



# CHARACTERS

A ONE-YEAR EXPLORATION OF THE BIBLE THROUGH THE LIVES OF ITS PEOPLE

VOLUME ONE

**THE PATRIARCHS**

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit [www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline](http://www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline).

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## About Explore The Bible Students



### The Whole Truth, For the Whole Student

When it comes to teens, don't avoid the truth. Don't sugarcoat it. *Explore the Bible: Students* helps you present teens with God's Word, allowing for honest and transparent conversations around the Bible as students learn how these ancient words speak into their lives today.



To find out more, go to [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

## How To Use This Study

This Bible study book includes six sessions of content for group and personal study. Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each session begins with group study. Each group session utilizes the following elements to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among students.

### INTRODUCTION

This page includes introductory content and questions to get the conversation started each time your group meets.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Continue the group discussion by reading the Scripture passages and discussing the questions on these pages. Finally, conclude each group session with a time of prayer, reflecting on what you have discussed.

### BIOGRAPHY

This section provides more in-depth information regarding the biblical character being spotlighted each week and can be included in the group discussion or personal study times.

### PERSONAL STUDY

Three personal studies are provided for each session to take students deeper into Scripture and to supplement the content introduced in the group study. With biblical teaching and personal questions, these sections help students grow in their understanding of God's Word and respond in faith.

### LEADER GUIDE

A front-and-back Leader Guide for each session is provided on pages 93-104. It can be torn out to use in leading a group. It includes sample answers or discussion prompts to help you jump-start or steer the conversation.

## introduction

What is the meaning of life?

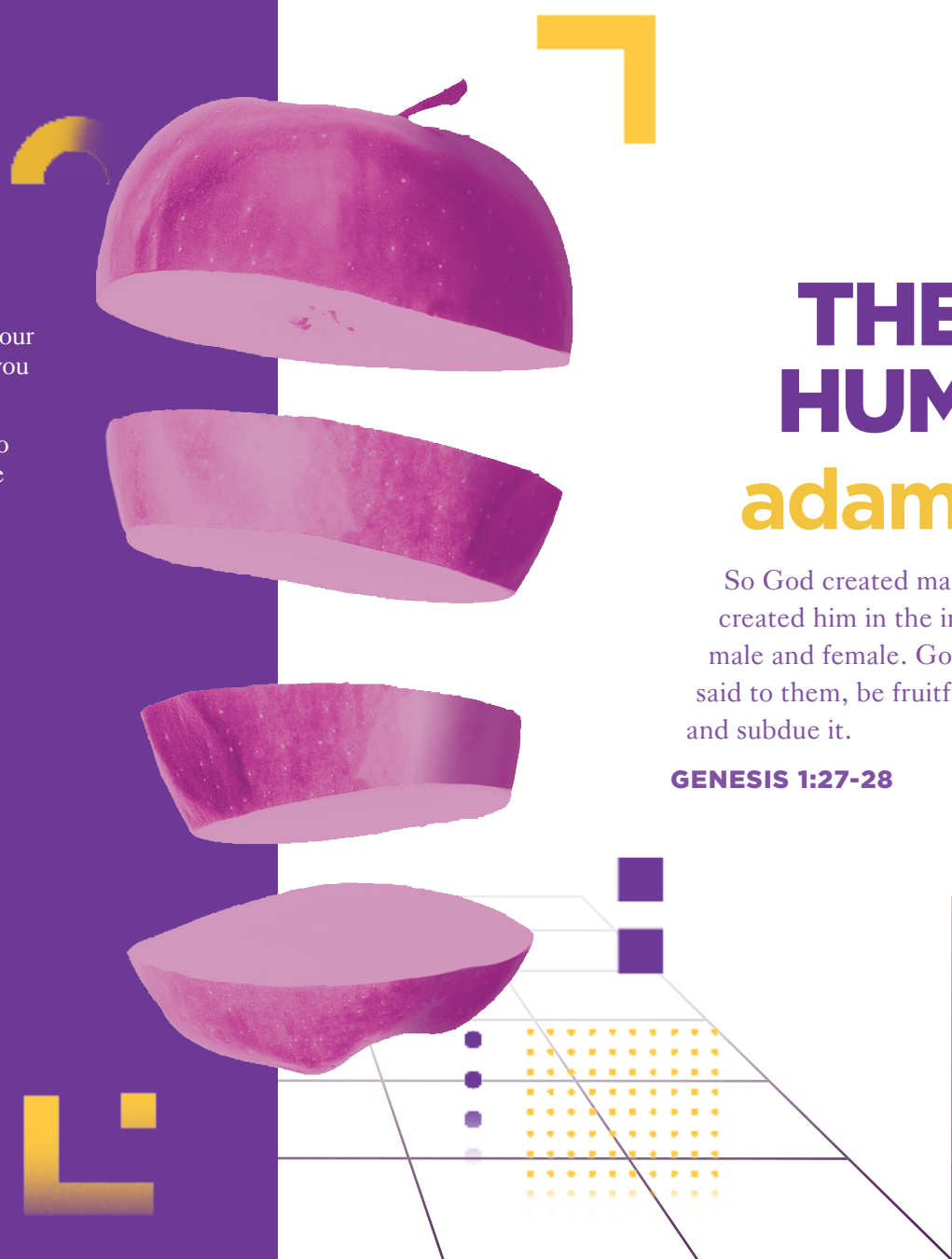
How would you answer that question? How do you think most of your friends or classmates would answer that question? Where would you look for the answers?

If we hope to get to the bottom of this all-important question, we have to go back to the very beginning. Only through knowing where we came from can we know who we are, where we are going, and why we are here. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, documents the beginning of human history in Mesopotamia and paints a picture of the meaning of human existence that is good, beautiful, and full of purpose.

In the beginning, God and God alone existed. Genesis 1 and 2 record God's creative process, speaking into existence from nothing all that we see and know. After each act of creation, God reflected on His work and declared, "It is good." From God came everything in creation, including the first human beings, Adam and Eve. Unlike everything else in creation, Adam and Eve were created "in the image of God." Having created Adam and Eve, God declared His creation to be "very good."

**What is the origin story of one of your favorite heroes or characters?**

**How does knowing where people come from help us better understand them?**



## THE FIRST HUMANS adam and eve

So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created male and female. God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.

**GENESIS 1:27-28**

// **SO GOD  
CREATED  
MAN**

# GROUP DISCUSSION

(get started)

## focus attention

Share some ways in which you are creative. How does this kind of creativity imitate God's creativity? How is it different from God's ability?



(examine God's Word)

## explore the text

AS A GROUP, READ GENESIS 1:1-5. \*/

**01 .** How did God go about creating the world? What does this tell us about His power and His authority?

**02 .** God existed before the world, before us, and before all things. What does this tell us about Him?

AS A GROUP, READ GENESIS 1:27. \*/

**03 .** How are humans different from the rest of creation? What does this tell you about your worth? About the worth of others?

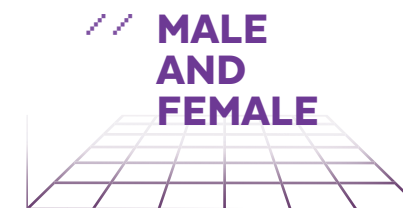
AS A GROUP, READ GENESIS 3:1-7. \*/

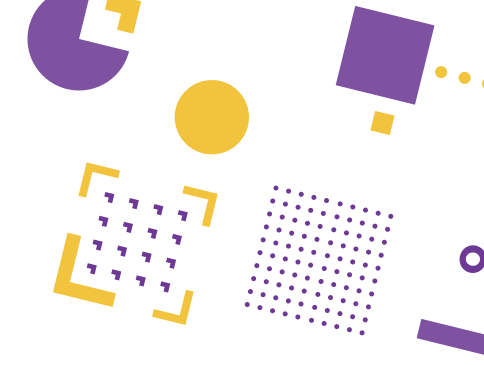
**04 .** What lies about God did Satan tell Eve? Are you tempted to think that God is holding out on you?

**05 .** What do you think Adam and Eve hoped to gain by eating the fruit?

AS A GROUP, READ GENESIS 3:14-19. \*/

**06 .** How did God curse the serpent? How did He curse Adam and Eve? How do you see evidence of these consequences today?





# adam & eve

## THE FIRST HUMANS

(respond to God's Word)

### apply the text

Human beings are marvelous and dangerous creatures. We are marvelous because we were made to reflect the glory of the God of creation. We are dangerous because we have all rebelled against God and invited dysfunction and corruption into God's good world. We need to acknowledge both of these aspects about ourselves. It's only when we see our potential, and our need for redemption, that we will look to God to save us and help us reconnect to our original design.

**07 .** How should knowing that God's design for people is good, but that all human beings are also broken by sin, shape how we think and live?

**08 .** How should knowing that all people bear God's image change how we interact with them and treat them?

CLOSE YOUR GROUP TIME IN PRAYER,  
REFLECTING ON WHAT YOU HAVE DISCUSSED. \*//

// **HE  
CREATED  
THEM**



### known for

- 01 .** Adam and Eve were the first human beings; they were created as male and female in God's image (**Gen. 1:27**).
- 02 .** Adam gave names to all the wild animals and birds that God created (**Gen. 2:19**).
- 03 .** Adam and Eve were the first man and woman to be married and give birth to children (**Gen. 2:24; 4:1-2,25**).
- 04 .** They introduced sin and its consequences into the human race (**Gen. 3:6,16-19**); Adam handed down the "sin nature" to all humans (**Rom. 5:12**).
- 05 .** Adam and Eve were the first to grow food in a garden (**Gen. 2:15**).
- 06 .** They were also the first to face temptation from the devil (**Gen. 3:6**).
- 07 .** They were the first to lose a child to violent crime (**Gen. 4:8**).
- 08 .** Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of Eden to work the ground (**Gen. 3:23**).

### basic facts

- 01 .** Name Adam possibly means "to be red or ruddy"; related to the Hebrew word for "ground, land."
- 02 .** Name Eve probably means "living"; called "the mother of all the living" (**Gen. 3:20**).
- 03 .** No human parents; created directly by God.
- 04 .** Lived in the garden of Eden (location uncertain) until driven out by God as a result of their sin.
- 05 .** Adam lived to age 930; Eve's age at death is unknown.



# PERSONAL STUDY 01.

(continue studying on your own)

## Read Genesis 1:26-31.

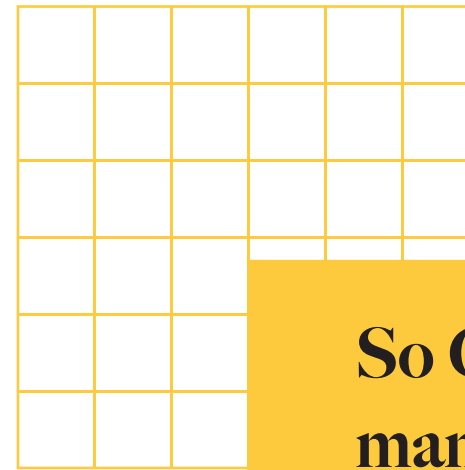
God spoke the universe into existence out of nothing. There are other ancient stories about how the world came into being but they're all quite different from the Bible's account. Ancient pagan religions, worshipping multiple gods, offer their own accounts of creation. These pagan accounts tend to focus on violent gods who only created people as slaves to help the gods one-up each other. In fact, in one such story, human beings were shaped from clay made by mixing the blood of fallen gods with dust. Genesis, however, presents us with one God who lovingly breathed life into human beings, shaped them in His very image, and gave them the good and dignified task of working and keeping the beautiful garden He gave them as a home. God's creation was orderly, purposeful, and powerful.

What does it mean to be created in God's image? It doesn't mean that human beings have a divine nature or can someday become gods. Instead, it means that God made us to reflect Him in ways that no other parts of creation do. Adam had the capacity to know and worship God perfectly.

If we keep going into Genesis 2, we see that it was not good for man to be alone. God created Eve, also in His image. Both women and men bear the image of God—they are equal in dignity and worth.

**Review** What does it mean to be made in God's image? Why is this good news?

**01** . What do you think life was like for Adam and Eve? How would their relationship have been different than our relationships today?



So God created man in his own image, he created him in the image of God; male and female he created them.



Genesis 1:27

# PERSONAL STUDY 02.

(continue studying on your own)

## Read Genesis 2:4-9,15-18.

Adam and Eve began their existence in perfect harmony with God, with creation, and with each other. They worked the garden, and their work was a joy. God commanded them not only to tend the garden, but also to be fruitful—to have children and fill the earth with human beings (see v. 22). In other words, human sexuality within the context of marriage between a man and a woman is part of God’s good design.

God also gave Adam and Eve the responsibility of governing the rest of creation as His representatives. In other words, we are to promote the well-being of our planet, including the well-being of all of its inhabitants and resources. God also gave humanity and all the wildlife of the earth access to the vegetation He created (see 1:11). Every living thing must have nourishment to survive, grow, and reproduce. Rather than just thinking about how we can take care of ourselves, we ought to think about how we can take good care of the world God has placed us in.

**02** . What are some ways we can practice and promote taking care of God’s creation?

**03** . How might we remind ourselves of what God has done for us and how He has provided for us?

When God surveyed all He made, He declared that it was “very good indeed” (v. 31). Everything that was good, beneficial, and purposeful for His creation was in place and in harmony.

Adam and Eve were unique among all God’s creation. To emphasize this, Moses used a different name for God in Genesis 2 than in Genesis 1. In 2:4, Moses used the name “Yahweh Elohim”, which is written in English as “the LORD God.” Yahweh is God’s personal, covenant name that He revealed to Moses at the burning bush; it means “I am” (see Ex. 3:13-15). Together, the two names emphasize that the all-powerful Creator wants to relate to us on a personal level.

These verses also show the deep connections God wove into His world. The two human beings needed a place to live, work, and fulfill their God-given purpose. The world needed human beings to cultivate and care for it. God prepared the earth first, and then He made its caretakers.

God created, out of nothing, the materials He used to fashion human beings. Indeed, the Hebrew words for “the man” and “the ground” are related. The picture is that of a skilled potter taking up a mound of clay in his hands and shaping it into a marvelous work. Even so, God fashioned the first man’s body of the dust of the ground (see Ps. 103:14). This was a “hands-on” process. Genesis 2 shows us God’s personal and intimate creation of Adam and Eve, telling us that He fashioned the physical body, and then He “breathed the breath of life” . . . into the man (Gen. 2:7), later called “Adam.” This special action set human beings apart from all other creatures. The God who created us, made us for a purpose—to know and love Him.

**01** . Have you recently felt insignificant? What drove those feelings?



**02** . What can you learn about your value from Genesis 2:7-8,15?

**03** . How is work itself a gift? How can we honor God with how we work, study, or do chores?

The garden is a gift to Adam and Eve, but not one they could be selfish or lazy with. Work, too, is a gift given to us by our good and generous God.

Think about it: when you love someone you will trust them to help you with important projects or even allow them to do things on your behalf. God's willingness to give human beings the task of working and keeping the garden demonstrates His love for us. It reminds us that God wants to have a personal relationship with human beings. Work is a gift. Through it God invites us to join Him in the task of bringing further order, beauty, and goodness into the world for His glory and for the benefit of our neighbors. Our work is, of course, riddled with thorns (frustrations), but as followers of Christ we can have hope that our work can be redeemed. You may not have even a part-time job yet, and that's ok. Your schoolwork, your chores, and even your extracurricular activities all have value and can be engaged in a way that honors God and promotes the good of the people around you.

**04** . How does God use relationships to make our lives better? What does our need for relationships reveal about our need for God?

In Genesis 2:18, we see the first instance in the Bible of something that God says is not good. This isn't to say that God created something sinful— just that creation was incomplete. And this isn't just about marriage; it has to do with all relationships. God made us to live in community. We honor God when we love and serve the people around us.

# PERSONAL STUDY 03.

(continue studying on your own)

## Read Genesis 3:1-7,14-19.

A new character pops up in Adam and Eve's story in Genesis 3—the serpent. The serpent's desire was to tempt, accuse, and destroy every good thing God had made—especially human beings.

The serpent asked Eve a simple question, but one that was carefully designed to raise doubts about God. Eve likely felt that to answer "yes" was to accuse God of being untruthful and unloving. To answer "no" was to suggest that it must be okay to eat fruit even from the forbidden tree.

To her credit, Eve corrected the serpent's deceptive question. The couple had God's permission to eat from all of the trees in the garden except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Interestingly, Eve added that they were forbidden to even touch the tree, or else they would die. God had only commanded them not to eat from the tree (see Gen. 2:17), but perhaps they had decided that not even touching it was better.

The serpent changed tactics from planting doubts about God's goodness to openly questioning God's integrity. The "father of lies" (John 8:44) accused God of lying to the two about the consequences of sin. The serpent insisted that God's warning was intentionally misleading, and that God was holding out on them. These are still the arguments Satan makes today—that God isn't good, loving, or generous, and that true satisfaction can be found apart from Him.

**01** . How does God use relationships to make our lives better? What does our need for relationships reveal about our need for God?

Satan never directly told Eve to disobey God. He simply clouded her mind with doubt and then watched as an internal struggle took over. Eve looked at the forbidden tree differently. It no longer seemed off-limits or dangerous; instead, it looked pleasant and seemed to be a source of wisdom. Eve took fruit from the tree and ate. Then she gave some to Adam, and he also ate. The perfect harmony for which they had been made was broken.

As the serpent promised, the man and woman's eyes were opened. What they gained, however, was not a God-like knowledge but rather a sense of deep guilt and shame. They became self-conscious of their nakedness. In a futile attempt to hide their shame and guilt, they sewed fig leaves together to wear as coverings. They had lost their innocence. Life would never be the same again.

**02 .** Why do you think people so often try to hide their sins? What do Acts 2:38 and 1 John 1:9 teach us to do instead of hiding our sins?

Sin entered the world, and being just, God pronounced His judgment on all involved—first on the serpent, then on the woman, and finally on the man. But even in the midst of judgment, God showed His grace. God's words to the serpent were also a declaration of war against Satan. These verses are also the Bible's first prophetic glimpse of the good news that would come in Jesus Christ. Christ defeated Satan through His death and resurrection. Although the battle continues for believers and will do so until Christ's return, our victory over sin and death is guaranteed through Christ (see Rev. 5:5-10).

Adam and Eve would one day return to dust. Physical death had entered the human experience.

**03 .** In what ways do you see the consequences of humanity's fall ongoing in today's world? In what ways is God's mercy evident?

