

# GENESIS

The Beauty

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## GROUP LIFE – AN INTRODUCTION

Welcome to community. We are made for life together but life together can get messy so here are some suggestions to make the time in your group fun, vulnerable and life-changing.

### **BE ATTENTIVE**

We live in a loud, distracted world full of social media, text messaging and selfies. For the short time in your group, silence your phone and put it away. When someone is sharing, lean in to listen and ask questions. When you share, keep on topic and seek to be concise so that others can also share. Avoid interrupting or dominating the conversation. We want to learn from one another and we learn the most when we listen.

### **COME PREPARED**

The emphasis of this time is to know God and to grow in our life with Him. When everyone does the homework, the discussion promises to be rich and deep. Pray before you come, anticipating what God will do in and through your group.

### **WHAT GROUP TIME IS AND IS NOT**

A healthy group creates a safe place to be vulnerable, and confident that what is shared will not leave the group or be received with judgment. This is a time to grow in love for God and for one another. This is not a time to fix one another or give unsolicited advice.

**Give feedback that is:** affirming (thanks for trusting us with your story), empathetic (I've done the same thing) and attentive (can you say more about how that made you feel?).

**Avoid feedback that is:** condemning (oh my, I have never heard of anyone doing that), counseling/fixing (you should . . . have you tried . . . you need to stop . . .) or all about you (that reminds me of when I . . .). Also be careful about encouragement that is given too soon. When someone suffers pain or deep loss it's not the time to say that it will all be okay, God has a plan or that this has happened to you and it served an amazing purpose in your life. Usually it's best to just say, "I'm so sorry. That is so hard."

### **GET TO KNOW YOUR GROUP**

We encourage connection outside your group time! Grab coffee, go for walks, talk, pray, check-in with one another. The work God is doing doesn't stop once you leave your group, and even a simple text of encouragement can be exactly what someone needs in the middle of a messy week.

## USING THIS GUIDE

Studying Genesis for Biblical understanding and life-change.

**Here's how to get the most out of your time:**

### SEEK GOD

God is the focus of our study. The intent of the author of Genesis is to put the beauty and hope of God on display as he shows the mess humanity created through misplaced worship and disobedience.

Settle into your study each day and pause to acknowledge God's presence with you. Do this again when you gather with your group to share what you are learning, experiencing and practicing.

Expect God to be present. Christian spirituality is entering into the reality that God is always present, always seeing, always hearing, always knowing and always moving toward us.

### SET A PLACE AND A TIME, FIVE DAYS A WEEK

Right now, determine when and where you will meet with God. Put it on your calendar. Guard this time like you guard time for your favorite person, event or show. Each week is divided into five days of studying and practicing the truths of Genesis. Be sure to set aside 20-30 minutes each day.

### GATHER TOGETHER

Gather some friends to meet with weekly to discuss how you are experiencing God, His word and life-change through your study of Genesis. Pray for each other. Listen to each other. Make it a safe time by not trying to fix one another with unsolicited advice. Be sure to be fully present with each other, knowing that God is fully present with you.

### EXPECT CHANGE

When we come to faith in Jesus Christ a miracle takes place. God, the Holy Spirit, comes to live in us. Jesus told His followers that His Father would send the Holy Spirit to be *with* them and *in* them (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit is committed to our transformation—He instructs us with truth, He convicts us against unrighteousness, He empowers us for the mission of God and He grows us in fruitfulness (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control).

### FOLLOW THE TEACHING

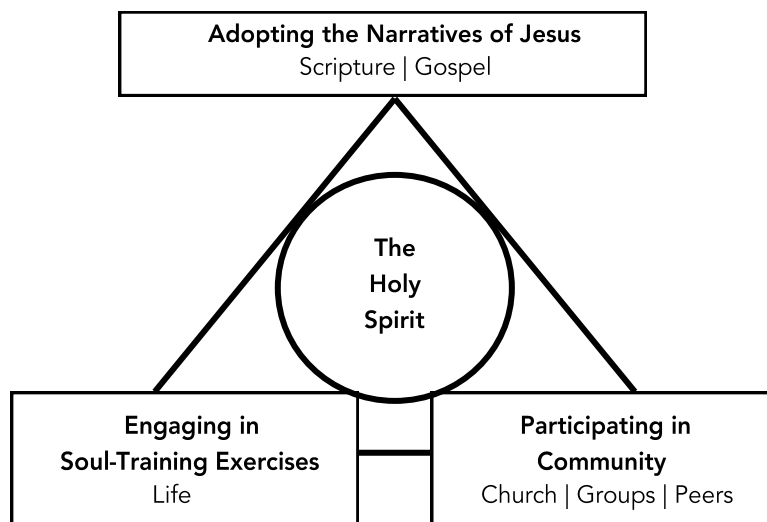
[www.womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://www.womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources)

## A PREVIEW OF EACH WEEK

This study is meant to change us. It's possible to study the Bible and change our mind but not our life—and this is a travesty. The work of God is not just a work of information but always, and primarily, a work of transformation. In *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows*, James Bryan Smith says that one reason we don't change and experience the fruit of God's Spirit is that "we are not training" nor have we been taught "a reliable pattern of transformation." He says:

*We cannot change simply by saying, "I want to change." We have to examine what we think (our narratives—false and true), how we practice spiritual disciplines (soul-training exercises) and who we are interacting with (our social context, the positive and negative pressure of peers). If we change these things—and we can—then change will come naturally to us. This is why Jesus said his "yoke" is easy. If we think the things He thought, do the things He did and spend time with like-minded people, we will be like Him, and it will not be difficult . . . I believe there is a reliable method of changing our hearts. It is not complicated, nor is it difficult. It does not rely on willpower. We begin with the triangle of transformation. It involves four basic elements: (1) changing the stories in our minds, (2) engaging in new practices (3) in reflection and dialogue with others who are on the same path, (4) all under the leading of the Holy Spirit.*

### THE TRIANGLE OF TRANSFORMATION





**These four components of transformation guide us each week as we study Genesis.**

**Day One to Three—Scripture: Adopting the Narratives of Jesus**

On the first three days we take it all in. We read Genesis, make general observations and answer questions that deepen our understanding and shape our lives. We always consider the false narratives we live by and allow Scripture to change those narratives to gospel, God-informed narratives. Remember, the Old Testament is the Bible Jesus read, so as we inform our minds with the truth of the Bible we are indeed adopting the mind of Christ.

**Day Four—Gospel: Adopting the Narratives of Jesus**

We are gospel people, reading the entire Bible through the lens of what Jesus accomplished in his life, death, resurrection and ascension back to the Father. On day four we connect the study of Genesis to redemptive history and gospel truth. The word gospel could be translated, “life-altering good news” and the truth of Jesus is indeed, life-altering good news!

**Day Five—Life: Engaging in Soul-Training Exercises by the Power of the Holy Spirit**

On this day we intentionally move the truth from our head and heart to our life. We will practice soul-training exercises that can be adopted daily or weekly for the rest of our life. As we train, we cooperate with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit who works in us and upon us to produce the fruit that is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.

*Grace is God acting in our lives to do things we can't do on our own.  
Grace is not opposed to effort; it's opposed to earning.*

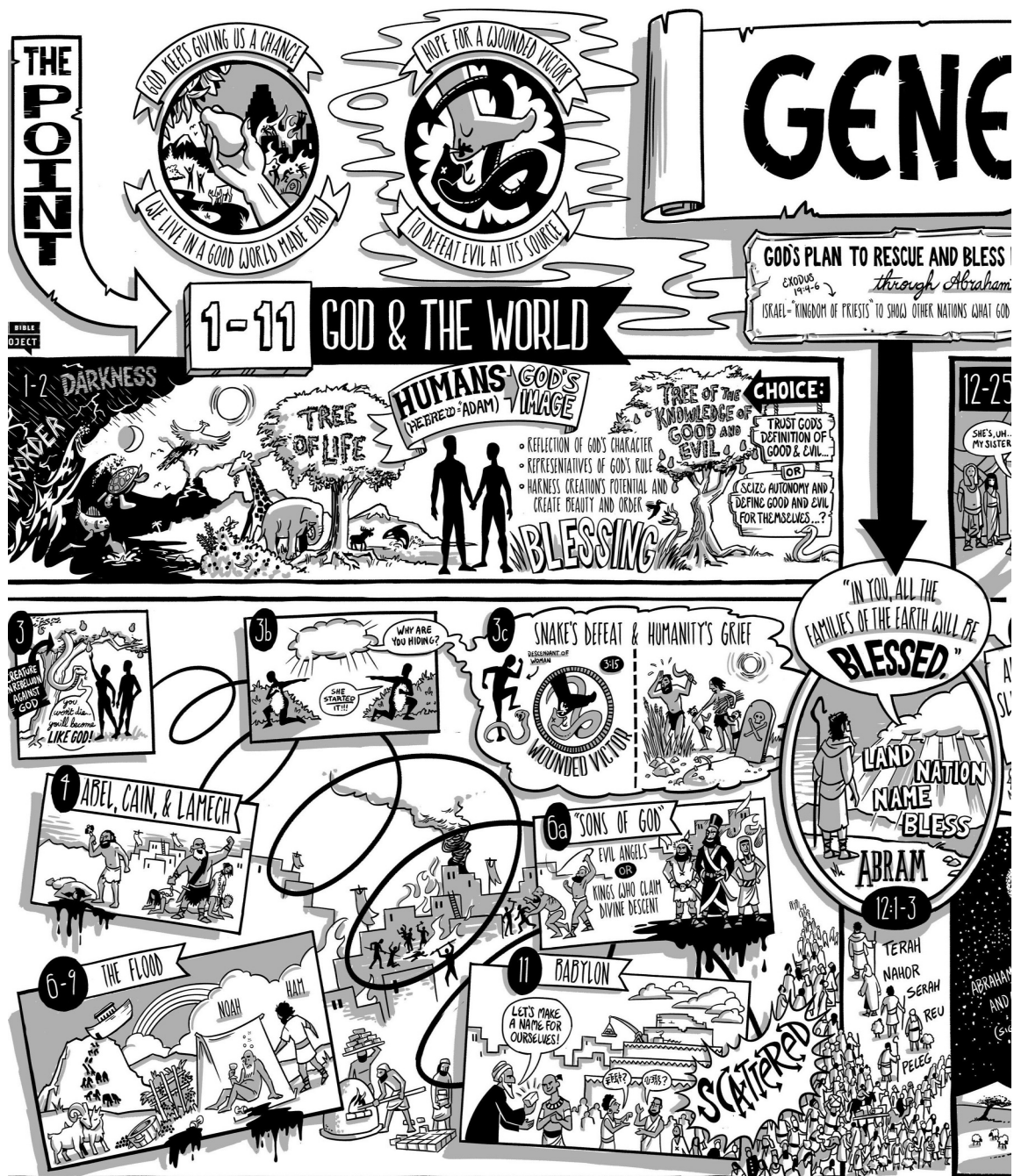
**Dallas Willard**

**Dig In With Your Group—Participating in Community**

Church isn't just a weekly meeting, it's a community of Christ-followers helping one another grow in the ways of Jesus (how He thinks, obeys, serves, loves and listens to the voice of the Father). We don't do this study in isolation but with others who are also seeking to know and follow God.

**Pray, Pray and Pray**

Each day we end with a simple prayer. This prayer will help focus our minds upon the ultimate author of Genesis, God. It will guide us toward greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit to teach us and empower us to live the truths we encounter in this study.



### GENESIS: THE BIG PICTURE

To understand Genesis, it's helpful to read the entire book in one or two sittings. This graphic from [TheBibleProject.com](http://TheBibleProject.com) is a helpful tool to see the whole of Genesis. We'll use videos and graphics from this website throughout our study.





# GENESIS: AN OVERVIEW

## The Beauty | The Mess | The Hope

Genesis means beginnings, and the first book of the Bible is chock-full of beginnings. In the beginning is **beauty**: God, heaven, land, sea, stars, moons, men, women, image-bearers, creatures that crawl, creatures that fly, creatures that swim, worship, obedience, relationship, purpose, love, marriage, food, plants, work, play, rest, commands, freedom and so much more. Genesis also records the beginning of a giant **mess**: sin, hiding, fear, shame, murder, suffering, polygamy, conflict, selfishness, disobedience, destruction, lying, cheating, stealing and more. But there is **hope**: hope that suffering will one day end; hope that humans and creation will live in the fullness of their purpose; and ultimately, hope for a Rescuer to make all things new.

This Study Guide is the first in a three part series on the book of Genesis. Throughout all three studies, we look at the themes of beauty, mess and hope. In this first study, the emphasis is on the beauty because in the beginning, our beautiful God creates beautiful things.

### **Reading Genesis Without Losing Your Mind or Your Faith**

Genesis comes with some challenges: Is God okay with polygamy back then, but not now? Is the creation account an utter denial of science? If Abraham is a hero of the faith, why does he keep telling his wife to lie? All good questions! To answer these questions we need to understand the following principles of biblical study.

### **Genre**

Genesis is considered by conservative theologians to be primarily historical narrative. It's always important to know the genre of the book or passage that we study to increase the probability of a right interpretation. Some will argue that Genesis 1-11 is myth and that Genesis 12-50 is historical narrative but, in our opinion, that understanding comes with quite a few problems.

We believe Adam and Eve are literal humans who, by God's providential selection, serve as representative humanity and therefore their sin corrupts all humanity. This is the position of Paul in Romans 5:6-21. As you read this passage (page 10), notice that sin entered the world through one man, Adam, just as righteousness was granted to us through one man, Jesus. Some say it's unfair that the consequence of sin was placed upon all humanity because of Adam's sin, but we must consider these two questions:

1. If this is unfair, shall we also reject the grace of God since it too is unfair and undeserved?
2. Would any of us do better than Adam at remaining perfectly righteous?

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—  
<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.  
<sup>11</sup> More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—<sup>13</sup> for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.  
<sup>14</sup> Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.  
<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. <sup>16</sup> And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. <sup>17</sup> For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.  
<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.  
<sup>20</sup> Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### **Romans 5:6-21**

In narrative, the author's intent is mostly revealed in true stories rather than direct statements. To correctly interpret narrative, we must study its whole (first read the whole book) and the whole of each story (first read the whole chapter or chapters). This means reading all of Genesis before reading Abraham's story and then reading all of Abraham's story before we dissect it verse by verse. No one critically studies a Harry Potter book without first reading it all the way through—and they'd be wise to first read the entire collection.

So, we'll go through Genesis chapter by chapter, but we'll also jump ahead (and back) to take in the grand scope of the narrative and important themes such as the sovereignty of God, redemptive history, covenant, blessing, grace, mission, the chaos and corruption of sin and the rescue plan of God. It will serve your study to read Genesis through in one sitting (or two).

Note that throughout Genesis the genre of poetry also appears. This is important when interpreting Genesis 1, which has the structure of a poem (more accurately described by theologian C. John Collins as, "exalted prose narrative"). Poems are meant to show and emote.

Genesis 1 *shows* us that God is creator and all that He creates is good, even very good. Genesis 1 also causes us to *feel* the beauty of God and His creation, as we are invited to worship the God who powerfully and personally speaks creation into being and does so with purpose.

### **Creation and Science**

Genesis is disturbing to some because they read it to be in conflict with science. They read Genesis 1 and conclude that our earth is much younger than science suggests or they conclude that science trumps the seven-day creation of the universe and its inhabitants. All of this is widely debated and we will not say where you ought to fall in the debate, but here are two things to consider:

**1. Authorial Intent**—Every Biblical author has an intent. This is why we believe all Scripture has one true meaning but many applications. The one true meaning is what the author intended it to mean, not what we think or feel it means. This is the reason for rigorous and humble study of Scripture. Because the author of Genesis 1 uses a form of poetry, *exalted prose narrative*, we read this chapter through that lens and it appears the author's intent was not to write a scientific proof of creation. Genesis 1 is a theological hymn with the emphasis on *who* created the universe (and *why* He created) not exactly *how* it all came to be. God is clearly the subject and the initiator (35 times). God *created, said, made, called, saw, set, blessed, finished, and rested*. And what God does is affirmed as *good* (8 times) and ultimately *very good*.

**2. Science and Faith**—See Tim Keller's thoughts on evolution and belief at <https://goo.gl/JHbJJr>

### **HEROES OF THE FAITH AND POLYGAMY**

Science isn't the only thing that causes us to question Genesis. Lots of people get tripped up over the prolific polygamy and the messed up lives of the so-called heroes of our faith. Lamech marries two women. Abraham makes his wife lie. Jacob manipulates his birthright. Joseph begins as an arrogant, spoiled daddy's boy.

But the Bible is not a book about people to emulate, it's about the one true God to worship. When we read Genesis looking for heroes, proclaiming "be like Abraham" or "be like Isaac" we miss the point. This is a critical point: Genesis tells the true story of broken men and women—who God works in and through—despite their flaws. Genesis is a book about the grace of God, not the goodness of humanity.

But, what about Hebrews 11? The people in Hebrews 11 are often called the heroes of our faith. This is a misunderstanding of the chapter. The purpose of Hebrews 11 is to put faith on display, not people. The point is not to put Abraham on a pedestal but to put his *faith* on a pedestal. **Do not** imitate Abraham's *lack of faith* when he hijacks God's plan by having sex with his servant

in hopes of producing an heir in his own timing. But, **do** imitate his faith when he obeys God's call to go to a land He will later reveal. The author of Hebrews wants us to see what faith looks like by highlighting these historical moments in the lives of men and women.

Tim Keller offers insight on this as well as the issue of polygamy. He says:

Many years ago, when I first started reading the Book of Genesis, it was very upsetting to me. Here are all these spiritual heroes—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—and look at how they treat women. They engage in polygamy, and they buy and sell their wives. It was awful to read their stories at times. But then I read Robert Alter's, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. Alter is a Jewish scholar at Berkeley whose expertise is ancient Jewish literature. In his book he says there are two institutions present in the Book of Genesis that were universal in ancient cultures: polygamy and primogeniture. Polygamy said a husband could have multiple wives, and primogeniture said the oldest son got everything—all the power, all the money. In other words, the oldest son basically ruled over everyone else in the family. Alter points out that when you read the Book of Genesis, you'll see two things. First of all, in every generation polygamy wreaks havoc. Having multiple wives is an absolute disaster—socially, culturally, spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and relationally. Second, when it comes to primogeniture, in every generation God favors the younger son over the older. He favors Abel, not Cain; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau. Alter says that you begin to realize what the Book of Genesis is doing—it is subverting, not supporting, those ancient institutions at every turn.



## GENESIS 1-3

**1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.<sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." <sup>7</sup>And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup>And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. <sup>16</sup>And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."<sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.<sup>22</sup>And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." <sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4</sup> These are the generations  
of the heavens and the earth when they were created,  
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

<sup>5</sup> When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, <sup>6</sup> and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—<sup>7</sup> then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. <sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst

of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. <sup>11</sup>The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.<sup>12</sup>And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.<sup>13</sup>The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." <sup>19</sup>Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.<sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man."

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

**3** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" <sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup>For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing

good and evil.”<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup>And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup>He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup>The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup>I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.”

<sup>16</sup>To the woman he said,

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,  
but he shall rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup>And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

<sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”

<sup>20</sup> The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” <sup>23</sup> therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.



# GENESIS

## AN INTRODUCTION

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Genesis: An Introduction*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# GENESIS

## AN INTRODUCTION

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Notes Continued.

### **DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP**

What most surprises you about Genesis?

What do you hope to gain from this study and time with your group?

Share 2-3 questions you have about Genesis.

Share three words that best describe your current journey with God.



# THE BEAUTY OF GOD

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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### DAY ONE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Transformation begins with truth. First, being honest about the false narratives we believe and live, and then aligning our beliefs with the ultimate truth of Scripture and the gospel of Jesus. The first day of each week we look at our false beliefs and dive into the truth revealed in Genesis.

List six false beliefs people have about God.

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

List four beliefs you hold about God that might be false.

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 3. |
| 2. | 4. |

How do these false beliefs affect your relationships?

Read Genesis 1-2 (page 13-14) and record your general observations.

Read through Genesis 1-2 one more time. As you read, put a triangle over the words God and Spirit each time they appear. List everything these chapters reveal about God.

What truth about God is most beautiful to you today?

Write your new narrative. What is true of God for you today?

***Creator God! I worship You today*** [slowly declare all that you discovered about Him in Genesis 1-2]. ***You are powerful, creative and before all things. Help my mind stay fixated on Your beauty today. Amen.***

**DAY TWO—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS**

*What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*

**A. W. Tozer**

Read Genesis 1 (page 11) and underline all the verbs associated with God. For instance, *God said* . . . Record these verbs and circle the two that most intrigue you.

List the two verbs that intrigued you, then record their meaning from the dictionary and why they intrigued you.

VERB	DEFINITION   WHY THIS VERB IS INTRIGUING TO ME

Go to [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) and search, in Genesis, the verbs that intrigued you in [Keyword Search >> Enter Word >> Limit Search to Genesis]. Record what you discover.

***Creator God, You are a God who speaks! Speak to me today** [Sit silently with Genesis 1 open before you and seek to hear God through His Word and the promptings of the Holy Spirit].*

### DAY THREE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read back through Genesis 1-2:3 and record the evidence that God is . . .

Relational —

Creative —

Ruler of All —

Read Colossians 1:11-20. What does this passage tell us about Jesus' involvement in creation and the purpose of creation?

We tend to approach life through the lens of self, so list how is it good news that: "*. . . all things were created through Jesus and for Jesus . . . He is before all things and in Him all things hold together . . . (so that) in everything Jesus might be preeminent*"

What does Genesis 1 and Colossians 1:11-20 reveal about . . .

Your Worth—

God's Worth—

Name one area of your life in which you need Jesus to be preeminent? \_\_\_\_\_

***Make this your prayer today.***

## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

The whole Bible speaks to the Gospel—the life-altering good news of Jesus. His life, work, words, and provision for salvation and intimacy with God. This good news shapes how we think and live. Today we look at the New Testament parallels to Genesis 1-3. Yes, we have to go all the way to chapter 3!

Read Genesis 1-3 alongside John 1:1-18, 29-34 and record the parallels you discover. Look for similar words and themes such as *beginning, light, creation, God's presence with us, sin, etc.*

Meditate on this list of parallels between Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21-22 taken from the teaching of Bill Silva. Pay attention to what creates wonder in your soul.

Genesis	Revelation
In the beginning (1:1)	I am. . .the Beginning and the End (21:6)
God created the heavens and the earth (1:1)	I saw a new heaven and a new earth (21:1)
Let there be light (1:3)	God gives it light (21:23)
The darkness He called "night" (1:5)	There will be no night there (21:25)
The gathered waters He called "seas" (1:10)	There was no longer any sea (21:1)
God made the two great lights (1:16)	Does not need the sun/moon (21:23)
He also made the stars (1:16)	The Morning Star (22:16)
Subdue [the earth]. Rule over (1:28)	And they will reign forever (22:5)
Tree of Life (2:9)	Tree of Life (22:2)
A river watering the garden (2:10)	River of the Water of Life (22:1)
You will surely die (2:17)	The free gift of the Water of Life (22:17)
Or you will die (3:3)	No more death (21:4)
A man will. . .be united to his wife (2:23-25)	The bride of the wife of the Lamb (21:9-10)
Shown a garden into which sin entered (3:6-7)	Shown a city into which sin will never enter (21:27)
Walk of God with man interrupted (3:8-10)	Walk of God with man resumed (21:3)
Initial triumph of the Serpent (3:13)	Ultimate triumph of the Lamb (20:10; 22:3)
Cursed. . .cursed (3:14, 17)	No longer. . .any curse (22:3)
I will greatly multiply your pain (3:16-17)	No more. . .pain (21:4)
God banished him (3:23)	They will see His face (22:4)
He drove the man out of the garden (3:24)	I saw the Holy City (21:2)

What one truth about Jesus is good news to you today? \_\_\_\_\_

***Make it the center of your prayer of worship today.***

## DAY FIVE—SOUL-TRAINING EXERCISES BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

### **The Creator God.**

This week we encounter the beauty of God. He creates. He speaks. He initiates. He works. He rests. Our Soul-Training Exercise today is to meet God in creation and creativity. This might be an all-day event or just 20 minutes.

### **Pick one of the following options:**

- Take a hike in nature
- Go to the beach
- Sit by a stream
- Go to an art museum
- Google photos of nature, galaxies, humans and animals
- Enjoy favorite photos of family, friends and nature
- Sit outside and stare at an ant hill, a flower, a tree or a bug.
- Create something by painting, drawing, doodling, baking, cooking, building, making, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ [something not listed here]

Wherever you go, or whatever you do, be intent to experience the beauty of God's creation and God Himself in the creative act. Don't force deep thoughts. Simply acknowledge God with you and invite Him to reveal Himself to you.

# THE BEAUTY OF GOD

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *The Beauty of God*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# THE BEAUTY OF GOD

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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Notes Continued.

### **DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP**

What most struck you from the talk?

Share your new narrative (the truth of who God is to you now) from page 22.

What struck you most about God's actions in Genesis 1-2?

What two verbs most intrigued you? Why?

Share what you did for your Soul-Training Exercise. How was this experience?



# THE BEAUTY OF HUMANITY

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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### DAY ONE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

God only creates humans in His image and this beautifully informs our purpose and value. But first, we must explore our false narratives.

Share three words and three stories from your life that *falsely* shape your understanding of your purpose and worth. The words can be lies you or others have used to describe you.

Three Words:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Stories:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Read Genesis 1-2 (pages 13-14). Highlight every word or verse that tells the truth about your identity, value and purpose as one created by God. What three truths most stood out to you?

Read Genesis 1:26-31 and answer these questions:

What did God do?

What did God say?

Write a declaration of your true narrative informed by this passage (what is true of you because of God's actions and words?). Carry this with you throughout the week.

As you glance back at Genesis 1-2, how do you see God providing for His creatures?

*Creator God! What a divine and holy privilege to be made in Your image! What a privilege to reflect You to the world—Your glory, kindness, justice, love and goodness. I will stare at You today to know what I am to look like as I work, rest, serve, love and play. Amen.*

## DAY TWO—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read Genesis 1:26-31. What does this passage teach about . . .

Gender —

Blessing —

What do the following passages reveal about image-bearing?

Genesis 5:1-3

Romans 8:29-30

2 Corinthians 3:15-18

Colossians 3:5-11

James 3:7-9

*Only human beings are said to be made in the image of God . . . and (therefore) it is clear that we have a closer relationship to God than any other creature. The metaphor of image means "reflection" or a "small scale copy". This means we are like God: He is not wholly other and mysterious. At the same time it means we are not God . . . Most importantly, image contains the seed of the idea of (Biblical) sonship. Just as children are born in the image of their parents (Genesis 5:1-3), so we are called to be His children.*

**Tim Keller**

*Heavenly Father, thank You for making me like You! Help me to look a little more like You today. I worship You for all of Your beauty and goodness.  
I am thankful You are God and I am not. Amen.*

### DAY THREE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Because all humans are created in the image of God, even after the fall (Genesis 5:1-3; James 3:7-9), we know that *all* humans have inherent dignity.

*"It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; (but) it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken . . . There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal . . . it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit . . . Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses."*

**C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory***

What type of people does our culture tend to most admire and follow? Why?

What type of people does our culture tend to disregard or make fun of? Why?

Read Mark 1:40-45 and place yourself in this event. Imagine you are the crowd looking on, the leper making his request and Jesus responding to the outcast. What do you feel, think and experience?

As the crowd looking on . . .

As the Leper . . .

As Jesus . . .

***Jesus, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Grow these in me and show me who I can extend love to today. Amen.***

#### DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

To be created in the image of God has tremendous practical implications. It informs how we live, how we value ourselves and how we value others. Today we connect this truth to the gospel and to Jesus.

Watch the BibleProject.com video on the image of God and record what you discover.

Video Link: [www.thebibleproject.com/videos/image-of-god/](http://www.thebibleproject.com/videos/image-of-god/)

What does this video say about our “divine and sacred task”?

What does this video say about Jesus?

What most stands out to you from this video?

Read the following passages about Jesus and ***let them guide your prayer today.***

*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side,  
Jesus has made Him known.*

**John 1:18**

*Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation . . . For in Him all the fullness  
of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things,  
whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.*

**Colossians 1:15, 19-20**

*. . . but in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son, whom He appointed the Heir of all  
things, through Whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and  
the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power . . .*

**Hebrews 1:2-3**

**DAY FIVE—SOUL-TRAINING EXERCISES BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT**

We want to live as image-bearers of God. To do this we need to be clear about how we are like God and how we are not like God. Start by filling in this chart.

How Humans ARE Like God	How Humans ARE NOT Like God

When are tempted to think you are God (controlling others, taking responsibility for things outside your power, etc.)?

**Soul-Training Exercise — Scripture Memory**

Meditate upon and memorize these verses.

*John came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."*

**John 1:20**

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

**Galatians 5:22-23**

**Tips for Memorizing Scripture:** <https://goo.gl/mVMYiQ>

# THE BEAUTY OF HUMANITY

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *The Beauty of Humanity*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# THE BEAUTY OF HUMANITY

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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Notes Continued.

### **DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP**

What most surprised you from the talk?

If you feel comfortable, share a story from your life that has shaped a false narrative about your purpose and worth (page 29). Also share how you rewrote this narrative (page 30).

Share one truth or exercise from the homework that challenged you to live differently.

How have you seen others in your group reflect the image of God? Share that with them in your gathering.



# THE BEAUTY OF WORK

## GENESIS 1

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### DAY ONE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Genesis shows the beauty of humanity and why we give dignity to all people: the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the young and the old. Genesis also shows the beauty of work. Often we see work as a result of the fall, but work was on display at the very beginning. God worked! Genesis 2:2 says, “*And on the seventh day, God finished his work, that he had done . . .*”

Tim Keller says, “*Some Greeks believed that gods created humanity to do the hard labor they found too demeaning . . . The physical was considered demeaning, while the immaterial and the spiritual were considered good. (So) in Greek thought, work was a necessary evil (and) one should aspire to be as free from it as possible. In complete contradiction to that view, we have Genesis 1-2. Here is a God who works, in fact, He puts in a full week like everyone else. So we learn here that work has dignity because it is something God does.*”

What false narratives does our culture believe about work?

What negative attitudes do you hold toward work?

*Idolatry as inordinate affection: loving ourselves or others or things more than God  
(and it) always bends us out of shape.*

**Richard Lovelace**

How can work be an idol?

Read Genesis 1-2. What kind of work did God do in creation and in making a home for Adam and Eve?

Write your new narrative for work. How do you believe God wants you to regard the work you do?

*God, You did a great work to create me and the world in which I live.  
I praise You today. Help me to be aware of Your presence with me as I work.  
I look to You for my inspiration for faithfulness, diligence, excellence and love.  
I offer You my work as an expression of worship. I love You. I serve with You  
today by serving those I work with and for. Amen.*

## DAY TWO—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read Genesis 1:26-2:3, 8-35 and answer these questions.

List all the human needs God meets in these verses.

Why do you think God included work in this earthly paradise?

What work did God give specifically to Adam?

What work did God give all of humanity?

***Father, thank You for work. Thank You for gifting me to serve [list those you work with and for]. Help me to see my work through Your eyes today. Amen.***

### DAY THREE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Meditate on the following passages. Circle the two that most resonate with you today.

*Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.*

**Colossians 3:23**

*Commit your work to the LORD, and then your plans will succeed.*

**Proverbs 16:3**

*. . . Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

*And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor,  
it is the gift of God.*

**Ecclesiastes 3:13**

*For the people worked with all their heart.*

**Nehemiah 4:6**

*But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.*

**2 Chronicles 15:7**

*The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.*

**Exodus 18:18**

*Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor.*

**Proverbs 12:24**

*The LORD demands fairness in every business deal; he sets the standard.*

**Proverbs 16:11**

*He must labor, performing with his own hands what is good,  
so that he will have something to share with one who has need.*

**Ephesians 4:28**

*May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us;  
establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.*

**Psalms 90:17**

Why did you circle the two verses you circled?

*Heavenly Father who meets all my needs and gives me work to do. Increase my joy,  
diligence and faithfulness. [Take a moment to pray for those who are looking for work and for  
those burdened by their work]. Thank You for hearing my prayers. Amen.*

#### DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Jesus was a carpenter before His public ministry. His father, Joseph, was a carpenter and Jewish culture mandated that a 12 year-old son apprentice under his father. In Mark 6:3 the onlookers declare of Jesus, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?" In Genesis 2, God plants a garden. Both of these jobs are considered *manual labor* in our culture.

What is the typical American hierarchy of jobs? What jobs are deemed most significant? What jobs are viewed least significant?

How does the fact that God was a manual laborer change your view of job significance? How will this change how you treat your job and the jobs of others?

Why do you think Jesus recruited fishermen and tax-collectors to be among his Twelve Disciples rather than Rabbis?

How is work good news?

***Father, Son and Holy Spirit—thank You for working in perfect harmony to create me, the earth, the universe and all of creation. Thank You for being a God who works. Thank you for the work You give me to do and the work You give those around me.  
[Pray for the people you see working each day]. Amen.***

## DAY FIVE—SOUL-TRAINING EXERCISES BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

### **Praying for Your Work: Palms Down, Up and Out**

All of us have work, whether it is in our home or outside the home. This exercise invites God into our work.

First, get in a comfortable position for prayer.

#### **Palms Down**

With your palms down, as a gesture of letting go, release to God the things about your job that make you anxious, fearful, irritated, unsure, etc.

#### **Palms Up**

With your palms up, as a gesture of receiving from God, invite Him to give you what you need today to do your job well. Thank Him for His presence with you as you do your job.

#### **Palms Out**

With your palms out, as a gesture of pointing toward others, pray for those you work for and with. Pray prayers of blessing.

**For great resources on work go to:** [www.faihandwork.com](http://www.faihandwork.com)

# THE BEAUTY OF WORK

## GENESIS 1

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *The Beauty of Work*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# THE BEAUTY OF WORK

## GENESIS 1

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Notes Continued.

### **DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP**

What struck you most from the talk?

How has your narrative of work changed (page 38)?

What most challenged you from this study and what most encouraged you?

What is your greatest need in your work this week?



# THE BEAUTY OF REST

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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### DAY ONE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

On the seventh day of creation, God stops working and He rests. It is a mind-boggling truth: God not only gives rest, but He also rests. Later God will command His people to rest on the Sabbath day.

Name at least four false narratives people have about Sabbath.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How do you practice Sabbath? If you don't practice Sabbath, why?

*The Sinai command to keep the Sabbath holy is the fourth in the listing of the ten revealed to Moses. It is given in two forms, one in Exodus and the other in Deuteronomy. The commands are nearly identical in the two listings but the reasons supporting the commands are different.*

***Eugene Peterson***

Read these two passages and record the reasons they give for keeping the Sabbath.

Exodus 20:8-11

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

What is significant about these two reasons and how do they work together to give us a more complete understanding of the purpose of Sabbath?

In Exodus 20:1-17, what is unique about the giving of the Sabbath command compared to the giving of the other nine commands? Why is this significant?

How can practicing the fourth command (keep the Sabbath) help you obey the first command (have no other gods before Me) and the tenth command (do not covet)?

Based on the reasons for the command to keep the Sabbath holy, along with God's rest on the seventh day, rewrite your narrative on the Sabbath by answering these questions.

What is true about the Sabbath?

How can Sabbath help you re-align your understanding of God?

How can Sabbath help you embrace your true value and identity?

What do you want to be the focus of your Sabbath observance?

***God who rests, help me to rest and provide rest for my neighbors, friends, family and co-workers. Meet me in this rest. Speak to me today about how You want me to keep the Sabbath this week. Amen.***

## DAY TWO—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read Genesis 2:1-3. List all that God did on the seventh day.

Read back through Genesis 1 and record how the author handles the seventh day differently than the first six days. Why do you think the seventh day is so different?

How does Genesis 1:31 set up the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3) and why is this significant as we imitate God's rest?

Meditate upon these words and, along with Scripture, ***let them shape your prayer today.***

*Un-sabbathed, our work becomes the entire context in which we define our lives. We lose God-consciousness, God-awareness, sightings of resurrection. We lose the capacity to sing "This is my Father's world" and end up chirping little self-centered ditties about what we are doing and feeling. This is a most difficult command to keep, a most difficult practice to cultivate.*

*It is one of the most abused and distorted practices of the Christian life. Many through the centuries have suffered much under oppressive Sabbath regimes . . . Jesus spent a good deal of His time at odds with people who had wrong ideas about keeping Sabbath . . . But I don't see any way out of it: if we are going to live appropriately in the creation we must keep the Sabbath.*

*We must stop running around long enough to see what God has done and is doing. We must shut up long enough to hear what He has said and is saying. All our ancestors agree that without silence and stillness there is no spirituality, no God-attentive, God-responsive life.*

**Eugene Peterson**

**DAY THREE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS**

Read Exodus 16:1-30 and record all that it teaches about Sabbath.

What makes Sabbath-keeping so difficult?

Meditate upon Exodus 16:1-30. **Let your meditation guide your prayer for today.**

*The divine rest on the seventh day of creation has made clear that (1) YHWH (God) is not a workaholic, (2) that YHWH is not anxious about the full functioning of creation, and (3) that the well-being of creation does not depend on endless work.*

**Walter Brueggeman.**

## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read Hebrews 3-4 and answer these questions .

What keeps us from the rest of God?

How does Jesus provide the ultimate rest (See also, Hebrews 10:11-13)?

Read Mark 2:23-28 and Matthew 12:1-14 and record what Jesus teaches about Sabbath.

*Jesus, I worship You today and I draw near because You invite me saying:  
"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke  
upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for  
your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).*

## DAY FIVE—SOUL-TRAINING EXERCISES BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

### **Keep the Sabbath.**

Make a plan for keeping the Sabbath this week. This can be a challenge with small children—be creative and give yourself grace.

Write your plan. Be specific.

*Sabbath is the time set aside to do nothing so that we can receive everything, to set aside our anxious attempts to make ourselves useful, to set aside our tense restlessness, to set aside our media-satiated boredom. Sabbath is the time to receive silence and let it deepen into gratitude, to receive quiet into which forgotten faces and voices unobtrusively make themselves present, to receive the days of the just completed week and absorb the wonder and miracle still reverberating from each one, to receive our Lord's amazing grace.*

**Eugene H. Peterson**

A great book on Sabbath: *Sabbath as Resistance*, by Walter Brueggeman.

# THE BEAUTY OF REST

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *The Beauty of Rest*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# THE BEAUTY OF REST

## GENESIS 1 - 2

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Notes Continued.

### **DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP**

What most struck you from the talk?

What most challenged you in this study? What most encouraged you?

What is most difficult for you about Sabbath-keeping?

Share your experience of keeping the Sabbath this week.



# THE BEAUTY OF MARRIAGE

## GENESIS 2

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### DAY ONE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Marriage is not a social construct but a covenant relationship established by God. This week, drawing heavily on Tim Keller's study of Genesis and his book, *The Meaning of Marriage*, we look at marriage, sexuality and gender.

List eight observations about our culture's false understanding of marriage, gender and sexuality.

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. |

What false narratives do you hold about marriage, gender and sexuality?

Read Genesis 1:26-28 and answer these questions.

How is gender important to our self-understanding?

Why is it important that there are two genders, male and female?

What does the creation of two genders reveal about God?

How do you tend to feel and act toward the opposite gender? What part of your story informs these feelings and actions?

How does Genesis 1:26-28 change or reinforce your relationship with the opposite gender?

How is your gender a gift from God?

*Father, Son and Holy Spirit— You who have lived together in unity and yet diversity as three and yet one—show me how to live with those who are like me and yet different than me, for Your glory and my good. Amen.*

## DAY TWO—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

The only thing “not good” in Genesis 1-2 is the aloneness of man. Tim Keller says, “The term ‘image’ makes it clear that human beings are made for relationships. This makes loneliness a problem for any human being . . . What is extremely interesting is the implication that Adam’s relationship with God is not, in itself, enough! Adam is without sin and therefore has an unimpeded relationship with God. Nothing blocks his fellowship with the Father, yet his aloneness is substantial. That means that Adam’s relationship needs and capacity are such that even a relationship with God himself is not sufficient to satisfy him.”

How do you respond to this Tim Keller quote?

Read Genesis 2:18-25 and answer these questions.

What does this passage reveal about God and His provision for loneliness?

Why does God make Adam search the animals for companionship?

What can we learn from the fact that God gave Adam neither an animal nor another male?

What about singleness? Read 1 Corinthians 7 and record how this passage puts marriage in perspective for those single and married.

*Father God, creator of male, female, friends, companions and spouses.  
When I am lonely, I ask You to meet me. I know that loneliness is a normal as I long to be  
with You fully for all eternity. But I do ask you to provide companionship.  
Help me to be a friend and to receive friendship. Help me to love and to receive love.  
Help me to be patient. Amen.*

### DAY THREE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read Genesis 2:18-25.

List at least eight things this passage reveals about marriage.

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. |

How is the marriage relationship unique from any other relationship (vv. 22-25)?

Based on this passage, and Tim Keller's insights below, what are three practical applications for your marriage today? If you are single, what are the implications to your dating life and how you relate to the marriages of your friends?

#### **Tim Keller on the Importance of Marriage as Covenant and One Flesh**

*The word 'cleave' (Gen. 2:24, sometimes translated 'hold fast to' or 'is united to') means to unite to someone through a covenant, a binding promise or oath. This is the missing piece in contemporary thinking. In our individualistic society, the legality of marriage seems inconsequential (just a piece of paper — what matters is that we love each other). But, the Bible insists on a public act of social accountability. A covenant was always enacted through a ceremony before witnesses. Genesis 2:22-25 is in fact the first marriage ceremony, in which God, himself, like a father of the bride, leads the woman to the man . . . Despite the rhetoric (we don't need a piece of paper to love each other), a binding public oath is actually an enormous act of love in and of itself . . . The willingness to make a binding covenant is a test that your love for each other is marriage-level. Scripture intends that marriage, as a covenant, is a permanent union . . . The husband and wife are also to be one flesh (Gen. 2:24). This refers to the personal union of man and woman at all levels of their lives which is expressed in, and deepened through, their sexual relationship. Most commentators agree that the phrase includes sex but is more all-encompassing. The purpose of sexuality, then, is to be a visible expression of the complete unity that should be happening in the rest of the marriage . . . The covenant made (shall cleave to his wife) is then regularly renewed (shall be one flesh). Covenant renewal is enormously important in the Bible. The book of Deuteronomy is a long renewal of the covenant of Sinai. The Lord's Supper is a regular, ceremonial renewal of the covenant of baptism. Sex physically expresses the oneness created by the marriage covenant in all other areas of married life (financially, legally, emotionally, personally, psychologically). Sex renews and revitalizes the marriage covenant . . . The implications relevant to our culture include: (1) Sex is clearly good, God-created and a requisite part of marriage; and (2) If sex is linked to covenant and is given for the purpose of symbolizing, deepening and renewing a covenant commitment, it needs the context of a covenant commitment (marriage)!*

## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:15-18. What specifically was the woman created to help with? How does this disrupt some conservative teaching and some liberal teaching on the role of women?

Sixteen times the word *helper* (*ezer*) is used in the Old Testament to refer to God when a savior or protector was needed against an enemy. How is this significant to Eve's role in Genesis 2:16-18?

How has Jesus come to *help* and protect you (1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 2:14-18; John 10:7-18)?

### Tim Keller on Women as "Helpers"

*The English word 'helper' is, unfortunately, a rather weak word. It connotes an 'assistant'—someone less capable who runs errands and does menial tasks. However, almost every other time the Hebrew word ezer is used in the Bible, it describes God Himself. As we use the word 'help' for God, we see that it means 'providing what is lacking in the one who needs help.' In this biblical sense, a helper is someone who helps out of strength, yet in a supportive way. For example, what does it mean for a parent to help her child with his math homework? The word 'help' implies two things: (1) It means that the helper is more capable in something than the one being helped. You can help with math if (and only if!) you do math better than your child; and (2) it means that you use your power in a way that enables and supports. You are not 'helping' your child with his homework if you actually do the work for him. You must not usurp his responsibility but use your power in a way that enriches, supports and 'empowers' him . . . The text contradicts both very traditional and very feminist views. On the one hand, it teaches that women are not inferior to men. If to be a 'help' is to be inferior, then God is inferior to us, for he is our help! In order to be a help to men, women must somehow be stronger. Yet, on the other hand, it teaches that there must be some ways that the genders are irreducibly different. There must be some things that women can do better than men. And, by way of implication, there must be some things that men can do better than women . . . The other word in verse 18's phrase, ezer kenegdo (helper suitable, NIV) means someone who 'fits' as a 'counterpart.' There is a sense of a complementary, irreplaceable companion" . . . One implication of this text is that we need (even apart from marriage) the friendship and fellowship of persons of the opposite sex—whether siblings and relatives, Christian brothers and sisters, or just friends. There are always ways in which we need the stretching and enriching experience of cross-gender friendships. There are things you can only learn (either through counsel or example) from people of the other gender. We must not think that we have to be married for this enrichment to take place.*

## DAY FIVE—SOUL-TRAINING EXERCISES BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

### **Lectio Divina: Ephesians 5:21-33**

Follow this guide from Richard Foster to practice Lectio Divina (*Spiritual Reading*).

#### **Listening**

Read the passage (Ephesians 5:21-33) all the way through without pausing – sometimes it's helpful to read out loud. Then read the passage again – this time pause, underline words, highlight a phrase. Take time to note what seems to be jumping off the page into your heart and mind.

#### **Reflecting**

Once you find a word or a phrase that strikes you, spend time reflecting upon it. Ponder it in your mind and heart. Ask: *How are You revealing yourself to me, Lord? What am I to see and understand as my life merges with Yours?*

#### **Praying**

Listening and reflecting naturally turns to conversation with God. Engage with what you are hearing by *praying* this Scripture and letting this holy moment with God give rise to your heart's cry of gratitude, confession, lament, relief, or praise. Record your prayer here.

#### **Obeying**

Here we contemplate the meaning of this word from God—for the choices we will make this day, for the attitudes we will carry into our tasks, for the thoughts we will allow to dwell uppermost in our mind. What is God calling you to as you pray through this passage? If you are married, is there a courageous, encouraging or healing conversation you need to have with your spouse?

# THE BEAUTY OF MARRIAGE

## GENESIS 2

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *The Beauty of Marriage*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# THE BEAUTY OF MARRIAGE

## GENESIS 2

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Notes Continued.

### DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

What most struck you from the talk?

How do you think differently about the creation of women?

How do you want to live differently as a single or married person as a result of this study?

Which day of the study was most profound to you?

This week, how will you apply this study?



# THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S COMMANDS

## GENESIS 2 - 3

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### DAY ONE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

The first command appears in Genesis 2. This week we look at the grace, provision and purpose of God's commands.

What false narratives do many in the church (and outside the church) believe when they hear of God's commandments in the Bible?

What false narrative do you hold toward God's commands and obedience to them?

Read Genesis 2:4-17 and draw a picture of Eden.

Read Genesis 2:15–18 and answer these questions.

What does God give the man and woman in the garden?

What is the commandment God gives and what grace precedes it (see also the quotes below)?

*If a thing is free to be good, it is also free to be bad. And free will has made evil possible. Why then did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having.*

**C.S. Lewis**

*. . . we embrace the law of God in order to discover our true selves. Deuteronomy says, "What does the Lord require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you this day for your good?"*

*Here we see that the law of God is a gift of grace that is the foundation of human flourishing. It is not "busywork" assigned just to please the arbitrary whims of a capricious deity. The law of God simply shows us what human beings were built to do—to worship God alone, to love their neighbors as themselves, to tell the truth, keep their promises, forgive everything, act with justice. When we move against these laws we move against our own natures and happiness. Disobedience to God sets up strains in the fabric of reality that can only lead to break down.*

**Tim Keller**

Based on what you have learned today, re-write your narrative concerning God's commands.

*Father, I receive Your commands as Your grace to me.  
I trust that Your commands are always for my good and for Your glory.  
I submit to Your ways today as an act of adoration, affection and worship. Amen*

## DAY TWO—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

Read Genesis 2:15-17. This is the only prohibition given to mankind before sin invades creation through the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3).

Why do you think this is the only command God gave?

How is this test a good test?

If they obey the test, what are they saying about God?

Respond to this quote from Theologian C. John Collins: *“God intended that through this tree humans would come to know good and evil: either from above, as masters of temptation, or from below, as slaves to sin.”*

***Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there is any grievous way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way. Amen.  
Psalm 139:23-24***

**DAY THREE—SCRIPTURE: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS**

Read the following passages and record what they say about obedience to God.

John 15:1-17

Romans 6

What is one truth from these passages that you want to live into today?

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him." The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. Amen*  
**Lamentations 3:22-26**

#### DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: ADOPTING THE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

God's commands are always given for good, enabling us to live as those who belong to God. God never gives commands as a way of salvation but as a gift to those who are saved. Scripture is clear, we are saved by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:1-10). Obedience is a mark of faith, trust and love for God. We obey Him because we trust His ways. Jesus did not obey the Father out of fear but out of love.

What do the following verses reveal about Jesus' obedience the Father?

John 5:18-19

John 12:44-50

John 14:31

Luke 22:39-46

What does 2 Timothy 1:9-14 say about salvation, calling, grace and holiness?

As image-bearers of God, how is holiness an expression of wholeness?

***Holy, Holy, Holy. God in three persons, You are Holy!  
Because of Your Holiness You are worthy of my life. Because You are holy, I trust you.  
[List the people and circumstances you entrust to God today]. Amen.***

## DAY FIVE—SOUL-TRAINING EXERCISES BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

### Worshiping through Hymns

Many of the old hymns contain deep and beautiful theological truths that inform our minds and ignite our hearts.

Use the lyrics of *Holy, Holy, Holy* to guide your worship today. Sing it. Say it out loud. Listen to it on YouTube\* and sit in the truth and beauty of this song.

Holy, holy, holy  
Lord, God Almighty  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee

Holy, holy, holy  
Merciful and mighty  
God in three persons blessed Trinity

Holy, holy, holy  
Though the darkness hide Thee  
Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see

Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee  
Perfect in power, in love, and purity

Holy, holy, holy  
Lord, God Almighty  
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea  
Holy, holy, holy  
Merciful and mighty  
God in three persons blessed Trinity

\*I love the version on YouTube by Jimmy Needham (featuring Shane and Shane).

# THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S COMMANDS

## GENESIS 2 - 3

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *The Beauty of God's Commands*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S COMMANDS

## GENESIS 2

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Notes Continued.

### **DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP**

What most struck you from the talk?

How has this study changed your thinking about God's commands?

Share a time in your life when God invited you to take a step of obedience and it produced greater freedom in your life. What helped you be obedient?

Why is it important to you today that God is holy?

What is your take-away from all seven weeks of this study?