

# A Study in GENESIS

Chapter 1-10



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Companion Guide  
Bible Study



- Moses interrupts his lengthy genealogy between Genesis chapter 5 and 10 to focus in on the life of one man, Noah. Why do you think he did this? What was he trying to teach us through the life of Noah?
- Does Noah's sin surprise you? Why or why not?
- The lineage information . . . Why do we take pride in our ancestry? Many times we hear people say such things as: "I am ¾ Italian, ¼ German," etc. Why does this mean so much to some folks? Should lineage be important to us? Why or why not?



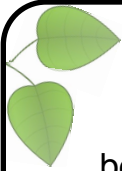
## INTRODUCTION

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Noah and the flood, God speaking through a burning bush, Sodom and Gomorrah, Jacob wrestling with an angel, Joseph in exile in Egypt. The stories found in the Book of Genesis captured our ancestors' imaginations more than three thousand years ago, and they captivate us still today. What explains their power and endurance?



For one thing, to millions of people they are more than stories, they are sacred texts, sanctified, resonating with a power and knowledge that is beyond our own. However, I believe the primary reason for the enduring quality of the stories of Genesis to appeal to both believer and unbeliever alike is due to the fact that the characters who inhabit the pages of Genesis are so starkly human. The stories of these people do not all have happy endings. They offer no easy answers to hard questions. They can leave us puzzled, forcing us to confront our own issues and life-questions without offering simplistic solutions.

Reading the story of Noah and the Flood, I am haunted by the ordeal of the survivor. I find Noah after the Flood both mystifying and troubling: God had spared him because he was a man "righteous



in his generation," but he hardly behaves the way we'd expect a model of righteousness to behave. His story is full of contradictions and divine mystery . . . just like most of the stories in Genesis, just like our own.

The people in Genesis rage at one another and at God; they struggle with temptation; they are jealous, grief-stricken, patient, conniving, loving, and hateful. And the dilemmas they face are ours: sibling rivalry and family violence; infertility and surrogate parenting; parents who play favorites; husbands who fail their wives; parents who grow old and frail, and children who are coming of age. Because their emotions and struggles are so real, the people of Genesis come to life in every generation, and their stories live on.

Furthermore, because the action can spill across generations, the resulting space in the stories gives us room to read ourselves into them. We begin to connect to past generations and to better understand our lives and our relationships, to one another and to the Creator. No other book may challenge you in quite the same way to reflect on our fallen humanness. No other book has the same potential to drive us past generic application directly into life-altering action. This is Genesis. This is our story . . . where everything past, present, and future collide and make up, what we call, home.

Genesis 9:25-27 then picks up Noah's declaration of cursing and blessing directed toward his sons. Ham's son Canaan and the Canaanites who descended from him were cursed to serve the line of God's people that would come from Ham's brothers. It was also promised that Japheth would prosper, as God would dwell with him. Lastly, Genesis 9:28-29 picks up the genealogy from 5:32 as Noah dies and the human race again begins to grow, though still sinful.

#### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- From what we have seen of Noah's character, what might he have been doing that "helped" God to "remember" him?
- There is some significant symbolism to the fact that Noah sent out a Raven from the ark first and then a dove. Read **1 Kings 17:2-6** and note the possible correlation between the Raven in each story. Pay special attention to the reversal of the curse. (flood vs. drought)
- What does the dove symbolize in Christianity? Why do you think this is so?
- What does covenant mean?



- both men are said to bear the “image of God”
- both men “walked with God”
- both men ruled over the animals both men are given the cultural mandate to increase in number and rule the earth
- both men work the ground
- both men sin against God
- both men experience shameful nakedness following their sin
- both men had their nakedness covered
- both men were in covenant with God (Adam’s covenant is found in Hosea 6:7)
- both have three named sons



God entered into a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:1-17 that was intended for all people of the earth. The terms of the covenant for human beings include respect for the sanctity of human life, and the freedom to eat animals, building on the teaching in Genesis 1 that while animals are to be treated kindly they are inferior to human life, which alone bears God’s image.

What follows is bizarre but has to be, at the very least, acknowledged. In Genesis 9:18-28, Noah would appear to respond to God’s kindness with drunkenness and nudity, which leads to the sin of Noah’s son Ham. In the story of Noah, we have a sort of second fall from God. The point is simply that sin remains the human problem even after, in fact immediately after, the flood.

## GENESIS 1

“In the beginning God created . . .” No other words have brought more opinion and controversy to the table amongst both the religious and the non-religious. But what if Genesis 1 wasn’t given to us to focus on the “how,” “when,” and “why,” questions surrounding the creation of the world? What if, instead, Genesis 1 was meant to draw our attention to the “who” and the “for what purpose” questions?



The first chapter and first verse of our Bible is like any other, in that it is meant to be pored over, and intensely studied, word-by-word, for truth and timeless application. What may come as a shock to many is that a careful examination of the creation narrative may radically change the focus of our study from the science of creation to its purpose.



In Genesis 1:1 the word translated as “created,” is the Hebrew word “*bara*.” However, throughout the rest of Genesis, the Hebrew word translated “created” or “made” is “*asah*” which means to make something suitable to use for what has been created (*bara*), such as making one’s bed. For 5 days, God “created” (*asah*) elements of our world. But on day 6 God “created” (*bara*) human beings.

Why is this important? If we were to read into the creation account carefully, and with this understanding, what we would see is a God who made creation and then prepared it for humankind, His second and only “created” (*bara*) element ever. God prepared creation for human life in five literal twenty-four hour days. He set us upon this planet to tend to, cultivate, and care for everything that He had made.

The text of Genesis 1 was never meant to create questions in our mind. The statements made in its verses are unarguable points of fact that will forever lie outside of the realm of human comprehension. Instead, Genesis 1 was meant to guide and give purpose to humankind. If we begin God’s story, and subsequently ours, with any other focus or in any other way we will fail to understand and apply God’s Words the way He intended us to. With that as our foundation, let’s look at Genesis 1.



#### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- What does it mean to us to have been created "in the image of God"?
- How does human creativity relate to divine creativity? In the arts? In business? In raising a family?



pg.4

#### GENESIS 8-10

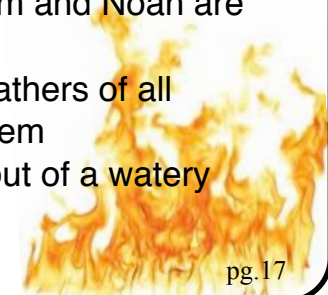
After the flood subsided and God dried the ground, Noah and his family exited the Ark. Then, Noah did a remarkable

thing that we must be careful to note and appreciate. In Genesis 8:20 we read, “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.”

After recognizing the devastation that God brought on the earth Noah was convicted of his own sin knowing that he too should have been killed with everyone else. So, he offered a burnt offering for the atonement of his sin (see Leviticus 1:4; Job 1:5). God was so pleased with Noah’s offering of atonement that He responded by promising to never flood the earth again.

Also, it’s necessary to see how the account of Noah, in many ways, echoes the account of Adam with a sort of new creation, new humanity, and new fall. The connections between Adam and Noah are numerous and include:

- both Adam and Noah are the fathers of all humanity that descend from them
- both worlds are brought forth out of a watery chaos



pg.17

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- Was Noah a righteous man? Do you think he would be considered righteous in our day?
- In what ways is Noah a bystander? A victim? A survivor?
- If the world had become so thoroughly corrupt and full of evil and violence and if God was so pained by it, why did God spare Noah and the animals? Why not just wipe everything out and start over? If you had to write the headline about the Flood for tomorrow's newspaper, would it be



GOD DESTROYS THE WORLD  
or  
GOD GIVES HUMANKIND  
A SECOND CHANCE?

- What is a patriarch?
- What other Scriptures can you find which echo the universal and total nature of human depravity that is explained in Genesis 6:5-7?
- Compare Genesis 6:5-8 with Paul's teaching in the New Testament that we are saved by grace, to the concept of good works in places like Ephesians 2:8-10. Why is it vital to the gospel that we recognize that Noah was not a godly man of his own effort?
- What does it mean that Enoch and Noah walked with God (see Hebrews 11:5-7, Jude 14-16 for further insight)?

- How have the stories of creation in Genesis shaped our perceptions of women through the centuries?
- What do these verses teach about the value of animal life compared to human life?
- What do these verses reveal about God's intention for children?
- What is the cultural mandate and what does it say about Christian involvement in making culture?
- What do these verses reveal about God?
- What does God's preparation of creation for us reveal about His heart toward us?



### STUDY TIPS FOR GENESIS 1

- Note each of the five days of creation in your Bible.
- Note each of the occurrences of the phrase "And God said..."
- Note each occurrence of the phrase "Let there be/Let the..."
- Note each occurrence of the phrase "And it was so..."
- Note each occurrence of the phrase "And God saw that it was good..."
- Note what you learn about God's attributes from these verses

## GENESIS 2

This is the account of the creation, part 2. We now reach day 7 in the creation narrative, and what a fascinating day it is. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day God rested. Was God tired? Were His resources depleted? Or was it, perhaps, our Creator intentionally communicating another important philosophy for His creation to learn from and follow? Despite what may be popular public opinion, God did not rest simply so that we would follow His example and slow down one day a week. In reality, the answer goes so much deeper and requires some personal digging (which I encourage you to do).

However, because space is limited and ink is costly, not to mention that the Bible only dedicates 3 of the 25 verses to this topic we must move on. Verse 4 of chapter 2 begins God's commentary on His creation. So much is said in the remaining 22 verses of Chapter 2 that greatly affects human behavior. In fact, much of the course of human history, particularly the development of our understanding of gender roles, has stemmed from our translation and understanding of this text.



pg.6

The harsh reality is that without a firm grasp on God's whole story, the text of Genesis 5-7 is devastating and too painful to accept. In fact, I believe that Genesis 6 is the place where God makes salvation and faith more difficult to obtain. It's here where God begins to separate the wheat from the chaff. Prior to this, there are no commandments that demand sacrifice, there is no standard, written or spoken, that would demand righteous behavior. Humankind is simply left to their own devices, their own intellect and will when it comes to having a relationship with the Almighty God.

With all of that said, we must also realize that Genesis 6 is the beginning of redemptive history. This is the place in our human timeline where God begins to set into motion the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His only begotten Son. While this may not be the best story to center a children's ministry around, it is certainly one of the best stories with which to indoctrinate ourselves as we continue to learn and to worship in what it means to receive the gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ.



pg.15

## GENESIS 5-7

The Flood. Seems harsh, no? It's almost as if God hit the reset button on original creation. What we are given, in Genesis 5-7, is the beginning of a whole new beginning, only this time it's not from scratch. This is probably one of the most beloved children's lessons within the pages of Scripture. But why? It's violent, it's filled with death and destruction, it's ripe with the stench of sin.

While it's true that God saves and preserves in this text, it's equally true that God destroys. And it's here where the questions begin: "What about the innocent children?" "Why kill all but a few of the animals?" "Where is the God of love, mercy, and peace in this story?" But do you notice the correlation



of Noah to Jesus? Salvation of the human race brought by one man. Did you notice the correlation between the destruction and re-creation of the world through a God-controlled disaster to the promised destruction and re-creation of the world through another God-controlled disaster?

Is it possible that the flood story is the same story that is presented to us in the Gospels and throughout the New Testament?



Once again, the focus has been shifted away from God's intended purpose for the text. Readers have taken the truths expressed in Genesis 2 as their basis for subjugation, their justification for and source of authority and power, and a false sense of gender or race superiority. The result has been culturally devastating. Genesis 2 isn't a second version of creation, as some have postulated. It isn't a social commentary on gender roles. It isn't a means of giving one person authority over another. Instead, it is a picture-perfect painting of true community . . . it's the birth of community.



As we read to the end of our Bible, we realize that when everything is repaired that was once broken in creation (Genesis 3), the result is perfect community. The idea is that both men and women, equally created in the image of the One God, would be eternally and willingly submitted to Him. It's this submission that is meant to direct male and female relationships, it's this submission that makes for healthy functioning marriages and families, it's this



submission that turns pride into humility and selfishness into loving service. Our grasp of the content of Genesis chapter 2 will determine our success or failure as human beings surrounded by other human beings, locked in community, for the rest of our fallen existence.

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- On the seventh day God rested. Why? What might God be communicating to us about the importance of rest through vs.1-3?
- What does God's creation of human life reveal about His loving care for us?
- Did you notice that the only element of God's creation that He didn't proclaim to be good was mankind. Why do you think that was?
- It would appear that God, prior to His creation of Adam, created both male and female animals. Why do you think God waited to create Eve?
- According to these verses what are the duties of a man? What are the duties of a woman? Why do you think God designated different duties to men and women?
- What did you learn about male and female relationships from these verses that encouraged and/or troubled you most? Why were they encouraging/troubling?



obscurities that define us. We may never be able to explain these things, so fundamental to humankind, but we would do well to ask ourselves what we can make of this double-edged story, and what can this story make of us?

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

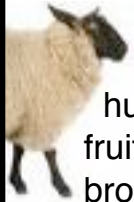
- Is Cain alone responsible for Abel's death or must God, Adam and Eve, and even Abel take some of the blame?
- Does Cain's punishment fit his crime?
- What is the legacy of Cain? In what ways do we see that legacy in our world?
- What does this story tell us about violence---in the family, in America, in the world---as we begin the twenty-first century?
- Do you think it is most likely in Genesis 4:13 that Cain lamented the punishment for his sin, or lamented the pain he had brought upon himself by his sin?
- Why are our motives as important to God as our actions?



## GENESIS 4



Two stories have haunted us from our beginning. We carry them along with us like invisible backpacks . . . the story of original sin and the story of Cain and Abel. In the story of the first murder, we are gripped by what is said and, perhaps more importantly, by what is left unsaid. This is a narrative full of gaps, and readers over the centuries have proven unable to tolerate its empty spaces. In the process of plugging up the holes, a wild assortment of interpretations has been fashioned to serve a variety of purposes, some of them deeply disturbing.



The first story to unfold outside of the Garden presents us with the best and worst of human nature. Cain delivers an offering of some fruits of the soil to God, and Abel follows his brother's lead by sacrificing the firstborn of his flock. This expression of worship was not commanded, but reflected among other things a primal desire to reach beyond oneself in gratitude and wonder.

The legacy of Cain is very much with us in both the impulse to destroy and the impulse to create. The story of Cain and Abel invites us to ponder the tangled relation not only of the brothers, but of the inner ambivalences and



## GENESIS 3



At the very beginning of human history, the serpent told us that knowledge was good and that knowledge was power. Even though we quickly learned how high a price we might have to pay for it, it is knowledge that we have desired and have pursued ever since. The serpent that tempted Adam and Eve still attends us, prompts and prods us, invites us, entrances us: "Come, be more than you already are, by affirming and pursuing capabilities that are yours to possess." What the serpent told Eve, that she and Adam shall be as gods (and with no consequent or subsequent danger of punishment from the Lord), is what we human beings have been telling ourselves ever since.

After all, like Adam and Eve, we are special among the earth's creatures. We're the ones whom the Lord addressed, the ones graced with language, with understanding, and with vision for the future. We are creations endowed with ambition and curiosity,



whose abilities, ironically, have from the very start been the source of total jeopardy. Our history has amounted to a pursuit of knowledge and the result has been the unparalleled

command over nature made possible by our scientific achievements, with more of them around every generational corner.



Yet our history reveals that all our knowledge has given us no escape from our mean and murderous side, despite all that we have learned. We are still prone to such simple sins as gossip and malice, slanders and spite, jealousy and hatred. Indeed, a century that gave us extreme advances in scientific knowledge also gave us nuclear bombs, the technology that enabled mass slaughter.

The originally-intended perfection and beauty of the creation would, from Genesis 3 onward, no longer be known by humankind. Genesis 3 is a new beginning, a new story, and it is here that our story truly begins. The biblical curse that is laid out in this chapter continues to be our daily challenge: namely, how to tame our restless intelligence with humility and sacrifice?



### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- What do you think Adam and Eve's real sin was? Was it sexual indulgence? Disobedience? Pride? Denial of responsibility? All of these?
- Are we all condemned to sin as a consequence of Adam and Eve's "original sin"? Or are we the masters of our own fates, free to choose between good and evil?
- What's the relationship between knowledge and sin?
- What are the greatest seductions and temptations of the modern world? How do they relate to the seductions and temptations that Adam and Eve faced?
- How do Adam and Eve's roles in the story differ? In what ways do those differences influence how we understand male-female relations and marriage today?
- Because of Adam's sin in Genesis 3 the Bible teaches that everyone who descends from him is a sinner both by nature and choice (e.g. Psalm 51:5, 58:3; Isaiah 53:6, 64:6; Romans 3:23; I John 1:18). What does this mean, and why does it matter that we understand the origins and remedy for sin from Genesis 3?



