

Session 01

Beginning of **ALL THINGS**

CENTRAL TRUTH | God is the Creator and Ruler of all things.

The beginnings of stories can grip us. In fact, many of us determine whether we will continue down the path that the book, movie, or video game has laid based on how it started. We want our attention captured as we immerse ourselves in a new story. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, provides an epic beginning to the story of Scripture—the beginning of all things. As we begin this quarter's study, we will see that God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of all things. And God providentially created human beings in His image and likeness to worship Him, enjoy a relationship with Him, and reflect His goodness into the world.

EXPLORE OPTIONS

> THE QUOTE QUIZ

For this game, you will need to collect the first few lines from a variety of popular movies (try to choose quotes from movies students will be familiar with like *Elf*, *Lion King*, *Inside Out*, *Star Wars*, or *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*). You'll also need to ensure that the quote from each movie is substantial enough for the participating students to be able to guess what movie they are from. You can print out these movie quotes on separate sheets of paper or keep a running list of them on your phone or device of choice. After students arrive, you will then break them up into two teams. After the students are assembled into their teams, you will then read a movie quote, and each student will have ten seconds to guess which movie the quote is the introductory line for. The student that guesses the correct movie first receives a point for his or her team. The team with the most points at the end of the game (when there are no movie quotes left) is the winning team! The beginnings of good movies can be memorable and captivate us. In this week's teaching, we will learn about another beginning—the beginning of all things. Through the creation story, we will see that God is the Creator and Ruler of all things.

> CONVERSATION STARTER

When have you created something that made you feel proud? What did you create?

This week's activity has downloadable content:



GENESIS 1:1-5

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there

was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

GENESIS 1:26-31

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. ²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on

the earth.” ²⁹ God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, ³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

GENESIS 2:1-3

¹ So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. ² On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from

all his work that he had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

Scripture COMMENTARY

GENESIS 1:1-5

1:1. This opening verse of the Bible, seven words in the Hebrew, establishes seven key truths upon which the rest of the Bible is based. First, God exists. Second, God existed before there was a universe and will exist after the universe perishes. Third, God is the main character in the Bible. Fourth, as Creator, God has done what no human could ever do. Fifth, God is mysterious: He is three divine persons in one divine essence. Sixth, God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He does not just modify preexisting matter but calls matter into being out of nothing. Seventh, God is not dependent on the universe; the universe is totally dependent on God.

1:2. The sense of verse 2 is that God created the earth formless and empty as an unfinished and unfilled state. Working through an orderly process over a period of six days,

God formed (days 1–3) and filled (days 4–6) His created handiwork.

1:3. A foundational teaching of the Bible is that God speaks and does so with universe-changing authority.

1:4. Another basic truth of the Bible is that **God saw**; this means He is fully aware of His creation. The term good can be used to express both high quality and moral excellence. The physical universe is a good place because God made it. God found satisfaction in His labor.

1:5. In ancient Israel, the act of naming an object, place, or person indicated that you held control over it (see 35:10; 41:45; Num. 32:42; Deut. 3:14; Josh. 19:47; 2 Kings 23:34; 24:17).

GENESIS 1:26-31

1:26. The New Testament teaches that Christians will someday bear the image of Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2).

1:27. The creation of humanity is the crowning event of chapter 1, as shown by the fact that created is repeated three times. The verb “created” (Hebrew: *bara*) is the same one used in 1:1, referring to a kind of creative activity that only God can do. The term “man”

(Hebrew: *adam*) is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to humanity in general, not just males (see 7:21); all people, both male and female, are created in the image of God. It should not be concluded that God is both male and female. Christians are generally agreed that God does not have a literal physical body.

1:28. God gave humanity five different commands: three commands regarding God’s

Scripture COMMENTARY CONTINUED

1:29-30. The repeated use of Hebrew *kol*, “all, every, entire” shows that the point is to emphasize God’s abundant and generous provision for all His creatures, rather than to specify what they were or were not supposed to eat.

1:31. This is the seventh, final, and most elaborate use of the word **good** in the account of the seven days of creation in that it adds very to good.

GENESIS 2:1-3

2:1. This verse serves as a complement to 1:1. Together, the two set the first six days of creation apart from the sacred seventh day.

2:2. This is the first use of the number seven in the Bible, a number that will play an especially significant role in the religious and social life of ancient Israel (see 4:15; 7:2-4,10; 21:28-31; 29:18-20). On the seventh day God rested, thus setting an example for people—who are made in His image—to follow (see Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-14). Though God rested from all his work that he had done,

this is not to say that God has abandoned the universe. In the New Testament Jesus affirmed that God is still at work in the world, even on the Sabbath (see John 5:16-17). Also, God’s “rest” does not imply that He was tired. It literally means “cease” and implies only that His creative work was complete.

2:3. This is the only instance during the creation process when God blessed a unit of time. The term holy is applied in the Bible to something set aside for service to God.

Conversation QUESTIONS



Refer to page # for a description of the 7 Arrows of Bible Reading.

CENTRAL TRUTH | God is the Creator and Ruler of all things.

EXPLORE GENESIS 1:1-5

If you have a cell phone or are interested in photography, you may be familiar with the panoramic features that many devices have. The panoramic mode of a device enables us to have a complete view of something from almost every direction or angle.¹ Similarly, Genesis 1 gives us a poetic, panoramic view into the creation of all things—this is the big picture.

Simply, yet beautifully, verse 1 reminds us that God is self-existent, eternal, and the main character of the Bible.² And as the main character of the Bible, we discover that God “created the heavens and the earth.” He is the Originator and Author of all things. The word “created,” in Hebrew, is only used to describe God’s activity, occurring six times in the opening creation account.³ This lets us know that something unique is happening. The self-existent, eternal God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing—only something that God can do.

KEY QUESTION

01.



What do the opening verses of Genesis 1 reveal to us about God?

After verse 1, we move further into the creation story. Verse 2 reveals that the earth was “formless and empty,” showing us how unfinished and uninhabitable the earth was. God was not done, and His creative

¹ Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. “panorama,” accessed July 9, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/panorama>.

² Robert D. Bergen, “Genesis,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax, eds. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 2017), Logos Bible Software version, 5.

³ Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale Commentary Series, vol. 1, David G. Firth, ed. (London: InterVarsity Press, 2019), Logos Bible Software version, 50.

work would continue to both form and fill what He had made. The dark, uninhabited, watery depths of the earth was hovered over by the Spirit of God. God was preparing to creatively transform the world into a habitable and ideal place. “The Spirit brings order out of chaos.”⁴

📍 EXPLORATION TIP

Invite students to read Deuteronomy 32:11. The verb translated as “was hovering,” in Hebrew, is also used in this passage. What might this passage suggest was taking place when the Spirit of God hovered over the earth in Genesis 1:2?

We see God’s might on full display as He speaks creation into existence. His powerful word brought forth light where there was once darkness. Not only that, but God exercises His authority by naming the light “day” and naming the darkness “night.” In the creation story, the sun, moon, and stars weren’t created until day four. So, what can we make of the light that is mentioned in these verses? Though not specifically stated, it’s not unfair to conclude that the light is connected to God Himself as its source.⁵ Keep this in mind as we move to the New Testament book of John in a few sessions. We will revisit the amazing truth that the Word of God, Jesus, created all things and is the One in whom true light is found (see John 1:1-5). In our dark, sin-corrupted world, God provides light that overcomes the darkness and enables us to enjoy a relationship with Him. **The One who created us is also the One who has made salvation possible.**

02.



Verse 4 is one of several instances when God’s creative work is called “good.” Why is this significant?

God not only spoke the light into existence, but as we see in verse 4, He “saw that the light was good.” We see this declaration about God’s creative work made several times throughout the creation story. The word “good” can be used to indicate “both high quality and moral excellence.”⁶ God is the Creator of all things and the Ruler who declares what is good.

03.



How should knowing that God is the Creator and Ruler of all things shape the way that we pray?

LeaderPACK

Item # | Leader Pack Item

⁴ Phillip Bethancourt, *Exalting Jesus in Genesis*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary, David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, eds. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2024), Logos Bible Software version, 9.

⁵ Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 51–52.

⁶ Bergen, “Genesis,” 5.

EXPLORE GENESIS 1:26-31.

If we're honest, the "let us" language of verse 26 may confuse many of us. Scholars do not all agree on the interpretation of this language. However, we do know that Scripture reveals there is one God; and He exists in three equal persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Father acts through the Son by the power of the Spirit in creation.

📍 THEOLOGY | HOW DOES JESUS HELP US UNDERSTAND THE TRINITY?

Jesus is our blueprint to helping us understand the triune God! Jesus revealed that the Trinity enjoyed loving unity among one another before the world was created, and the Father sent Jesus by the power of the Spirit to share God's love (see John 17:20-26). Simply put, The Father acts through the Son by the power of the Spirit in both creation *and* salvation.

04.

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

In verses 26-31, we learn about the crowning achievement of creation—human beings! God made both male and female in His image and likeness. Humankind has been set apart from the rest of God's creation. And as His image bearers, humans are to reflect God's character, rule, and goodness into the world. Verses 28-31 make this specifically evident. Humankind was not only blessed, but called to "be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." This command invited human beings to reproduce, populating the land and rule over the animals of then earth. As one commentator notes, "Mankind is appointed as God's royal representatives to rule the earth in his place."⁷ With humankind created—the peak of God's creative work—He now declares that all His creation is "very good." Human beings were not created to be passive spectators but were meant to serve God by cultivating and caring for the world He created. The phrase "very good" marks God's emphatic celebration of all that He had made, including human beings.

📍 BE VULNERABLE

Why is Genesis 1:26-28 foundational to our understanding of human dignity and value? How has this verse shaped the way you see yourself and others?

As image bearers, all human beings hold inherent dignity, worth, and value. Yes, *all* people—regardless of ethnicity, gender, social status, education level, family of origin, and so on. Rather than allowing our culture to dictate who is worthy of dignity and respect and who is not, we must commit to treating ourselves as people made in the image of God, as well as those around us. In moments when we are tempted to say

⁷ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), Logos Bible Software version, 164.

something cruel about ourselves, we must remember that we are made in the image of God. Those in our communities who are vulnerable and in need, and even those whom we struggle to be kind to are made in the image of God as well. Genesis 1:26-28 lays the groundwork for this belief and is the lens through which we see all human beings.

05.



What does Genesis 1:28 tell us about God's desire for humanity? Why does this matter?

LeaderPACK

Item # | Leader Pack Item

EXPLORE GENESIS 2:1-3.

The heavens, earth and everything in them were completed—with verse 2 teaching us that God rested on the seventh day. As one commentator notes, “Genesis 1 tells the story of how God builds a temple for [H]imself. The creation is not just designed to house creatures and humanity; it is also the place where God intends to dwell alongside [H]is people.”⁸ As God dwells alongside humanity as their King, they were to worship Him and enjoy a relationship with Him, as well as reflect His rule and cultivate the world He had made. God's creation was good, beautiful, ideal—and now, complete.

This creation was followed with God's rest. God did not rest, however, because He was tired; rather, this means that He ceased from His creative work. Creation was complete. This seventh day was marked by God's blessing and declared holy, or set-apart. In other words, this seventh day was uniquely devoted to the Lord—a truth from which the Israelite's day of rest, called sabbath, would come from.

06.



What does it mean for God to rest?

In the book of Exodus, after the Israelites were freed from their Egyptian captivity, we see that they were commanded to “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (see Ex. 20:8). This day was uniquely devoted to the Lord. The word sabbath means “to cease,”⁹ and keeping the Sabbath day meant the Israelites were

⁸Bethancourt, *Exalting Jesus in Genesis*, 16.

⁹Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology, E. Ray Clendenen, ed., (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group), Logos Bible Software version, 78.

to cease their work and rest every seventh day of the week, redirecting their focus to the Lord. This weekly rhythm of rest has its roots in the story of creation. The Creator and Ruler of all things freed the Israelites from their Egyptian captivity and gifted them with a day to rest and worship Him.

07.



Read Exodus 20:8-11. What is the connection between the completion of creation and the Sabbath?

As Christ followers, we understand that the sabbath ultimately points to Jesus, the One in whom true, eternal rest is found. In Christ, the Creator and Ruler of all things put on flesh, lived a sinless life, died the death that we deserved for our rebellion against God, and resurrected. For those who believe in this good news, the apostle Paul says, “[they are] a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (see 2 Cor. 5:17). The God who created all things has created a way for us to be in a relationship with Him and His eternal family. In Him, we are made new!

08.



How does the sabbath point to Jesus? Why does this matter?

📍 FOR THE ROAD

CENTRAL TRUTH | God is the Creator and Ruler of all things.

KEY QUESTION

09.



In what ways should Genesis 1:26-28 shape the way we see ourselves and others?

Daily READING

BEYOND SMALL GROUP

This week, plan to send a message to your students, reminding them that they are valued and treasured by God.

MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 1:27

DAY 1

Genesis 1:1-5

DAY 2

Genesis 1:26-31

DAY 3

Genesis 2:1-3

DAY 4

Psalms 8:3-9

DAY 5

2 Corinthians 5:17