

The Big Story: Beginnings
Genesis 1:1-2:3
Small Group Guide

Opening Icebreaker Question:

- What's your favorite story? It could be a fairy tale, or a novel, or a Bible Story, or even a movie plot. Why do you find it so compelling?

OPTIONAL BACKGROUND READING/INTRO: Today we're beginning a new message series called, "The Big Story," which will take us through the bulk of the school year. We're going to work our way from the very beginning of the Bible, all the way through to the very end of the Bible, and along the way, we're going to hit some of your favorite stories, as well as some that may not be so familiar. But we're going to be looking at each story to see what it shows us about the Big Story that holds the whole Bible together. (For a few ways that you can get the most out of this series see Attachment 1.)

READ GENESIS 1:1-2:3.

1. Pastor Josh says that Genesis 1 shows three themes and the first one is that **God created the earth to be our perfect home.** Where do you see this "perfect home" in Genesis 1? Give some examples from Gen 1.
 - a. What implications are there for us if God originally created our world as a "perfect home" for us?
2. God creating the heavens and the earth presupposes that he is all powerful. Where do you see proof of God's sovereignty in Genesis 1?
 - a. What implication does this kind of power have for our daily lives?
3. Josh says that God created all the earth, all of matter, intrinsically good. Where do you see that in Genesis 1?
 - a. How do you feel about this observation? What does it change?
 - b. David exclaims in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." How might we cooperate with God in using creation as his witness to the world? Has God's creation ever encouraged you in your faith?
4. Josh also points out that God ordered this universe with natural laws that lend a great deal of predictability and dependability to the world and how things work. Read and discuss Gordon Wenham's observation, below:

Genesis 1 provide[s] the intellectual underpinning of the scientific enterprise. Its assumption of unity and order underlying the manifold... phenomena of experience rest on [the] assertion of the one almighty God who created and controls the world according to a coherent plan. Only such an assumption can justify the experimental method. Were this world... subject to mere chance, no consistency could be expected in experimental results and no scientific laws could be discovered.... The six-day schema is but one of several means

employed in this chapter to stress the system and order that has been built into creation.

Question: What does it mean to you that God created the universe with order and natural laws that science both uses and uncovers?

5. Pastor Josh's second theme from Genesis 1 is **People are the pinnacle of God's creation.** Read Genesis 1:26-27.
 - a. In Attachment 2, five truths about human beings are listed as a result of God creating them in the way he did here in Gen 1:26-27.
 - i. Get in groups of 2 or 3 and have each pair take one of the truths. What does it matter if this is true?
 - ii. Share your findings with the entire group.
 - b. How does it make you feel that God originally created humans as a perfect "work of art" and that they were "very good," above all other creation? Do you think you have a healthy perspective of your value to God, or do you tend to under-value yourself?
 - c. How does this observation affect the way we view issues such as racism, poverty, clean water, abortion, and political corruption?
 - d. As Sally Lloyd-Jones says in the *Jesus Storybook Bible*, Genesis 1 is not the beginning of a science book. It's the beginning of a love story. In other words, what we see in Genesis 1 about the pinnacle of God's creating explains why the rest of the story unfolds as it does. **Question: What does it mean to you personally that the Bible is a love story more than a theology or science textbook?**
6. The third theme that will ring out from Genesis 1 and into the Big Story is that **We were created for a rhythm of work and rest.**
 - a. What's your first reaction to hearing that work was originally created good and was part of the human experience (Gen 1) before sin entered the world (Gen 3)?
 - b. What are the implications of this fact?
 - c. Like the *Chariots of Fire* movie quote, do you feel God's pleasure when you work? Why or why not? How can we grow into that experience?
 - d. Is a day of rest a regular, guilt-free part of your weekly rhythm?
7. **Prayer:** Consider starting with reading the quote below as a prayer from Pastor Josh:

"My hope today is that every time you experience the beauty of this physical world, you will grasp the goodness that God has put into it and the perfection toward which he is moving it as your perfect home. That you will grasp the reality that you are the pinnacle of God's creating, that he delights in you, and you were worth any price to redeem you. And that you will work and rest with all your heart, knowing that God will enfold your work into this Big Story that he is writing."

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - A few ways that you can get the most out of this sermon series:

- Read the Bible through. “[Reading God’s Story, One-year Chronological Plan](#).” This is the best way to understand how the big story of the Bible fits together.
- At minimum, read the published readings that our office puts out every month.
- Use the Jesus Storybook Bible with your kids. (They’re also doing something similar in Sunday School, called the Gospel Project.)
- Participate in a small group. We’re going to offer a quiz each week for you to use to see what you’ve learned along the way, and help you remember it.
- Listen to what you miss on our website.

Attachment 2 - Five truths about humans from Genesis 1:

1. Human beings alone have the capacity for personal relationship with their Creator. In the creation account, God speaks with humans as friend to friend.
2. We are God’s representatives on earth. In other words, you might say that people are his “vice-rulers,” tasked with ruling and caring for the created order. Because humans are God’s representatives, their lives are sacred: every assault on humans is an affront to the Creator.
3. Humans bear the closest likeness to God of any creature, and it is akin to the likeness of a son or daughter to a parent. In other words, it’s not an identical replica, but enough of a likeness to see a definite relationship. Next week we’ll talk more about this likeness.
4. Gender is intricately connected to being created in God’s image. V. 27: “In the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.” Gender is not a social construct; gender distinction it is inherent in our wiring, and shouldn’t be messed with. However, that fact does not imply gender stratification, because of the next point.
5. Men and women are equally created in the image of God, and equally considered rulers over his creation. Both genders have equal dignity because they bear the image of God.