



Schedule

	Leaders training		Wed Apr 22
1	All the world's a stage	Genesis 1:1-2:3	Apr 26-May 1
2	The man and the woman	Genesis 2:4-25	May 4-May 8
3	And, so it begins	Genesis 3:1-24	May 11-May 15
4	Am I my brother's keeper?	Genesis 4:1-26	May 18-May 22
5	Grieved that he had made man	Genesis 5:1-6:8	May 25-May 29
6	God said to Noah, there's gonna be a...	Genesis 6:9-9:29	Jun 1-Jun 5
7	Where to from here?	Genesis 10:1-11:32	Jun 8-12
	Social week		Jun 15-19

7 studies on the first part of Genesis

These studies...

These studies are super important because they're an opportunity for us to dig deep into God's word. Whenever we open the Bible we have an opportunity to get to know the God of the universe. We also, unfortunately, get to know a bit more about ourselves. Not only that, we have the opportunity to hear God's great plan for us, despite our sin, we get to hear God's great plan for our life and our world.

Here are some passages that help us to understand why the Bible is so important for us:

2 Timothy 3:15-17

and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Isaiah 55:11

so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,

but will accomplish what I desire

and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Looking at the passage

For many of you, it will feel like familiar territory as you read through this part of Genesis. But don't grow complacent. Pray that God would help you to look afresh at his word and hear afresh what he is saying to you. Pray that God would work by his Spirit through his word—even if you have read this part 100 times—to conform you to the likeness of Christ.

Digging deeper...

Each week there will be a little box with a bit of a discussion about a complex aspect of the passage. You don't need to read this part, but it will probably deal with some of the questions you had as you read the passage. It is just an opportunity to dig a little deeper into the word of the living God.

The New Testament

Because we believe the Bible is the progressive unfolding revelation of God's plan to redeem humanity it makes sense that when we look at the Old Testament it would lead us to the New. Particularly as we look at this part of Genesis it makes sense that we would end up looking at Jesus. If this part of Genesis shows us God's very good intention for humankind, then we see that most clearly fulfilled in Christ. If this part of

Genesis shows us the damage human selfishness can cause, Jesus shows us the restoration his selflessness can bring about. If this part of Genesis is the beginning of a quest for a seed/offspring from Eve who would deal with the root cause of this fallen world, then that seed is found nowhere else than in the Son of the virgin, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praying together... some hints and tips

It's really important to pray. Our Bible study groups are a place where we should be praying with and for each other. However our main meeting time unfolds together it must allow time for sharing what's going on in each other's lives and praying together. While it is often interesting to spend an hour discussing things like whether Genesis 1 is poetry or prose or some other genre, or trying to sketch up a to scale drawing of Noah's Ark for example, it's hardly a greater priority than ensuring there is time to meaningfully pray for each other at the end of our groups.

You can help prayer time not to 'go all night' by jotting down some personal prayer points before you go to study. It would be lovely to sit and listen to each other give a blow by blow recital of our weeks but we do need to be a little mindful of time. If we want to give everyone time to share their prayer points, and pray beyond ourselves, coming with some prepared prayer points is helpful.

Praying together in a group at first can be quite awkward. You may not feel comfortable praying publicly yet because you don't think you do it properly. Or you feel uncomfortable praying publicly because English is your second language. But, Romans 8:26 seems to suggest **none of us have the right formula:**

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Praying in a group can be quite encouraging and it would be a great thing—quite liberating really—to challenge yourself to do. **But—it's not compulsory**, so don't sweat it if you just don't feel comfortable.

There are all kinds of ways to pray together in a group. Some groups stay together and listen to each other's prayer points before a number of people in the group pray and a designated person closes the prayer. Some groups listen to each other and then as a prayer point is shared one person will stop and pray before they move on to the next prayer points. Some groups split up into groups of men and women when it's time to pray so they can share more intimate matters that would otherwise be a little embarrassing. However you do it, it's important to find a way that encourages prayer in your group.

If we want our Bible study groups to be places where we grow in our love for the Lord and each other (and we do) then we need to share our lives together. The first step in shared lives is being prepared to be, and committed to, praying for one another.

1

All the world's a stage

Big idea: God is almighty, all-powerful creator of the universe who created from nothing by the power of his word. In creating humans he's given us a unique place in creation by creating us in his image.

Warm up: What things make humans unique from every other animal?

Looking at the passage

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3

1. Verse 2 says that the earth was 'formless' and 'empty'. Many scholars have noticed that the days of creation seem to fall into a fairly neat pattern of God creating forms out of the formlessness (Days 1-3) and then filling the emptiness (Days 4-6). How does the filling on days 4-6 match the forming on days 1-3?

2. There is a lot of repetition in the 6 days of creation: "And God said...", "And God saw that it was good...", "and there was evening, and there was morning..." as well as a few others. What do you think the author is trying to tell us about God by using these repetitive statements?

3. How does the language of vs. 26 where God creates people differ from all his other acts of creation?

4. What does this passage say about what it means to bear God's image?

5. How does the end of the seventh day on which God rests differ from the other days? How does this help us understand the hope of dwelling with God in eternity?

The New Testament

Read John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:3

6. How do these passages help us understand the relationship of Jesus to creation?

7. How would you say Jesus helps us to see what it looks like for humans to bear God's image?

Apply

8. How does God's character and power displayed in creation help us entrust ourselves to him when we feel like what we're facing is chaotic?

9. How does knowing every human bears the image of God shape the way you treat them?

Pray

Young Earth... Old Earth... God's Earth

Questions over the age of the earth have been an enormous source of division among Christians for the last several hundred years as different Christians seek to faithfully read the text and apply it. Those who hold to a young earth creationism are holding firm to what is clearly the plainest and most natural reading of Genesis 1. This view holds to the idea that each of the 6 days of creation is a 24 hour period (12:00am to 11:59pm) in which God completed his creating work.

However, there are others who also want to hold steadfastly to the teaching of Genesis 1 and yet conclude that it is a literary genre that allows for an older earth—in fact they would say it's not even attempting to reveal the age of the earth.

For example in Genesis 1:2 the earth is said to be formless and void, and therefore existent, prior to the first day of creation. There is nothing in the text that indicates that it only existed in such a state for only a brief time, which has allowed some to conclude that perhaps it existed in a formless state for a long period of time. This could be used to explain the very old geological record. It is also worth noting that believing in an old earth doesn't necessarily mean you believe in theistic evolution (google it if you're unsure).

Additionally, scholars have noted, the genre itself is not designed to give a scientific account of creation. For example the expanse or firmament described in verse 6 is, in the original context, conceived of as a giant solid dome, which holds back the chaotic waters of 1:2 thereby creating a middle place in which animal and then human life could then live. It's the language of appearance, God is wanting to communicate his goodness and majesty to non-scientific minds and so he tells them the reason why the sky is blue and water comes from the sky as rain is due to God's good ordering of creation.

There is also the observation that the author is trying to convey a particular understanding of God and his creation. He's concerned his readers understand that God is powerful, that he is a God of order, that he is good, that he has authority over everything, that humans occupy a unique place in creation and because this was his concern there are many 'how it happened' things about creation he wasn't concerned to include. All this is to say that we want to be gracious to others who are equally trying to be faithful to the teaching of Genesis 1 who nevertheless disagree with you over the exact age of the earth. The truth it teaches us about God and Humanity is of primary significance and the main point the author is trying to make. So as long as we agree on those points we can afford to demonstrate consideration and grace to our brothers and sisters where we differ.

2

The man and the woman

Big idea: Man and woman are the pinnacle of creation and their relationship gives us an insight into our relationship with God.

Warm up: Why do think God retells the creation story in Genesis 2?

Looking at the passage

Read Genesis 2:4-25

1. Describe how God made the man.

2. Where does God put the man and what is he to do and not do?

3. What is not good and how does God work to fix that?

4. Describe how Adam feels about the woman.

5. In Genesis 1:26-28 it tells us what man and woman are meant to be doing.

How does the woman help the man to do his role?

The New Testament

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

6. Next week we will look at the fall and the way that ruins this perfect relationship. Jesus obviously comes to fix up our problem of sin and we will look at that more next week as well. But when we trust in Jesus marriage is meant to be a reflection of the beauty of Genesis 2. How is that achieved?

7. The eternal picture of marriage is not husbands and wives but us as the church being married to Jesus (Rev 19:6-8). It's us being with Jesus and each other forever in eternity. This is what verse 32 (in Ephesians) is talking about. Marriage between a husband and wife is the shadow of the great marriage between us and Jesus. What is comforting about this truth?

Apply

8. If you are married how can you better love your partner?

9. As a church how can we better love single people?

10. Some of us are single for a whole host of reasons, if you're sad about your singleness, what hope does this passage offer?

Pray

What does suitable helper mean?

Literally it says 'helper like opposite him'. What does that mean? Well according to Christopher Ash he reckons it not about whether or not Adam is lonely, it's got to do with his massive job of being the Gardener. He's got to bear God's image all over the world by making more gardens. He needs someone to help him but also someone who is opposite him—you know human but with different plumbing, so that they can make more gardeners. Together the man and woman bear God's image to the world. That's why the animals don't cut it, they can't help him with the gardening. Together both man and woman have a very important role to play.

Big idea: Adam and Eve reject God and make the world a mess — Jesus comes to fix this problem.

Warm up: Why is the world such a mess?

Looking at the passage

Read Genesis 3:1-24

1. What is alarming about Eve's response to the serpent in verse 3?
2. Why do you think Eve eats the fruit and then gives some to her husband who is with her?
3. Genesis 2 established a clear order of creation, Man — Woman — Animals. How is that undone here?
4. What are the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin?
5. What hope is there for the humans' relationship with God, if any, in this passage?

The New Testament

Read Romans 5:17-21

6. A serpent crusher eventually does come. He defeats the devil and offers hope to all of Adam's descendants. What did Adam bring into the world and what does Jesus bring into the world?

Read Revelation 22:1-5

7. What is the hope that Jesus gives?

Apply

8. In what ways in your life might you be doubting God's goodness (and therefore are tempted to sin)?

9. When you sin, and we all do, what good news is there?

Pray

What's the go with the talking snake?

To be honest this is hard to answer. We can comfortably from what we know of the New Testament, say that the snake represents the devil. The devil is using the snake to communicate with Eve but how that actually works and why Eve is so happy to talk with the 'dirty' snake it's really hard to know. God certainly speaks through a donkey and so maybe the devil has the same power. Also there is other literature from around the time of Genesis that indicates that snakes or serpents were associated with death and wisdom, maybe this plays into it as well. To be honest I need to do some more thinking on it. What are your thoughts?

4

Am I my brother's keeper?

Big idea: The second generation of humans seems as intent on abusing God's grace as the first! Thankfully where human sin seems to reign God's faithfulness and grace is at work for our good and his glory.

Warm up: How do you think we are in our society today with looking after our brothers and sisters?

Looking at the passage

Read Genesis 4:1-16

1. In chapter 3:16 the Lord cursed the woman and said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing, with pain you will give birth to children." There is no mention of a painful birth in v 1 and 2. How then would you say the curse on the woman is played out in this chapter?

2. We're not really told the basis upon which the Lord assessed the brothers' offerings. We are told how Cain responded to the Lord's assessment. How did Cain respond and why do you think he responded this way?

3. Have a close look at verses 6 to 16. Here is the second generation of humanity. What similarities are there in these verses to what we read in chapters 2 and 3 about the first man and the first woman? Try to list as many as you can.

Read Genesis 4:17-24

4. Remember that from Genesis 3:15 onwards the Old Testament is very much concerned with the search for the serpent crushing offspring/seed of Eve. The 7th generation of humanity through Cain's line ends up with Lamech. Is there any good that comes through the line of Cain?

5. In what ways is Lamech just like Cain and Adam?

Read Genesis 4:25-26

6. What hope are we left with at the end of the chapter?

The New Testament

Read Acts 4:27-28

7. What does this passage show us about the way that God can work through human sin?

8. People often ask why God would tolerate any sin—why not just wipe us all out? How has God’s grace here in the face of human sin in Genesis, and in each of our own lives, ultimately lead to him receiving glory?

Apply

Read 1 John 3:11-18

9. This passage contrasts the first born son of Adam with the first born Son of God. In what ways are you more like a child of God than a child of Adam?

10. What things can you do differently this week to be more like a child of God?

Pray

No ‘but’... but ‘and’

If you look at Genesis 4:4 in the NIV 1984 version (our pew Bibles) it says ‘But Abel brought fat portions from some of the first born of his flock’. The ‘But’ is a strong contrastive conjunction. It makes us contrast Abel’s good offering of fat first fruits with Cain’s plain old ‘fruits of the soil’. This is not a great translation. The ESV, KJV and indeed the NIV 2011 do a better job. They translate 4:4 something like ‘**And** Abel **also** brought an offering’. That translation, rightly so, doesn’t sound so contrastive.

The natural reading of the Hebrew of the original is to use ‘**And**’ and include ‘**also**’. The Hebrew word ‘**also**’ is actually sitting in the text but left out by the NIV1984.

When you change the ‘but’ to ‘and’ and pop in an ‘also’ it rightly makes the content of Cain and Able’s offerings sound similar. One bloke does grain—so that’s what he could bring, another bloke does meat so that’s what he could bring. The text doesn’t really offer an explanation as to why one was better. You can understand why the NIV 1984 translators erred on the side of making it seem like there was a difference—we want there to be an obvious difference! But the truth is, God doesn’t want us to know what difference there was if any between the two offerings. We just need to be comfortable with him looking with favour at one over the other.

5

Grieved that he made man

Big idea: God's unwavering commitment to having a people of his own is put to the test by the incessant wickedness of the human heart, yet his grace and faithfulness prevail.

Warm up: What does it mean when we tell someone that we are 'disappointed in them'?

Looking at the passage

Read Genesis 5:1-5

1. Look at the language used to describe Adam's son in v 3. Where have we seen this sort of language prior to this in the Bible? What could the narrator be trying to tell us here?

Read Genesis 5:6-24

2. What constant refrain appears in this passage? What does it remind us of?

3. The 7th generation of humanity in Cain's line was Lamech in chapter 4. In chapter 5, the 7th generation of humanity through Seth's line is Enoch. What are the difference between Enoch and Lamech? What could the narrator be telling us here?

Read Genesis 5:25-32

4. What hope are we left with at the end of this genealogy?

Read Genesis 6:1-8

There's a lot to digest here—and we can't afford to be too dogmatic with our explanation of parts of this passage as a lot of it is not entirely clear. According to Derek Kidner's Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, it seems possible that the 'sons of God' in v 2 are angels. That is how the term is understood in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 and Daniel 3:25. Much like the demons in the gospels were interested in taking on human flesh it seems here that the sons of God are interested in the same thing with the daughters of men—this is a little speculative but probably the most reasonable explanation I've heard. This could also make sense of 1 Peter 3:19-20 Jesus preaching to the spirits in prison. Whether or not the daughters of men were choosing willingly to engage in this unholy relationship or they were coerced by the sons of God/angels it seems that humanity is beyond self help!

The Nephilim in v 4 could be 'giants' or 'mighty men' - again it's speculative. We can say reference to them seems more like the narrator's acknowledgment of a well known part of his readers' history than a deep theological point. It possibly served to enforce the historical reliability of the account for original readers.

5. How is humanity described here?

6. Explain how the Lord responds to the state of humanity.

7. What hope is there at the end of the line of Seth?

The New Testament

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

8. What makes any of us any different from those mentioned in Genesis 6:5-6?

Apply

9. How does this passage help us to answer the question, ‘What kind of a sadistic God would let the world become like this?’ ?

10. How should what we have learnt in this study re-shape the way we respond to disappointment in our society and in people in our society?

Pray

Gee that's a long time to live

Some of the life periods of the genealogy in chapter 5 are breathtaking—900 plus years! What do we make of these life periods?

Some academics have suggested that their referring to the period of existence of the tribe of that person (for example Jared's tribe existed for 962 years). But that can't be the case because both Noah and Enoch are treated as individuals, not the heads of tribes, so it should be assumed that this is a list of the ages of individuals.

While it's difficult for us to get our head around such a length of time (we seem to max out at 120—which is quite consistent with Genesis 6:3), we can say that other ancient records of other nations have long life spans too. It's not unique to the Bible. We can also say that for the original readers, these life spans were just accepted.

6

God said to Noah, there's gonna be...

Big idea: God wants good for the people he has made but they are incessantly wicked. He has a plan to restore humanity but it is a plan that involves great sacrifice on his behalf.

Warm up: Can you think of any examples of genocide from human history?

Looking at the passage

Read Genesis 6:9-7:24

1. Consider what happened in Genesis 1 and in particular Genesis 1:31. How is what God is doing here different to what God was doing in Genesis 1?

2. How would you describe Noah's role in this account?

3. Verse 23 seems quite severe. How would you explain the severity of God's actions (look at 1:26, 31 and 6:11)?

Read Genesis 8:1-22

4. What do you think v 1 means when it says, 'But God remembered Noah'?

5. It seems like Genesis 1 rebooted here—we've got multiplying, fruitfulness, increasing, water being separated. It's like a new beginning for creation. But there's one thing that is a little ominous. Have a close look at the Lord's promise in v20-21. What is the Lord's promise based on—the sacrifice? OR a change in the human heart?

Read Genesis 9:1-17

6. What does the Lord's covenant with Noah tell us about the Lord's regard for human life?

Read Genesis 6:18-29

7. What hope, if any, does humanity have according to this passage?

The New Testament

Read Romans 3:25-26; Hebrews 11:7

8. According to this passage, on what basis was Noah's and on what basis is our or anyone's relationship with God restored?

Apply

9. In the midst of all that is wrong with the world, how does the account of Noah remind us that God has always wanted good for his creation?

10. How can you use what you have learned in this study to help people to see that God wants good for the people that he has made?

Pray

A flood?

There are other ancient accounts of a universal flood. The most similar to the Biblical account are found in the Babylonian versions. The majority view of scholars is that the Babylonian stories were copied and recopied for centuries before Moses and were the raw material for the account in Genesis. The problem with this is... it makes Genesis out to be a late, made up retelling of someone else's story. A bit like me telling you that I won gold at the 2000 games... when in fact... I didn't.

I prefer the view that the two accounts have a common origin, which Genesis reflects faithfully and Babylon corruptly. According to Derek Kidner, the fact the Genesis tells a simpler, more coherent story favours this. The language and setting of the Biblical account is accurate to history. Apart from the dating of the oldest surviving texts (the Babylonian text dating further back than our oldest surviving biblical text) there is no good reason to doubt the Biblical account. And... if you think the flood account in the Bible is fanciful, let me encourage you to read the Babylonian flood account... it's off the chart weird!

7

Making a name for...

Big idea: Despite the failure of any suitable seed being found, God has a plan to provide an offspring of the woman who will deal with sin and ensure that people are restored to God and glorify him.

Warm up: Share an example of a time when you've struggled to learn from your mistakes.

Looking at the passage

Read Genesis 10:1-32

1. This is not an exhaustive account of every single nation that existed. There are exactly 70 nations in the list, which is possibly symbolic of all nations stemming from Noah (interestingly the total number of Abraham's offspring/seed at the end of Genesis is also 70 (Genesis 46:27). In Genesis 1:28 and again in 9:1 God commanded his people to 'fill the earth'. How would you say they're going with 'filling the earth' based on this chapter?

Read Genesis 11:1-9

2. This passage provides an explanation for how men came to fill the earth. What do we learn about how man is going with their obedience to God's word here (see particularly v 4)?

3. What is the motivation for the people to build the tower?

4. Look at the Lord's response in v 5 to 9. Read Genesis 1:22-24; 4:10-12; 6:5-7. How would you describe the Lord's response to humanity so far in Genesis?

Read Genesis 11:10-32

5. Ever since Genesis 3:15 we have been on the look out for the seed/offspring of Eve who would crush Satan's head and undo the curse. Things are looking pretty bleak for humanity. The narrator gives us another genealogy here. Do you remember the refrain in the genealogy of Genesis 5? What is different about this genealogy? What do you make of that difference?

6. From v 27 the genealogy zooms in to Terah and his family. He has three sons. Have a close look at each of them. Where do think humanity's hope of a serpent crusher/sin smasher is here?

The New Testament

Read Acts 2:1-13

7. In Genesis 11:1-9 the people all spoke the same language and wanted to make their own names great. In Acts 2:1-13 people of all different languages hear the wonders of God being declared. How is this possible?

Apply

8. How should your purpose in life be different as a result of knowing Christ?

9. What will it look like for your life to be about making a name for God rather than making a name for yourself? Use the ordinary events you have planned tomorrow to explain how the two purposes look different.

Pray

God so loved the world

One of the things I really love about the first 11 chapters of the Bible is that they show us God's love was not just for one nation (i.e. Israel) but it was for the people that he made. He made us very good in a very good world, yet we turned from him—everyone turned from him. And no matter how many times it seemed like there may have been a thread of hope for humanity to turn themselves around, we turned again.

Yet, God in his grace and faithfulness did not give up. From this point in the Bible the quest for the seed of the woman narrows down to Abraham's family, then to Israel, then to Judah... and finally we find him in Jesus. Jesus came to do what no-one in humanity had done before him, that is: obey God; crush Satan's head; provide the perfect sacrifice for sin and; undo the curse to bring blessing. Jesus is God's plan to redeem the whole of humanity. God knows we're unable to do it ourselves. All we need to do is acknowledge that our hearts have turned from him, and turn back and put our faith entirely in God's plan to rescue those he loves through the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, we can get on with declaring the wonders of God—the very thing we were made for!

