

What questions do I have about what I read?

SPECK

Is there a **sin** to avoid?

A **promise** to claim?

An **example** to follow

A **command** to obey?

How does this passage increase my **knowledge** of Jesus?

Significance Questions

Why does this matter?

What is the essence of what I have read and learned?

How would I explain this to others?

How can I implement what I have learned into my life?

ACTS Prayer

Adoration (praise)

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication (requests)

The Bigger Story – Beginnings

Week Three: Promise

Theme

God keeps His promises. He is faithful and true. He blesses and uses ordinary, flawed people to showcase and complete His work. Abraham is known as the patriarch of our faith. Israel (the nation) and Jesus our Messiah came from his seed. The blessings bestowed upon Abraham and the way God calls us into trusting faith, calls us to be a blessing, impact, teach and encourage us today.

Word Choice & Meaning of Names

“Abram” means, “exalted father” or “high father” God changed his name to “Abraham” which means, “father of a multitude.”

In Romans 4:16, Abraham is called “the father of us all.”

Abraham’s life makes up 13 chapters of Genesis (15%). His name appears 300+ times in the Bible and he is mentioned in 11 of the 27 NT books.

In the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11, Moses gets 6 verses and Abraham is described in 12.

There are 80+ references to “God’s blessing” in Genesis.

Facts & Figures

The Abrahamic Covenant contains promises which filters throughout all Scripture. It is ceremonially made in Genesis 15:18-21, reaffirmed in 17:1-21, renewed with Isaac in 26:2-5 and with Jacob in 28:10-17. It is everlasting (1 Chronicles 16:17, Psalm 105:7-12, Isaiah 24:5).

Three world religions trace their beginnings back to Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

God promised to make Abraham a blessing... all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. This promise was fulfilled in the Messiah that came from his lineage. God’s blessing to Abraham was not for his own sake or the sake of the future Jewish nation. It was for the whole world for all the families of the earth through Jesus Christ (John 3:16, Galatians 3:8-9 and Revelation 5:9).

Abraham’s name, reputation, and legacy were fulfilled materially (Genesis 13:2, 24:35), spiritually (Genesis 21:22) and socially (Genesis 23:6).

Guiding Verse

“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 12:2-3

Week’s Readings

Genesis 34-35, Matthew 11

Genesis 36-38

Genesis 39-40, Matthew 12

Genesis 41-42

Genesis 243-44, Matthew 13

Genesis 45-47

Genesis 12:1-3, Psalm 105:1-11, Hebrews 11:1-12, John 3:16-21

Part 2 - Journey: Week Four’s Readings - Freedom

Gen. 48-49

Gen. 50, Ex

Exodus 4-5,

Exodus 6-8,

Exodus 9-10

Exodus 11-12,

Matt. 14

1-3, Matt 15

Matt 16

Matt 17

Matt 18

Exodus 2:24-3:4, Psalm 106:1-12, 2 Peter 1:1-11, John 8:51-59

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Specific Questions for Week Three

Notice Genesis 11 is about the plans of *man* while Genesis 12 is about the plans of *God*. **Discuss** the difference between the plans of man vs. the plans of God, Biblically, historically and personally.

God says “I will” 5 times, taking the responsibility of the covenant upon Himself. The covenant ceremony (Genesis 15) indicates the unconditional nature of it, God moves, indicating He is the responsible party, binding Himself to this covenant (Hebrews 6:13). **What does this signify about the role of man? The power, authority, provision and love of God?**

God promises Abram a land, nation and blessing. One day, Israel *will* repent, be forgiven, and be restored to God’s favor (Zechariah 12:10-14, Romans 11:25-27). One day, the nation of Israel will possess the entire territory promised to them. One day, the Messiah will return to set up His throne, and through His righteous rule the whole world will be blessed with an abundance of peace, pleasure, and prosperity. **Discuss** these promises.

Have you experienced the joy of the Lord by being a blessing to others?

God calls ordinary people to do His extraordinary work. **How do you intentionally live, act, speak, knowing that God may choose to make your name great because you will make His name great...** to see God’s blessing as an opportunity to be a blessing to others and to share in His joy.

Abraham, though he committed errors and transgressions, is an example of growing in faith and obedience. When God called him, he 75, a Gentile, worshipping pagan gods, married to a pagan woman who was his half-sister (same father, different mother). God chooses to use flawed, ordinary people to complete His extraordinary work. Read John 15:16 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 and **discuss**.

Have there been times in your life when God chose to make your name great? How did you handle it? What are examples in your life when you were selected by the Lord to bear lasting fruit?

Share experiences about times when the Lord has called you to do something by faith. **How did your faith in the Lord involve trust and obedience?**

God tells Abraham he will be blessed. He chooses to bless us so that we might be a blessing, making Him known and reflecting His goodness, love and generosity. Don’t equate the blessing of God with prosperity, suggesting the poor/disadvantaged who love the Lord are outside of His blessing and the rich with Him.

God’s financial blessing is not a right you can demand or expect because you’re a Christian. **Discuss** the “I deserve” mentality and “name it and claim it.” Neither does living in poverty necessarily signify your devotion to God. **Discuss** the two extremes (the prosperity gospel and the poverty gospel), both unbiblical and harmful (Deuteronomy 8:18, Psalm 115:12–15).

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