

LIFE GROUPS

Genesis Overview

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What first comes to mind when you think about the Book of Genesis?

From beginning to end, the book of Genesis delivers a relentless portrayal of the human predicament of fallen, inveterately sinful humanity. And it is appropriate to begin with the problem of man because the following subjects of faith and righteousness, grace, Christ, and God provide the answer to man's predicament. Our¹

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**

2. **Why is the story recorded in Genesis critical to understanding God's Story as a whole? What is the point of God's Story in Genesis?**

Genesis can be divided into two sections. The first section (chapters 1–11) is a general history that shows how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chapters 12–50) is a more specific history that focuses on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham's descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 579.

3. Read Genesis 1:1; 2:7. Why are these two verses critical to understanding the rest of Scripture? What do we learn about God and humanity from these verses?

God is the sovereign Lord and Creator of all things. He created everything out of nothing. He has infinite power and perfect control over everything. He is separate from the created order, and no part of creation is to be considered an extension of God. All that God created is good, because He is a good and majestic God. God is Lord, maintaining sovereignty and involvement with His creation. God's control over human history is so complete that even the worst of human deeds can be turned to serve His benevolent purposes (50:20).

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, unique from the rest of creation, to have fellowship with Him. Since all human life is created in the image of God, no person or class of humans is superior to others. Humanity was created to live in community. The most fundamental unit of community is the family: a husband (male) and wife (female) with children. God wants to work through individuals to bring a blessing to every human life (18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Nevertheless, Genesis teaches that because humans have sinned, using their God-given resources and abilities in ways that violate God's laws (2:17; 3:6) and hurt other people (3:8-11; 6:5,11-12), all human beings must die (2:17; 3:19; 5:5,8,11).

The logic of God's all-power as we have it in Genesis is this:

Since He has at His command all the power in the universe, the Lord God omnipotent can do anything as easily as anything else. All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that must be replenished. His self-sufficiency makes it unnecessary for Him to look outside of Himself for a renewal of strength. All the power required to do all that He wills to do lies in undiminished fullness in His own infinite being. (A.W. Tozer)²

As J. I. Packer wrote:

What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that *he knows me*. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him, because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters.

Fellow Christians, do you truly believe this? The answer is crucial—because the most important thing about you is what you believe about God.³

² R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 616–617.

³ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 620.

The great Genesis truths that God is all-powerful and all-present and all-knowing coalesce in the truth that he is sovereign over all—that he is on the throne ruling over all.⁴

Tradition does not determine grace. Convention does not dictate grace. Neither do giftedness or natural endowments. Grace does not bow to social privilege or status. God is not bound by our self-righteous moralizing. God is not bound by our limited knowledge. God is not tame and will not submit to the captivity of our notions of what he should be or do. So we see in Genesis that God is sovereign in history, in life, and in grace—and, lastly, in providence.⁵

4. Read Genesis 3:1-15; 6:11-13. What does this passage teach us about sin, judgement, and mercy? What should these passages ultimately point us to?

Evil and sin did not originate with God. Adam and Eve were created innocent and with the capacity to make choices. Sin entered the world at a specific place and time in history. Adam and Eve chose freely to disobey God, fell from innocence, and lost their freedom. Their sinful nature has passed to every other human being. Sin resulted in death, both physical and spiritual. Sin has led to a world of pain and struggle.

Human depravity was not a temporary state. There were no relentings, no repentances, no hesitations. Lust was their medium, violence their method. This was total, inveterate depravity⁶

So what are we to conclude? Principally this: The book of Genesis, which is the sole record of creation and primeval history and patriarchal history, teaches us that man is both *wonderful* and *awful* and spends most of its pages confirming his awfulness. Genesis teaches that humanity left to itself is thoroughly sinful and helplessly and hopelessly lost. Genesis also informs all of subsequent Old Testament history, which repeatedly confirms the conclusions of primeval and patriarchal history. And more, the New Testament's view of man, and particularly that of Paul, is not a novel twist. Rather, it is in radical continuity with the contours and conclusions of Genesis. Paul's statements are not so much Pauline as primeval and patriarchal.⁷

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 620.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 622.

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 583.

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 585–586.

Humanism. Man is *awful*, and he is *wonderful*. Shakespeare's Hamlet says, "What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!" Well, yes, if he heeds the "better angels" of his nature, as Abraham Lincoln put it. But the problem is, he cannot.⁸

Again as Dr. Packer says, "It signifies a corruption of our moral and spiritual nature that is total not in degree (for no one is as bad as he or she might be) but in extent. It declares that no part of us is untouched by sin, and therefore no action of ours is as good as it should be." This is why none of us can turn to God in a sincere, wholehearted way on our own.⁹

5. Read Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18; and 49:10. What do we learn about God's grace, blessings and promises from this passage? How does the covenant promise of God apply to people in our day and time?

Genesis is a narrative of relationships, and certainly relationships grounded in covenants with God. These covenants provide a unifying principle for understanding the whole of Scripture and define the relationship between God and man. God's covenant with Abraham is a major event both in Genesis and throughout the Bible. God called Abraham out of Ur to go to Canaan, promising to make him a great nation that in turn would bless all nations (Gen. 12:1-3). God repeated His oath in Genesis 22:18, adding further that it would be through Abraham's offspring ("seed") that all nations would someday be blessed. Paul applies the singular noun "seed" as a reference to Christ (Gal. 3:16). It is through Christ, Abraham's prophesied descendant, that the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant would come to every nation.

"The drama of unfolding covenants brings us to the renewal of the covenant in the Lord's Table and baptism." – D.A. Carson

6. Read Genesis 15:1-6; Galatians 3:5-9. What do these passages teach us about faith and righteousness? How does this kind of faith change the way you live your life?

The very next night Abraham's faith was further strengthened as God confirmed his promise of a land for Abraham's offspring with a theophany as the blazing furnace of God's presence glided down the aisle of glistening sacrifices in unilateral covenant (cf. 15:12–20). What elevation this brought to Abraham's faith! First, under the stars Abraham had believed that a countless people would come from his own body, and God counted it to him as

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 587.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 586.

righteousness. Now, with the same faith, he believed that the land would go to his people. All was light. His fears and doubts were gone.

Faith extraordinary. The great man of faith was, to use Luther's term, "at the same time justified and a sinner" (*simul justus et peccator*), and his faith and conduct were not perfect in the following years¹⁰

As Von Rad has said, "But above all, his righteousness is not the result of any accomplishments, whether of sacrifice or acts of obedience. Rather, it is stated programmatically that belief alone has brought Abraham into a proper relationship with God."¹¹

Thus we see that from beginning to end the redemptive principle of the patriarchal age was faith. The principal characters of that age were men and women who lived, or came to live, by faith. Furthermore, Abraham's life and the divine dictum that Abraham "believed the LORD, and he [God] counted it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6) was in fact the operative principle for the major players in primeval history—Abel, Enoch, and Noah—as well as for the patriarchs—and their offspring.¹²

The universal gospel is the good news that salvation comes not by works, but by faith! So what must we conclude? Solely this: Just as original sin was not a Pauline invention but is primeval and patriarchal and universal, so also faith-righteousness is not something that Paul cooked up, but it too is primeval and patriarchal and universal.¹³

7. Read Genesis 45:7,8; 50:20-26. What did we learn about God's sovereignty and providence in this passage? What evil in your life may God be intending for good?

The sweet doctrine of God's providence is this: God sovereignly works in and through the everyday, non-miraculous events of life to effect his will. Such a God, of course, is great beyond our imaginings because he *maintains* all of life, *involves* himself in all events, and *directs* all things to their appointed end while rarely interrupting the natural order of life. He is far greater than our imaginings because he arranges all of life to suit and effect his providence. This makes all of life a miracle. God provides and controls in three grand

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 594.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 594.

¹² R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 595.

¹³ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 596.

arenas—history, nature, and the lives of individual people. God’s providential control of life is illustrated by virtually every narrative in the Bible. His providence is an axiom for all biblical narrative.¹⁴

What a God he is—because he is not just a God of the extraordinary but a God of the ordinary! His power and infinitude took both the good and evil actions of Joseph’s family, of Pharaoh and his servants, and of passersby and used their actions for good, so that at the end Joseph declared to his brothers, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (50:20)¹⁵

The sweet providence of God is the province of God’s people. The prophet Jeremiah sang of it: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). Paul gave it this cherished expression: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).¹⁶

8. How is the Gospel and Christ shown all through Genesis? What was your biggest takeaway after looking back at our study in Genesis?

Humanism. Man is *awful*, and he is *wonderful*. Shakespeare’s Hamlet says, “What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!” Well, yes, if he heeds the “better angels” of his nature, as Abraham Lincoln put it. But the problem is, he cannot.

That is why Christ came. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). What awaits the Christian is the likeness (*eikon*, “image”) of Christ. “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:49). Ultimate humanity. True humanism!¹⁷

¹⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 622.

¹⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 623.

¹⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 623.

¹⁷ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 587.

PRAYER

Thank God for creating the universe and humankind, and for loving us so much that He covenants with us to take us into His promised eternal home. Thank Jesus for making atonement for the sins of all people so that you might be restored to God and enter that promised land. Ask God to teach you more of who He is, who you are, and what that means for daily life as you wait for that promised day.



FURTHER STUDY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQI72THyO5I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4isSyennFo>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/a-little-introduction-to-covenants>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/themes-from-genesis>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/3-things-genesis>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-involved-is-god-in-the-details-of-your-life>