

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS

THE GOD WHO CREATES
VOL. 1 | Genesis



1

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible-study book includes seven weeks of content for group and personal study. Each session is divided into the following components:

Introduction

Every session contains an intro option for your group time, allowing there to be a natural transition into the material for that week.

Setting the Context

This section is designed to provide the context to the biblical passage being discussed. It will help group members to better understand the passage under consideration for each session, as well as how the biblical storyline connects between each session. It is also in this section that you will find the reference to the informational graphic for each session, once again helping students to develop a deeper understanding into the storyline of Scripture.

Session Videos

Each session has a corresponding video to help tell the Bible story. After watching the video, spend some time discussing the questions provided, as well as any additional questions raised by your students in response to the video.

Group Discussion

After watching the video, continue the group discussion by reading the Scripture passages and discussing the questions on these pages. Additional content is provided on these pages to grant further clarity into the meaning of these passages. Also, it is in this section that you find the Christ Connection, showing students how all of Scripture points to Jesus.

Head, Heart, Hands

This section is designed to close out your group time by personally reflecting on how God's Story challenges the way we think, feel, and live as a result. Because God's Word is capable of changing everything about a person, this section seeks to spell out how each session is able to transform our Heads, Hearts, and Hands.

Personal Study

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

SESSION 1

GOD CREATES



*IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED EVERYTHING,
AND HE CREATED EVERYTHING GOOD.*

INTRODUCTION

Every story has a beginning. The story of the Bible begins with four astounding words: “In the beginning God...” (Gen. 1:1). Often, people are tempted to take God’s presence in the beginning for granted and fail to recognize the power it implies. In fact, God wasn’t just there at the beginning; He was there before the beginning.

Every physical thing in the universe has an origin. That’s as true of you and me as it is of the most magnificent stars in the farthest galaxies. Everything that exists once did not. If you were to travel back in time, you would reach a point when everything and everyone in existence fades into nothingness.

Everything and everyone, that is, except God. Before the first four words of Genesis 1, before the stars filled the night sky, before God breathed life into the dust and made man, God alone was there. “In the beginning God...” (Gen. 1:1) is really just another way of saying, “Before the beginning, God was there.”



Both science and the Bible point to a definite beginning of the universe. What are some conclusions about God’s nature we can draw from His creation of the universe?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

God was there at the beginning of the story line of Scripture—and so was the Son of God, which the New Testament makes explicit: The Son is before all things and He created all things (Col. 1:16-17). “Seeing Jesus in Genesis” (p. 10) shows just some of the ways the centrality of Jesus in Scripture was the plan of God from the very beginning.

Also vital to the beginning of Scripture is the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, a Latin phrase that means “out of nothing.” We use the word create when we cause something to come into being, but we always form something out of other things that previously existed. We create music using notes, art out of paints and a canvas, books from words, language, paper, and binding.

God, however, created from nothing. Everything in existence came to be because of Him—rocks, trees, the very air we breathe. Not only that, but non-tangible realities such as courage, love, and laughter came from Him as well. All of this came from the heart of God at the beginning.

SEEING JESUS IN GENESIS

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
The First Adam Brought Death (Gen. 3)	The Second Adam Brought Life (Rom. 5)
The Protoevangelium The Promise of Deliverance from the Serpent (Gen. 3:15)	The Fulfillment Jesus Destroys the Works of the Devil (1 John 3:8)
Abel's Blood Cries Out for Justice (Gen. 4)	Jesus' Blood Proclaims Forgiveness (Heb. 12:24)
The Almost Sacrifice of Isaac "The Lord Will Provide" (Gen. 22)	The Crucifixion of Jesus "The Lamb of God" (John 1:29)
Joseph Suffered According to God's Plan (Gen. 50:20)	Jesus Suffered According to God's Plan (Acts 2:23)

SESSION VIDEOS

Watch this session's video, and then continue the group discussion using the following guide.

- ▶ What ideas or phrases stood out to you most in the video? Why?
- ▶ In what ways is the biblical truth that human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation affirmed in our culture? Denied in our culture?

GROUP DISCUSSION

As a group, read Genesis 1:1-2,31.



What are some of the things we can learn about the nature and character of God from these verses alone?



Why does God call each step of His creation good?



Is it morally good? How so?
Is it aesthetically good? How so?
Is it usable? How so?

While these things are certainly good, the ultimate purpose and design of creation is to declare God's glory and proclaim the work of His hands (Ps. 19:1) and to reveal things about God that are invisible to us, such as His eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20). Because of creation, we can clearly see and understand these things.

As a group, read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16-25.



What is different about the way God created humans from everything else?



What do you think it means to be created in God's image?



Why is it important that we recognize that all humans are created in God's image?

To bear God's image means:

- 1** To have a relationship with Him.

Our image-bearing started when God created us. The account in Genesis shows how powerful a scene this was—when God's face was toward us, when He breathed into the first man the breath of life. Just as a mirror best reflects an image when the mirror is directly in front of the object, we reflect God's image best when we are in close relationship with Him.

To be created in God's image means that we have a unique ability to relate intimately with God and others. When we recognize this fact, we can only conclude that every human being is deserving of respect and honor.

GROUP DISCUSSION *CONT.*

▶ In what ways can your life demonstrate the priority of your relationship with God?

2 To bear God's image doesn't point only to the relationship we have with God; we also have a relationship with one another. God created us "male and female." The God who exists in community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created human beings to live in community as well.

In fact, verses 22-24 tell us that we were not created to bear God's image on our own or to have an isolated relationship with God. We reflect God best when we are in community with one another—relating to others in love and grace. Thus, reflecting God's image means we are to relate rightly to Him and to others.

▶ How are Jesus' remarks in John 13:35 a reflection of people living out the image of God in their relationships with others?

3 Reflecting God also goes beyond our relationships and is seen in the rhythms of our everyday activities and rest.

A lot of people have wrongly assumed that the command to work was a result of man's sinning and rebelling against God. But the creation narrative shows us that God created work for man as part of His good world. Work is just as beautiful as the sunset, and just as purposeful as the rain.

Work isn't something that God gave man as a curse after the fall into sin; the toil of work is what came with sin, but work itself is designed to give us fulfillment and provide us an environment to reflect God. When viewed rightly, our work can reflect God. But not only does our work reflect God, our resting does as well. In fact, God commands us to rest.

▶ How can you reflect God in your work as a student? an athlete? in a part-time job?

As a group, read Colossians 1:15-17.

- ▶ What description of Jesus sticks out to you the most in these verses?
- ▶ What do these verses tell us about the process and purpose of creation?
- ★ How does it change our overall perspective to recognize that all things were created by the Son and for the Son?

The Bible is a God-centered book. We have been given Scripture so that we might know God. That means when we read Scripture, we should focus primarily on what we can learn, love, and embrace about God and His Son, Jesus.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God, the only One who rules wisely over creation, perfectly relates to God and others, and through His work, earns our everlasting rest. By the Son, for the Son, and through the Son, all things exist and hold together.

OUR MISSION



Head

How does knowledge of God's sovereignty over all creation influence the way you think about your circumstances?

How should the doctrine of humans being created in God's image influence the way we think about others?



Heart

How should the doctrine of humans being created in God's image influence the way we feel about others, both Christians and non-Christians?

Why should we be grieved when we see image-bearers of God living in a way that is contrary to the way God intended?



Hands

How will you begin to treat friends, family members, and even strangers differently based upon the truth that they are created in God's image?

What are some ways you can begin to reflect God by being a better steward of the world He has given us?

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 1



The point: God created everything.



Read Genesis 1:1.

In verse 1, the Bible introduces the concept of the heavens and the earth. What Person is also introduced here? How is this significant? Explain.

What was the action that occurred in verse 1? Why do you think it's important to realize that God was the one to take this action?

How does verse 1 go against what so much of our culture believes? Why is it important for believers to understand this foundational truth?

Underline the words God used to describe the earth in verse 2.

The word *create* means to bring into existence. God created everything from nothing, but even more amazing is the truth that God already was, before anything else existed. The fact that God created everything means that nothing, other than God Himself, is eternal.

While many in our culture believe that the universe sprang into existence from nothing, such beliefs are implausible, and science itself testifies to this. According to the standard scientific beliefs in cosmology, the finite universe came into existence at a certain point in time/space/history. Since both science and philosophy discredit the claim that something can come from nothing, the empirical knowledge we have makes it look more and more like the Christian worldview gets it right on the creation account.

How does knowing that we have a Creator change the way believers view our meaning and purpose?



Respond

Journal your thoughts on this: *The God who existed before the world began is the same God who made me.*

Jot down a few ways you can look at life differently, knowing that the eternal God created you, loves you, and wants a relationship with you.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 2



The point: God created everything good.

What comes to mind when you hear the word *good*? A good person? A good movie? A good day? A good game? Considering all of these phrases, what is your personal definition of the word *good*?



Read Genesis 1:3-25.

Briefly describe what God created on each day.

First Day:

Fourth Day:

Second Day:

Fifth Day:

Third Day:

At the end of each day, God was pleased with what He had made. Circle each instance of "God saw that it was good."

Why is it important that God saw creation as good? What are the implications for our lives now?

God's definition of *good* is sometimes different than our own. God's creation was good because it fulfilled its main purpose: to display His glory. Everything beautiful tells of His beauty. Everything He made is good because He is good.



Respond

If the weather permits, go outside and take a short walk. Spend a few minutes listening, looking around, and paying attention to the smell. Notice the parts of God's creation you usually pass by.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 3

The point: God created everything through His Son.

Read John 1:1-3,14.

As Christians, we believe in the *Trinity*—that *God is One, in three persons: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit* (See John 14). Combining this belief with what we read earlier this week, we know that in the beginning, all three persons of the Trinity were present: God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

List the three things John said about “the Word” in verse 1.

Read through the verses once more, replacing “the Word” with Jesus. How does this help your understanding of these verses? Explain.

According to these verses, how was everything created? Why is this important?

Summarize the truth of verse 14 in your own words. What is so significant about the fact that Jesus took on flesh and walked on earth with His people?

Read Colossians 1:15-17.

Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God, the only One who rules wisely over creation, perfectly relates to God and others, and through His work, earns our everlasting rest. By the Son, for the Son, and through the Son, all things exist and hold together.

Respond

How does understanding that the entire Bible is the story of Jesus change the way you approach reading it?

What are some areas of your life in which you need to remember that Jesus holds all things together?

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 4



The point: We reflect God in how we rule wisely over the world.



Read Genesis 1:26-31.

Summarize verse 26 in your own words. How does knowing we are made in God's image and likeness affect the way we live and rule over His creation?

According to verse 27, both men and women were created _____. Why is this significant?

Using verses 28-30, list what God instructed Adam and Eve to rule over, as well as what He told them to use.

Rule

Use

God created everything, and He has ultimate power and control over everything. Still, He made us in His image, and then gave us authority to rule over creation.

What do you think this shows about God's character? Explain.



Respond

Think about items, people, or tasks you have a responsibility to rule wisely over. What are some ways you can influence each area in a way that reflects God?

God created the world, which speaks of Him, and He created us, who bear His image. The way we interact with the world around us also speaks of Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you wisely influence the people, places, and things around you for God's glory.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 5



The point: We reflect God in how we relate to Him and others.



Read Genesis 2:4-9,16-25.

Verses 4-7 summarize the creation of the heavens and the earth, as well as man. Before God created man to cultivate the earth, how did things survive?

God could have sustained the earth on His own, but He made Adam to take care of His creation. This was the beginning of the first relationship—between God and man.

Considering this, why do you think it's important that God "placed" man in the garden (v. 8)?

What are the implications of God's command in verses 16-17? Why are these commands significant?

The animals weren't enough to complement Adam and be His helper, so God created another human—woman. Community and relationships are important to God. From the beginning, God didn't intend for people to be alone.

Circle Adam's job in verses 19-20.

Although God gave Adam an important job to do, even that work couldn't fulfill him. He needed a helper, so God created Eve. God had established the second relationship, this time between man and woman.

What is unique about the way God created Eve from the way He created Adam or the rest of creation?



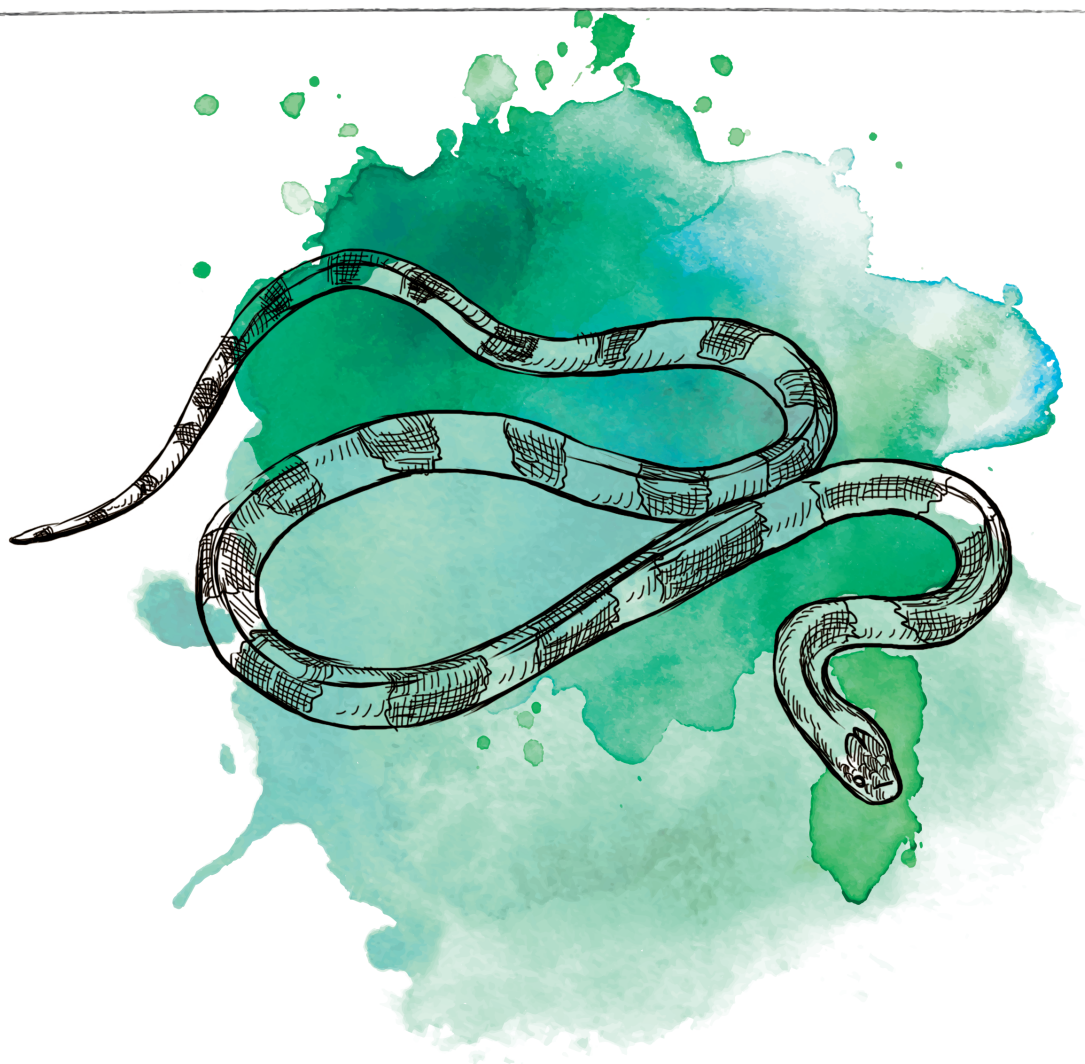
Respond

The first relationship God created was between Himself and man, and the second was between man and woman. Our relationship with God should always come first. Does your life currently reflect this priority?

Do your current relationships bear the image God intended? What are some ways you are accomplishing God's work together with the people in your life?

SESSION 2

MAN SINS



SIN CORRUPTS GOD'S GOOD CREATION.

INTRODUCTION

As a society, we don't seem to agree on much. Actually, about the only thing we might all agree on is that something is not right with the world. The broken world we see on the news, streaming through our social media feeds, or in the lives of our loved ones stresses one key truth: Somewhere at some time in our history, something went horribly, tragically wrong.

Most of us assume the problem is “out there” somewhere. Maybe you believe there are good people and bad people, and bad people cause all the trouble for good people. Or maybe you think the real problems are more systemic—poverty, lack of education, unequal opportunities, or the breakdown of the family structure.

What if the problem is not just out there, but in us? What if that outburst of anger you explained away wasn't just a result of stress, but reflected something you truly believed? What if that cutting remark wasn't just a slip of the tongue, but a hint at the real, unfiltered you? Maybe the problem is deeper than we know or care to admit.



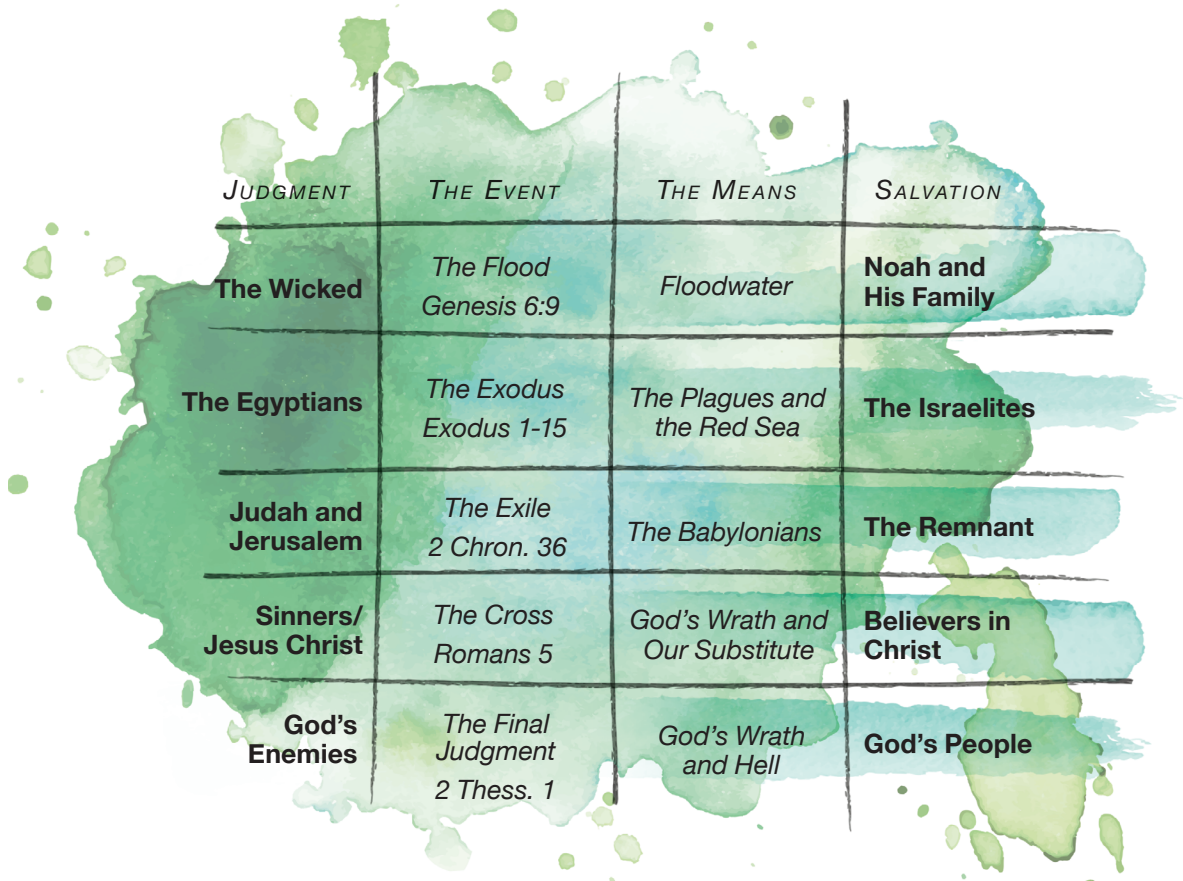
How would you define sin?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

God's creation was good. It was very good, in fact. The first man and woman lived together in God's garden where He had placed them, and they did the good work of representing His image in creation and living in a harmonious relationship with one another and God.

It's at this point in the story that we are introduced to another character, one that was not content with his place in creation. Here was a being that did not want to serve God as Creator but instead wanted to be God himself. Not only that, this creature desired that people—God's prized creation—adopt the same self-determining attitude and throw off the loving rule and reign of God. He would tempt the first humans to join him in his rebellion by inviting them to violate the single prohibition God had lovingly given them—not to eat from the one forbidden tree in the garden.

SALVATION THROUGH JUDGMENT



JUDGMENT	THE EVENT	THE MEANS	SALVATION
The Wicked	<i>The Flood</i> Genesis 6:9	<i>Floodwater</i>	Noah and His Family
The Egyptians	<i>The Exodus</i> Exodus 1-15	<i>The Plagues and the Red Sea</i>	The Israelites
Judah and Jerusalem	<i>The Exile</i> 2 Chron. 36	<i>The Babylonians</i>	The Remnant
Sinners/ Jesus Christ	<i>The Cross</i> Romans 5	<i>God's Wrath and Our Substitute</i>	Believers in Christ
God's Enemies	<i>The Final Judgment</i> 2 Thess. 1	<i>God's Wrath and Hell</i>	God's People

SESSION VIDEOS

Watch this session's video, and then continue the group discussion using the following guide.



What ideas or phrases stood out to you most in the video? Why?



What images or phrases about sin were most striking to you in the video? Why?

GROUP DISCUSSION

As a group, read Genesis 3:1-7.

- ▶ Look closely at the serpent's words. What was he implying about the nature and character of God through this temptation?
- ★ What can we learn about our own sin from the serpent's temptation and Adam and Eve's response?
- ▶ What are some of the noticeable effects of sin you see in this passage?

As we begin to read the opening verses in chapter 3, we see that a drastic change is about to take place between humanity's relationship with their Creator. And at the heart of this change lies an issue of trust—trusting the goodness of God and His Word. In fact, distrust is at the heart of human rebellion. Human rebellion leads us to distrust the goodness of God's Word. This is at the heart of human sinfulness, so it's no surprise that Satan (disguised as a serpent) chose this line of temptation in the garden of Eden.

- ▶ When have you seen people disbelieve what God has clearly said?

As a group, read Genesis 6:5-7.

The text says God "was deeply grieved" over this entire situation. The Hebrew word used here means wounded, pained, or heartbroken. In Isaiah 54:6, the prophet used the same word to describe the feeling a wife would have if her husband abandoned her. Honestly, it's a strange word to use when talking about God because it makes Him sound incredibly vulnerable. God was not just angry over sin, but grieved and heartbroken by it. Sin is never primarily about breaking rules, but about wounding a relationship. When we sin, we betray our loving God and break His heart.

- ★ The Bible tells us that God grieved before His judgment took place. What does this tell us about His character and how He views sin in our lives?

GROUP DISCUSSION *CONT.*

Our instinctive response to the judgment of our sin is to wonder if God has gone too far. It doesn't seem befitting of a loving God to purge the earth like this. But consider what you might do if someone you love was being ravaged by cancer. You would take radical measures (like chemotherapy) to cleanse them from the cancer—not in spite of your love for them, but because of that love. That's precisely what God does with His creation. He loves it too much to let the cancer of our sin spread another inch.



How would your attitude toward sin change if you saw it less as breaking God's rules and more as breaking God's heart?



What are some things that might grieve God today? In what ways does He still show patience to His people?

God could have destroyed the world and all its inhabitants, but instead He chose to purge creation of its great wickedness. Yet, He would save one family. He chose not to give up on all humanity, not to turn His back and start over completely. Even though He knew Noah and his descendants would again disappoint Him, defy Him, and walk in faithlessness, God decided to preserve this remnant. Why? Because like a father who will not stop loving his children no matter how often they disobey, God bound His heart to His people.

Ultimately, sin became so great on earth that God decided to wipe creation clean with a worldwide flood. But in His grace, God made a way for His judgment of the wicked to lead to the salvation of Noah and his family. "Salvation Through Judgment" (p. 22) shows how this event foreshadows the cross of Jesus Christ and God's eternal plan of rescue for His people, for those who believe in His Son.

As a group, read Genesis 11:1-9.

At this point in the Genesis account is an interesting story, often called The Tower of Babel. Some time had passed since the judgment and mercy of the flood, but humanity was still broken from the inside out. There was still a sin problem because there was still a heart problem. Sin remained in people's hearts after the flood. God knew this was true—the flood was only meant to slow down the progression of sin in the world.



How did the people's work demonstrate a prideful disobedience?

God isn't against cities and towers, of course, but the architecture itself wasn't the issue that day; it was the motivation behind the city and tower. It was the wayward heart of humanity. The people wanted to build a city with a tower so high that they would make a name for themselves. Feel the arrogance of this statement. They stood in direct contrast to God's promise to give Abram a great name in Genesis 12. But these people wanted to achieve greatness for themselves. Notice in the last line of verse 4 that they were acting directly against God's good command to fill the earth by wanting to huddle together and build their own kingdom.

- ▶ In what ways might people in today's culture try to make a name for themselves?
- ▶ How might pursuing a bigger platform or a personal brand be the equivalent of trying to build our own kingdom?

CHRIST CONNECTION

Our sin reveals the depth of our rebellion against God and our helplessness to do anything to be right with God again. But what we cannot do, God has done through Jesus. Jesus is the Son of Eve whom God graciously provided to crush the head of the serpent Satan and rescue us from sin and death. (Genesis 3:15)

OUR MISSION



Head

How has this session altered your perception of sin?

How might a right perspective on sin help us have a right understanding of God's grace?



Heart

What happens when you only focus only on the behavioral aspect of sin and not on what is taking place within the heart?

How does the truth that God is grieved by our sin influence the way you deal with personal sin and temptation?



Hands

How can you trust in God's Word this week? How might that affect different areas of your life?

What opportunities has God given me in my neighborhood, school, community, and beyond to make God's name great and proclaim His kingdom?

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 1

★ The point: Human rebellion leads us to distrust the goodness of God's Word.

Has anyone ever told you a lie about someone? How did the lie affect your view of both people?

Lies affect our outlook on different situations and people. Adam and Eve trusted the serpent's lies rather than God.

▶ Read Genesis 3:1-7.

By trusting what the serpent said about God, Adam and Eve questioned God's goodness. How did the serpent create doubt about God's command?

▶ Read Genesis 2:15-17.

How did the serpent twist God's words? What did God actually say to Adam and Eve?

God's Words	The Serpent's Twist

What did Eve add to God's original commands?

People often forget that sin is actually rebellion against God (Isa. 1:2). Because the core of human rebellion involves mistrusting what God said, Satan's introduction of this doubt was critical. He attempts to do the same to believers today, tempting us to give in to sin.

▶ Respond

Consider this: *Are there areas in my own life where I'm tempted to doubt God's goodness?* Jot down a few areas and ask, "how your life might look different if you trusted in God's goodness in each of those areas."

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 2



The point: Human rebellion ruptures our relationship with God and others.



Read Genesis 3:8-16.

Humanity's rebellion against God resulted in our relationships with God and each other being broken. List Adam and Eve's actions in verses 8-10 that reveal a broken relationship with God.

Notice Adam heard God "in the garden" (v. 10). What does this reveal about the closeness of God's relationship with Adam and Eve?

According to verse 10, why did Adam and Eve hide from God?

Verse 11 demonstrates that Adam and Eve didn't previously have knowledge of their nakedness. What did God's second question imply?

Where did Adam shift the blame for his sin? Where did Eve shift the blame for her sin? In what ways do people often react this way today?

Make a note of God's punishment to both the serpent and the woman.

The Serpent

The Woman



Respond

Prayerfully consider any broken relationships that might be present in your own life. Then, take a moment to jot down the names of those people. Pray for that relationship and the individual/group involved. Ask forgiveness from the individual/group. Offer forgiveness to the individual/group.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 3

The point: God judges wickedness.

Grief may be technically defined as experiencing extreme mental pain due to loss or sorrow. What is another way you might describe grief in your own words.

Read Genesis 6:5-7.

Reread verses 5-6 and fill in the blanks.

God saw that man's wickedness was _____.

Man's mind was on nothing but _____.

The Lord regretted He _____.

According to verse 6, what did God experience in response to widespread sin?

What was God's reaction to His people turning their hearts over to evil?

Judgment is God's response to sin. He is holy and righteous, and He will not continue to tolerate willful sin in His creation. God's decision to destroy parts of His creation was His judgment for sin at the time of the flood.

Name a few other places in the Bible where God was grieved by His people's sin, yet patient in His judgment.

Respond

God created us for His glory (Isa. 43:7). Any time we choose not to live according to His glory, we sin (Rom. 3:23). Just like mankind at the time of Genesis 6, we are sinful and often choose disobedience.

God is grieved by sin (Ps. 78:40; Isa. 63:10). It causes Him agony and pain. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you examine your heart. Confess to the Lord any sin in your life, repenting for any grief you have caused Him.

What is one sin that interferes with you focusing your mind and heart on God? If nothing in particular immediately comes to mind, ask God to reveal that sin to you today.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 4

The point: God provides a way of escape.

Read Genesis 6:8-22.

List the four ways Noah was described in verses 8-9.

Jot down the two words used to explain the state of the world in verse 11.

Underline the word “every” each time it appears in verses 12 and 13. What was God’s plan for the inhabitants of the earth?

Briefly describe the scene depicted in verses 14-16.

How did God physically provide a way of escape for the righteous in this passage?

God told Noah He would destroy the earth with a _____. Who would be saved from the flood?

Noah received favor from God (Gen. 6:8). God’s favor is His special blessing or approval. In response, Noah chose to live righteously and blamelessly (Gen. 6:9). Because of Noah’s righteousness, his entire family would be saved from the flood.

In light of this, why do you think Noah’s response was so important (v. 22)?

Respond

This is so much more than the story of one man being saved from destruction; it begins the ongoing story of God using one man’s righteousness to save humanity—Jesus.

We are not saved by our works, but by Jesus’ righteousness. Thank God for providing a way for you to be saved.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 5

The point: God judges our attempts to build our own kingdom.

The people of Shinar thought they could build a tower to reach into the heavens and make a name for themselves. However, God had a different plan.

Read Genesis 11:6-7.

What made it easy for the people to work together to build the tower? Explain.

According to verse 6, what would happen if the men succeeded?

Why do you think God considered their “success” to be a negative thing? Explain.

What action did God take to respond to this situation?

God made men in His image and commissioned them to know and live according to His covenant. God knew that the men in Shinar were moving further away from His plan and His purpose. God didn't destroy the men; however, He destroyed their ability to carry out a plan that would cause them to lose sight of their need for Him.

Respond

Sometimes you have a great plan and wonder why it falls apart. When you find yourself in this situation, stop and ask: *How often do I talk to God? How often do I hear from God? Was this my plan or God's plan?*

On a note card, write out these phrases:

- *God sees me.*
- *God cares for me.*
- *God knows any sin in my heart and will take steps to bring me back to Him.*

HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

Prepare to Lead

The Leader Guide is designed to be cut out along the dotted line so you, the leader, can have this front-and-back page with you as you lead your group through the session.

Watch the session video and *read through the session content* with the Leader Guide cut-out in hand and notice how it supplements each section of the study.

Use the *Session Objective* in the Leader Guide to help focus your preparation and leadership in the group session.

Questions & Answers

★ Questions in the session content with this icon have some sample answers provided in the Leader Guide, if needed, to help you jump-start or steer the conversation.

Setting the Context

This section of the session always has an *infographic* on the opposite page. The Leader Guide provides an activity to help your group members interact with the content communicated through the infographic.

Group Discussion

The Group Discussion contains the main teaching content for each session, providing questions for students to interact with as you move through the biblical passages. Some of these questions will have suggested answers in the Leader Guide.

Our Mission

The Our Mission is a summary application section designed to highlight how the biblical passages being studied challenge the way we think, feel, and live today. Some of these questions will have suggested answers in the Leader Guide.

Pray

Conclude each group session with a prayer. A brief sample prayer is provided at the end of each Leader Guide cut-out.

SESSION 1 • LEADER GUIDE

Session Objective

Demonstrate to students that God is the sole creator of the universe, and His creation was good, especially His creation of humanity made in His image, intended to reflect His goodness.

Introducing the Study

Use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.

- ★ Both science and the Bible point to a definite beginning of the universe. What are some conclusions about God's nature we can draw from His creation of the universe? *We learn that God, who created all things and through which all things exist, is eternal. He has always existed, otherwise He would just be another created being, which is simply not the case. God is the One who created everything we see and know. It is from Him that we understand the meaning of our own lives. It is through Him that all things continue to hold together in our world today. And it is to Him that all glory is properly due.*

Setting the Context

Use the following activity to help group members see the significance of a Christ-centered reading of Scripture.

Ask group members to look at "Seeing Jesus in Genesis" (p. 10) and to come up with a statement that ties together and summarizes these five Old and New Testament connections from the Book of Genesis. (Example: Jesus sets right what humanity destroys through sin, and He does so by sacrificing Himself for the sake of humanity.)

A good summary statement here will lay the foundation for the gospel of Jesus, who died on the cross for the sin of the world. If the basics of the gospel can be found foreshadowed in the first book of the Bible, then imagine how much the rest of Scripture points to the Son, the Word of God, who created all things with the plan and purpose to lay His life down for God's image-bearers.

Group Discussion

Watch this session's video, and then as part of the group discussion, use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.



★ What are some of the things we can learn about the nature and character of God from these verses alone? *God is eternal and exists outside of time. God is all-powerful, the Creator of all things. God is good.*

★ Why does God call each step of His creation good?

Is it morally good? How so? *Yes. When God created everything, there was no sin in it.*

Is it aesthetically good? How so? *Yes. You don't have to stare at the Grand Canyon or a sunset for long to realize that the work of creation is beautiful.*

Is it usable? How so? *Yes. When God created something and called it good, He was saying it was doing well at performing its intended purpose and design.*

★ Why is it important that we recognize that all humans are created in God's image? *Being created in the image of our Creator means humanity is fundamentally distinct from the rest of creation. It means all humans are created with inherent value, worth, and dignity as a result of bearing God's image. Seeing people as created in the image of God, just as we are, can also help us spot injustice in the world and work toward justice for the oppressed. Treating people with respect as image-bearers of God honors the God who made all human beings.*

★ How does it change our overall perspective to recognize that all things were created by the Son and for the Son? *We can no longer take things for granted nor live for our own selfish pursuits and desires. Everything we see and interact with and use in creation should serve the purpose of honoring the Son of God. People who live only to please themselves are missing their true purpose in life, and we who know Christ can share His gospel with them.*

Our Mission

○ How does knowledge of God's sovereignty over all creation influence the way you think about your circumstances? *It should help us recognize that no matter our circumstances, however painful or lonely they may be, God is both good and ultimately in control. We can trust Him and in His timing to work through whatever difficult circumstances we face to make us more like His Son each day.*

Pray

Close your group in prayer, thanking God for His creative power and praying for a greater vision to live out what it means to bear His image.

SESSION 2 • LEADER GUIDE

Session Objective

Show how deep and widespread sin is by surveying the rapid descent in Genesis 3–11. The main takeaway should be how terrible our sin is and how God is right to judge us for it, but still we see God’s hope and grace all along the way.

Introducing the Study

Use this option as an introduction to talk about the nature of sin, uncovering how your students currently think about sin—whether sin can be reduced to wrong actions and/or thoughts, or whether it stems from something deeper, a heart rebellion against the goodness of God.

Setting the Context

Use the following activity to help group members see the grace of God in providing salvation for sinners who likewise deserve judgment along with the wicked.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being carefree; 10 being holy wrath), ask group members to plot their own sense of justice and judgment when they have been wronged and sinned against by someone else. Then ask group members to look at “Salvation Through Judgment” (p. 22) and to reflect specifically on the means of God’s judgment (a “10”) in comparison with our own sense of judgment. Then encourage them to see God’s amazing grace in the salvation column to save sinners who deserve His judgment.

Read this paragraph to transition to the next part of the study:

While the theme of sinfulness is pervasive in Genesis 3–11, so also is the refrain of God’s love and grace. Keep an eye out for the signs of God’s “salvation through judgment” as we continue our discussion.

Group Discussion

Watch this session’s video, and then as part of the group discussion, use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.

- ★ What can we learn about our own sin from the serpent’s temptation and Adam and Eve’s response? 1) *Acts of sin in our own lives show a distrust of God and His Word.* 2) *Sin is appealing to our eyes and our desires, and we can easily*

rationalize our choices to give in to sin. 3) Sin always results in shame and broken relationships.

- ★ The Bible tells us that God grieved before His judgment took place. What does this tell us about His character and how He views sin in our lives? *The fact that God is grieved over sin tells us that He is a loving Father who will not simply overlook or turn His head to the pain and disobedience of His children's sin.*
- ★ How did the people's work demonstrate a prideful disobedience? *Pride is at the root of their rebellion for the simple reason that pride rejects the wisdom and authority of God our Creator. Pride manifests itself by choosing to go my own way instead of God's way, essentially making myself the god of my life.*

Our Mission

- 🗨️ How might a right perspective on sin help us have a right understanding of God's grace? *When our eyes are opened to the reality of sin—to its pride and rebellion against a good God, and the consequences that it unleashes to those around us—we begin to see God's love and grace in a whole new light. God wasn't obligated to show grace and mercy or even provide a way to be made right before Him again, but He did, making His love all the more overwhelming in our hearts.*
- ♥️ What happens when you only focus only on the behavioral aspect of sin and not on what is taking place within the heart? *The heart, representing the center or essence of a person, is what directs that person's behavior. It is the command center. Thus, if one has a covetous heart, that may result in the physical act of stealing. The heart is the root, where the behavior is the fruit of one's life. If we were to only focus on the behavioral aspect of our sin, we would never actually confront the root issue that causes us to do what we do. To use an analogy, if we see a polluted river, it is one thing to deal with the pollution as it flows downstream. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it's not the most important thing. The best thing is to travel upstream to the source of the pollution, which in this case, is the human heart. Only by dealing with sin at the heart level can we effectively deal with it at the behavioral level.*

Pray

Close your group in prayer, asking God for wisdom to identify sin for what it truly is and to help others do the same so we can find grace and forgiveness in Jesus.