

SESSION 1

God Creates



Introducing the Study

In the beginning...

These three words serve as a launching pad. They set the stage for the story of everything that comes next. They serve as the foundation for all we know, experience, love, and understand. And yet, these three words lose their meaning without the next word we find in Scripture:

In the beginning, *God*...



Why are these four words so crucial to understanding all of reality?



What do these words teach us about the nature of God?

Setting the Context

God was there at the beginning of the storyline of Scripture—and so was the Son of God, which the New Testament makes explicit: The Son is before all things and He created all things (Col. 1:16-17). “**Seeing Jesus in Genesis**” (p. 9) shows just some of the ways the centrality of Jesus in Scripture was the plan of God from the very beginning.

How can Christ connections throughout Scripture help us make sense of God’s Word?

Also vital to the beginning of Scripture is **the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo***, a Latin phrase that means “out of nothing.”

We use the word *create* when we cause something to come into being, but we always form something out of other things that previously existed. We create music using notes, art out of paints and a canvas, books from words, language, paper, and binding.

God, however, created from nothing. Everything in existence came to be because of Him—rocks, trees, the very air we breathe. Not only that, but intangible realities such as courage, love, and laughter come from Him as well. All of this came from the heart of God at the beginning.

So this is where our story begins—with nothing. Nothing except God, and then came much, much more.

What are some of the ways we might, through our lives, neglect the fact that God is our Creator?

CHRIST Connection

Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God, the only One who rules wisely over creation, perfectly relates to God and others, and through His work, earns our everlasting rest. By the Son, for the Son, and through the Son, all things exist and hold together.

Seeing *Jesus in* Genesis

OLD TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT



The First Adam
Brought Death (Gen. 3)

The Second Adam
Brought Life (Rom. 5)



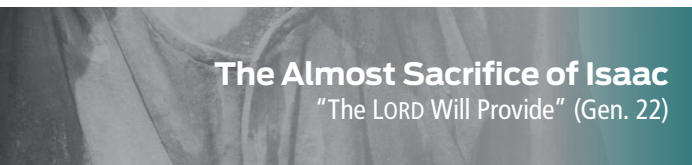
The Protoevangelium
The Promise of Deliverance from
the Serpent (Gen. 3:15)

The Fulfillment
Jesus Destroys the Works of
the Devil (1 John 3:8)



Abel's Blood
Cries Out for Justice (Gen. 4)

Jesus' Blood
Proclaims Forgiveness (Heb. 12:24)



The Almost Sacrifice of Isaac
"The LORD Will Provide" (Gen. 22)

The Crucifixion of Jesus
"The Lamb of God" (John 1:29)



Joseph Suffered
According to God's Plan (Gen. 50:20)

Jesus Suffered
According to God's Plan (Acts 2:23)

Continuing the Discussion



Watch this session's video, and then continue the group discussion using the following guide.

What ideas or phrases regarding God as Creator were most striking to you in the video? Why?

In what ways does this biblical truth—human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation—affirmed in our culture? Denied in our culture?

As a group, read Genesis 1:1-2,31.



What are some of the things we can learn about the nature and character of God from these verses alone?

Why might spending time in God's creation be a valuable exercise for the Christian?

Why is it important for us to remember not only that God created everything but that He created everything good?

How might our lives go off track if we fail to recognize this truth?

God is not only our Creator, He is also our good Creator. When we embrace God as our Creator, we must also embrace the truth that we owe Him our obedience. If we fail to see creation as God's activity, then we can and will easily justify any kind of disobedience.

As a group, read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16-25.

What is different about the way God created humans from everything else?

What do you think it means to be created in God's image?

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- * Why is it important that we recognize that all humans are created in God's image?

To be created in God's image means that we have a unique ability to relate intimately with God and others. When we recognize this fact, we can only conclude that every human being is deserving of respect and honor.

As a group, read Colossians 1:15-17.

What description of Jesus sticks out to you the most in these verses?

What do these verses tell us about the process and purpose of creation?

- * How does it change our perspective of creation and life to recognize that all things were created by the Son, through the Son, and for the Son?

The Bible is a God-centered book. We have been given Scripture so that we might know God. That means when we read Scripture, we should focus primarily on what we can learn, love, and embrace about God and His Son, Jesus.

+ MISSIONAL Application

Record in this space at least one way you will apply the truth of Scripture as an image bearer of God.

Personal Study 1

God creates everything good.

Read Genesis 1:1-2,31.

How else could you describe the creation of everything unless you're first introduced to the Someone who preceded everything? That's the whole point of Genesis 1:1. The God who simply is, who preceded everything and is not dependent on anything, created all that we know and all that we don't know as well.

The original audience of the Book of Genesis was the ancient Israelites on their way to the promised land (a story for a later time). They likely would not have been asking some of the questions that pique our interest, such as the age of the earth or the science behind creation. So what, then, was the original purpose for the creation account in Genesis?

The Israelites would have wrestled with questions such as “Is our God the real God?” “Is He the best God?” “Is He the most powerful God?” Having lived so long among the gods of the Egyptians and being introduced to the gods of the foreign nations that surrounded them, the Israelites struggled to believe that their God was *the* God.

To remedy such wandering hearts, God wrote Genesis 1:1 to help His people understand that the God of their bedtime stories—the God of their fathers and their fathers' fathers—was the very same God who created the world.

We are no different than the original audience of the Book of Genesis. Though perhaps not tempted to bow down to wooden statues, our hearts are just as prone to wander. Lazy Sundays instead of early Sunday worship sure sound nice. You dream about all the things you could've bought with the money you gave the church by the end of the year. There's an ever-present guilt each time your eyes steal a glimpse of your attractive coworker.

Obedience, at times, seems too costly, and our hearts wonder: *Is God real? Does He love me? Is He worth it?* When we have these questions and struggle to believe in the realness and goodness of God, He wants us to recount Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, God...” When there was nothing but nothing, God was, and that ought to create in us a sense of wonder about Him that trumps all our other wonderings.

But not only did God create everything, God created everything good. When God created something and called it good, He was saying it was doing well at performing its intended purpose and design.

So what is the purpose and design of creation? To declare God's glory and proclaim the work of His hands (Ps. 19:1). To reveal things about God that are invisible to us (Rom. 1:20). Creation reveals God's eternal power and divine nature in a way that we should clearly see and understand them. The purpose and design of creation is to tell of the glory of God, to display plainly His power and His divine nature. When God created the heavens, the stars, the trees, the mountains, the birds, and the animals, they did their job well, and God called them good. They're still doing their job well, even if it is now obscured as a result of sin in the world.

How does creation still testify about the nature and character of God?

How should the reality that God is the Creator of everything and that He created everything good impact the way you live each day?

Personal Study 2

God creates people in His image.

Read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16-25.

God created, and God created everything good. In the first three days of creation, God dealt with its formlessness by giving boundaries, separating, and organizing to make the heavens, the seas, and the land. Then, in the second set of three days, God dealt with the emptiness of the world by filling the spheres that He had created in the first three days. He filled the expanse with the sun, moon, and stars, and He filled the sky, seas, and land with living creatures. Throughout all of this, God stepped back from each moment in creation and “saw that it was good.” But the crown jewel of His creation was still to come. God created humankind in a unique way from everything else in the universe.

In this aspect of creation, we see God not just displaying His power by commanding, “Let there be human beings,” as He did with all the other elements of creation, but He also displayed His closeness toward humanity in fashioning the first people. He began by forming Adam from the dirt, shaping him, and breathing life into his nostrils.

The key here is to notice that God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26). To bear God’s image fully means to have a relationship with Him. We were not merely spoken into existence by God’s power but formed by His hands to hold His very breath. We were created not just by power but through intimacy—for the purpose of relationship.

Our image-bearing relationship started when God created us. The account in Genesis 2 shows how powerful a scene this was, when God’s face was toward us, when He breathed into the first man the breath of life. Just as a mirror best reflects an image when the mirror is in perfect “relationship” with, or directly in front of, the object that it’s imaging, so too do we best reflect God’s image when we are aligned with Him in relationship. We reflect God best—we image Him best—in two ways: in our relationships and in our stewardship.

Being made in God’s image means we are meant to be relational creatures. In other words, we are best able to show the world who our God is and what He is like when we walk closely with Him, meeting with Him daily through His Word and prayer. God’s desire is that we live in intimacy with Him, for we alone among creation have the capacity to do so since we are created in God’s image.

But bearing God’s image doesn’t point only to the relationship we have with God; we also have relationships with each other. God created us “male and female.” The God who exists in community by nature—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created human beings to live in community as well.

After multiple statements of God seeing His creation and saying it was “good,” then came the first moment when something was described as “not good”—the man whom God had formed was alone. We were not created to bear God’s image on our own, to have an isolated relationship with God. We reflect God best when we are in community with one another, relating to others in the love and grace of God, and when we are pursuing an intimate relationship with Him ourselves. This is the core of what it means to be made in God’s image.

Not only do we image God in our relational capacity, we also image Him in our stewardship. When God placed humankind in the garden, He immediately gave these humans work to do. They were to care for and cultivate the garden as His representatives in worship of Him. As they worked and rested and cared for the earth, they were to do so in the same way God cares for all of creation. Because we are created in God’s image, we are to mirror that image in the way we steward everything God has given us charge over.

Because we are image bearers of God, we reflect His glory in how we steward the earth, work and rest, and cultivate relationships with Him and others.

What does the fact that all people are created in God’s image indicate about the way every human being should be treated?

What are some of the barriers in your own life to living in true community?

Personal Study 3

God creates everything through the Son and for the Son.

Read Colossians 1:15-17.

Why did God create? Was it because He was lonely? Because there was something deficient in Himself? To fulfill some need that He had? Far from any of these reasons. God created not because He was lacking but because He was overflowing—spilling over with the perfect fellowship between the three Persons of the Trinity from the very beginning.

It's not uncommon for people to misunderstand the nature of the Trinity—one God in three Persons—to mean that at creation, God was the Father, then in Bethlehem, God became the Son, and then in the Book of Acts, God became the Holy Spirit. This is not true and is actually an ancient heresy called modalism. Contrary to this, the Bible teaches that God has always existed in these three distinct Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even more, the Bible teaches us that God created everything through the Son and for the Son.

These New Testament verses from the Book of Colossians work in concert with the account of creation from Genesis to show us this truth. This passage of Scripture teaches that Christ was “before all things,” which indicates that He is eternal. Christ is not created; He is the eternal Creator. Whenever the beginning took place, He was already there making everything become a reality. In John 8:58, while debating with the Jewish leaders, Jesus made it clear that He was preexistent and divine: “Before Abraham was, I am.”

Christ not only created all things but He also maintains the entire cosmos. He sustains the order in the universe. He holds it all together. Doesn't this give you hope? If He holds the universe together, surely He can hold our lives together as Christians! Whenever we are tempted to give up hope, to feel like we can barely “hold it together,” like the world is spinning out of control, we ought to remember that God is God and we are not. Jesus holds everything together by the power of who He is!

Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God, the only One who rules wisely over creation, perfectly relates to God and others, and through His work, earns our everlasting rest. By the Son, for the Son, and through the Son, all things exist and hold together.

It is through Jesus that all things were created; it is through Jesus that all things hold together; and it is for the glory of Jesus that everything exists. The most basic implication this truth has for us is that we, like everything else in creation, exist through and for Jesus. It would be a drastic mistake for us, then, to read the story of the Bible as if we were the main character in Scripture. We are not. We are supporting players, and we only find true meaning and purpose when we align our lives with God for the glory of Jesus rather than trying to find how He fits into ours.

When we read the Bible, then, we should not be asking primarily how this passage or text relates to me and my story. Instead, we must read Scripture as the revelation of God that we might know Him and His Son. Consequently, our question shifts from asking what these verses say about me and my life to what this passage says about God and His story, and then how we fit into that overall narrative.

Jesus is the main character in Scripture. He is the center of the story. Everything revolves around Him.

How does understanding that the entire Bible is the story of Jesus change the way you approach reading it?

What are some areas of your life that you need to fight to remember that Jesus holds all things together?

SESSION 2

Man Sins



Introducing the Study

In the beginning, there was God and nothing else. He has co-existed in the Persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from all eternity. Furthermore, it was through the Son and for the Son that all things were created good, and through Him all things hold together even today.

- * What happens when we begin to drift from remembering it is through the Son and for the Son that all things were created and hold together?

Unfortunately, what was created good did not stay in its perfect order. While the world around us might look at earthquakes, cancer, tsunamis, poverty, and the like and call them tragedies, disasters, or just cruel twists of fate, Christians look to the storyline of the Bible and see the ultimate source of these calamities—sin.

Do you think it's correct to attribute all that's wrong in the world to sin? Why or why not?

Setting the Context

God's creation was good; very good, in fact. The first man and woman lived together in God's garden where He had placed them, and they did the good work of representing His image in creation and living in harmonious relationship with Him and one another.



How does the relational nature of the triune God impact your understanding of why He created people?

It's at this point in the story that we are introduced to another character—**the serpent**—who was not content with his place in creation. He did not want to serve God as Creator but instead wanted to be God himself. Not only that, this creature desired that people—God's prized creation—would adopt the same self-determining attitude and throw off the loving rule and reign of God. So **he tempted the first humans** to violate the one prohibition God had lovingly given them—do not eat from the *one* forbidden tree.

Adam and Eve did choose to eat from that tree and set in motion **a downward spiral of sin** we see graphically depicted in Genesis 3–11.

How would you define *sin*?

Ultimately sin became so great on earth that God decided to wipe creation clean with a worldwide flood. But in His grace, God made a way for His judgment of the wicked to lead to the salvation of Noah and his family. “**Salvation Through Judgment**” (p. 21) shows how this event foreshadows the cross of Jesus Christ and God's eternal plan of rescue for His people, for those who believe in His Son.



CHRIST Connection

Our sin reveals the depth of our rebellion against God and our helplessness to do anything to be right with God again. But what we cannot do, God has done through Jesus. Jesus is the Son of Eve whom God graciously provided to crush the head of the serpent Satan and rescue us from sin and death (Gen. 3:15).

Salvation Through Judgment

JUDGMENT	THE EVENT	THE MEANS	SALVATION
The Wicked	<i>The Flood (Gen. 6:9)</i>	<i>Floodwater</i>	Noah and His Family
The Egyptians	<i>The Exodus (Ex. 1–15)</i>	<i>The Plagues and the Red Sea</i>	The Israelites
Judah and Jerusalem	<i>The Exile (2 Chron. 36)</i>	<i>The Babylonians</i>	The Remnant
Sinners/ Jesus Christ	<i>The Cross (Rom. 5)</i>	<i>God's Wrath and Our Substitute</i>	Believers in Christ
God's Enemies	<i>The Final Judgment (2 Thess. 1)</i>	<i>God's Wrath and Hell</i>	God's People

Continuing the Discussion



Watch this session's video, and then continue the group discussion using the following guide.

What images or phrases about sin were most striking to you in the video? Why?

How does sin keep us from fulfilling our mission as image bearers of our Creator God?

As a group, read Genesis 3:1-7.

Look closely at the serpent's words. What was he implying about the nature and character of God through this temptation?

What are some of the noticeable effects of sin you see in this passage?



What can we learn about our own sin from the serpent's temptation and Adam and Eve's response?

Sin is much more than a choice about a piece of fruit; it is a failure to trust in the good character and rule of God. As a result of sin, our relationship with God and with others is fractured beyond our ability to repair.

As a group, read Genesis 6:5-8.

What do these verses reveal about the gravity and seriousness of sin?

How does this passage show both the reality of judgment and the hope of being saved?

 How should the reality of God's judgment motivate us?

The Bible tells us the consequences of sin are death and judgment. Because of this, we should put our full faith in God alone to save, but we must also strive to help others see the consequences of sin and how they might also be saved from God's judgment.

As a group, read Genesis 11:1-9.

Does God's reaction in this story surprise you? Why or why not?

How did the people's work demonstrate a prideful disobedience?

 Why is sin, at its core, an exercise in pride?

The people in this account wanted to replace God with themselves, taking the glory that is rightfully due to Him. At its core, sin is always an effort at self-rule and self-determination in which we reject the loving authority of God our Creator.

 **MISSIONAL Application**

Record in this space at least one way you will apply the truth of Scripture as a sinner who knows of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Personal Study 1

Man's sin ruptured our relationship with God and others.

Read Genesis 3:1-7.

In the garden of Eden, God had provided everything Adam and Eve would ever need. His only prohibition for the first couple was they could not eat from one particular tree. This rule was not arbitrary; He told them not to eat from that one tree because death would be the result of their disobedience. God wanted Adam and Eve to believe Him, to believe in His goodness, for their well being. But Satan—a mysterious figure who opposes God—slithered onto the scene through the serpent. And the serpent planted a serious and grave lie into the heart of Eve.

Satan knew that if he wanted Eve to sin, he would need to make her doubt if she could really trust God. So he convinced her that God was holding out on her—He was not giving Eve something that was good. This is the true evil behind the temptation; ultimately, it was a question regarding the character of God and whether He could be trusted, not just about whether a piece of fruit was good to eat.

Satan put the idea in Eve's mind that God wanted her to stay away from the tree not so she wouldn't die but because He didn't want her to truly live. To this point, God had provided for her every need, but for the first time, Eve was confronted with the possibility that there might be more for her outside of God's will than within it.

Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God by eating the fruit. With this choice, our first parents plunged humanity and the rest of creation into darkness. In eating the fruit, they rebelled against God's authority and goodness and chose the road of self-lordship over trusting God.

Before the sin of Adam and Eve, God had determined what was good. But when they took that forbidden bite, the first humans declared they were going to decide what was good for them. They didn't want God to tell them what was best for them; He couldn't be trusted anymore, and it was no longer His place to decide. Instead, Adam and Eve, and all their descendants, would determine their own courses of action. In that moment, we grasped for the authority that belonged to God, our Creator, and tried to take it for ourselves. We decided to be our own gods.

Our disobedience didn't stop with the rejection of God's authority; we also turned our backs on the primary reason of our existence—relationship with God. A loving relationship had existed between God and His image bearers. But after our rejection, humans no longer saw God as the near and intimate Father they had once known so well. Instead of reveling in God's presence, Adam and Eve ran and hid from God, and we continue to do the same. We too live estranged from God, thinking that if we obey Him, we will miss out on something better—something good He wants to withhold from us. We see God as being out to sabotage our happiness and joy.

Furthermore, sin ruptured the relationship between Adam and Eve. From the very moment of their eating, new elements entered into that relationship, elements of distrust, of blame, and of accusation. The first couple went from being naked and unashamed—no barriers between them and complete acceptance and intimacy—to being clothed and ashamed.

Our act of sin in Adam and Eve was not primarily about a piece of fruit. It was about exchanging God for an idol. In eating the forbidden fruit, we were essentially saying to God, "Anyone or anything but You!" trusting instead in a creature over the Creator. As a result, we are broken. This brokenness is most clearly seen in the fracturing of relationships that God had established for His image bearers, and we still feel the effects today.

What are some of the ways sin continues to affect your relationship with God?

How does sin impact your relationships with others?

Personal Study 2

Humanity's sin grieves God and brings judgment.

Read Genesis 6:5-8.

Eating the fruit in the garden and the rejection of God it symbolized threw all of creation into upheaval. As the story continues, we see sin spiraling out of control just a few chapters later. Things weren't getting better but much, much worse. The one act of disobedience was not an anomaly; now "every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time" (6:5). And this growing sinfulness didn't just impact us. The author of Genesis tells us God was "deeply grieved" by the evil of humanity (6:6).

What we see from the grieving of God's heart is something very unique: The all-powerful Being who created the universe voluntarily (and that is an important distinction) bound His heart with man when He formed him with His hands. We weren't just made in God's image; we received His love and heartfelt affection. So our idolatry and rebelliousness, then, is like a knife in His back, a knife to the heart! Though we are about to see how holy God must respond to sin and punish it severely, we must remember this "grief" along with His righteous anger. God justly judges sin, yet His unfailing love manifests itself through His glorious grace. We see this in the story of Noah.

While he deserved to perish under God's waters of judgment with the rest of humanity, Noah found favor, or grace, in the eyes of the Lord. That is why salvation was extended to him, not because of anything he had done. Noah was not righteous by his own merit but by the grace given to him by God. Notice also that salvation went beyond Noah and extended to the members of his family. The righteousness of Noah was the foundation of the preservation of the rest of his family.

Does that sound like anyone else you know? The story of Noah points ahead to Jesus. In Noah we see a pattern, a shadow, for how God will offer salvation from sin. Jesus is the One in whom God is truly pleased, the One God truly favors. Though all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), though none are righteous, not even one (Rom. 3:10), based solely upon the person of Jesus, His work and His righteousness, God offers us salvation.

Noah's family was saved not on the basis of their righteousness but on the basis of Noah's righteousness, and that by God's grace. They were saved because they belonged to Noah. Likewise, we're not saved by our own works but by the work of Jesus alone, and we will be saved from God's coming judgment because we belong to Jesus.

Through the story of the flood, we see the gospel framed as salvation through judgment. What does this mean? While the entire world was turning from God and rejecting Him—telling Him they didn't trust Him, just like their parents before them—Noah was building an ark. He was demonstrating through his obedience that he believed God. He had faith that God was going to do what He had said. And the waters of judgment did come.

The same water that swallowed up everyone who didn't believe in the word of God lifted Noah up. As the waters increased, everyone else was pressed down and crushed. But at the same time, Noah and his family were lifted up and saved. The waters of judgment actually saved him; it was salvation through judgment. And Peter confirmed this for us later in the Bible: "God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. In it a few—that is, eight people—were saved *through* water" (1 Pet. 3:20, italics added).

Surprisingly, the waters were actually salvation for some and death for others. In the biblical storyline, the reality of salvation through judgment will be seen most gloriously in the cross of Jesus Christ. As Jesus was judged on the cross for our sin, we were being saved. Salvation came to us through the very instrument by which death came to Jesus. God judges sin and wickedness, but He brings salvation out of this judgment.

What is the significance of "grief" preceding God's judgment of sinful people?

What picture of God do we have when we consider His anger apart from His grief? What about when we think of God as grieving but never angry? Why is it important to hold these two truths together?

Personal Study 3

Humanity's sin reveals our prideful disobedience.

Read Genesis 11:1-9.

We might think that so drastic a judgment and such an amazing salvation in the flood would renew humanity's trust in God and foster deeper reverence and worship. But soon after the flood, we see the evidence of sin resurface and the pattern of sin continue. When we reach chapter 11, we see prideful disobedience on display through the construction of the city and tower of Babylon, also known as Babel.

At the tower of Babylon, humans gathered around a common mission, united as one people. Their focus on a shared mission actually brought them together in such a way that God said nothing was impossible for them. This sounds great, right? A step in the right direction? Wrong. The common mission that united the people at the tower of Babylon was the idea that they could make a great name for themselves, not for God. They were unwilling to resound with the praises of God's great name and were united in their rejection of Him—united in one mind and purpose in prideful disobedience.

So we see God come down and further isolate humankind from one another by confusing their language. Yet even here there is an element of mercy in this act of judgment. By confusing their language, God slowed down the horrible developments that followed in the wake of human sinfulness.

Sin has affected everything. It has broken every relationship we have—with God, human beings, and creation. We need a better solution than Adam, but what hope do we have? The Scripture teaches us that in Adam all sinned (Rom. 5:12). You and I wouldn't have acted any differently if we had been in the garden with the serpent.

Yes, all of our individual acts of sin are very real and very serious. And yes, our individual acts of sin contribute to our guilt before God, but our problem goes even deeper than that. Sin is not just what we do. *We are* sinners, this is who we are, and we cannot save ourselves.

We have a sinful nature because Adam is our head. The only solution is a new head. Our old head brings death; we need a new head that will give us life. The good news of the gospel is that a new head has been offered to us in Christ Jesus (Rom. 5:17-19). God has adopted us through Jesus so that in the place of our prideful disobedience and judgment, He may grant us every spiritual blessing. Through Him we are holy and blameless because that is the inheritance we receive under the headship of Jesus.

God is bringing back the humanity that our sin has broken. He is restoring us to a state even better than our original creation, to a state as authentic and perfected humans who bear His image. Our relationship with God is remedied through Jesus. And our reconciliation with God also affects our relationships with other people.

When we repent and believe in Christ, we are forgiven and accepted by God. This truth must affect the way we treat others. When a brother or sister in Christ wrongs us and we desire to enact our own judgment against them, we are saying that the price Jesus paid for that sin on the cross was not enough. We are asking them to pay a little more because somewhere deep in our hearts, we believe the authority we hold as an offended party is greater than God's. Instead, we must freely offer forgiveness and pardon, just as we have been forgiven and pardoned.

The restoration of our relationship to God and our relationship to others means the church is the inverse of Babylon. We gather not to make a great name for ourselves but to make known the glorious name of Jesus Christ. We go out into the world on mission not to spread the news of our personal kingdoms but to spread the presence of the unfailing, never-ending kingdom of God.

Why is it impossible to seek God's glory and our own glory at the same time?

How can we show the world we desire God's fame rather than the glory of our own names?



Session 1 • Leader Guide

Session Objective

Show God's good purpose in creation, specifically how He positioned humankind to bear His image and glorify Him through our ruling over creation, our relationships with Him and one another, and our work and service for Him.

Introducing the Study

Use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.

- All that we experience as a part of creation had a beginning, so it is not ultimate in our lives.
- God, who was before all things, is the greatest reality ever to exist, and all of our reality must be interpreted through Him.
- In Genesis 1:1, we meet a God who is simply there. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself, not an argument for His existence.
- God existed before the beginning; therefore, He is outside of time and is eternal.
- We see that God is present and active in His creation from the very beginning.

Read this paragraph to transition to the next part of the study.

God is the One who created everything we see and know. It is from Him that we understand the meaning of our own lives. It is through Him that all things continue to hold together in our world today. And it is to Him that all glory is properly due.

Setting the Context

Use the following activity to help group members see the significance of a Christ-centered reading of Scripture.

Ask group members to look at **“Seeing Jesus in Genesis”** (p. 9) and to come up with a statement that ties together and summarizes these five Old and New Testament connections from the Book of Genesis. (*ex. Jesus sets right what humanity destroys through their sin, and He does so by sacrificing Himself for the sake of humanity.*)

A good summary statement here will lay the foundation for the gospel of Jesus, who died on the cross for the sin of the world. If the basics of the gospel can be found foreshadowed in the first book of the Bible, then imagine how much the rest of Scripture points to the Son, the Word of God, who created all things with the plan and purpose to lay His life down for God's image bearers.

Continuing the Discussion

Watch this session's video, and then as part of the group discussion, use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.

Genesis 1:1-2,31

- * God is eternal and exists outside of time.
- God is all-powerful, the Creator of all things.
- God is good.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16-25

- * Recognizing the image of God in other people will help us to treat them with respect and dignity, whether they are as yet unborn, among the elderly, an acquaintance, an unknown, or counted as family, friend, or foe.
- Seeing people as created in the image of God, just as we are, can help us spot injustice in the world and work toward justice for the oppressed.
- Treating people with respect as image bearers of God honors the God who made all human beings.

Colossians 1:15-17

- * We can no longer take things for granted nor live for our own selfish pursuits and desires.
- Everything we see and interact with and use in creation should serve the purpose of honoring the Son of God.
- People who live only to please themselves are missing their true purpose in life, and we who know Christ can share His gospel with them.

Share the following statement with the group. Then direct them to record in the space provided in their book at least one way they will apply the truth of Scripture as an image bearer of God.

+ MISSIONAL Application

Because we are image bearers of our good Creator God, reflect His glory in how you steward the earth, work and rest, and cultivate relationships with Him and others in the name of Jesus Christ.

Close your group in prayer, thanking God for His creative power and praying for a greater vision to live out what it means to bear His image.



Session 2 • Leader Guide

Session Objective

Show how deep and widespread sin is by surveying the rapid descent in Genesis 3–11. The main takeaway should be how terrible our sin is and how God is right to judge us for it, but still we see God’s hope and grace all along the way.

Introducing the Study

Use these answers as needed for the question highlighted in this section.

- * • We begin to live only for ourselves, satisfying our selfish desires with no thought of Creator God or anyone else, for that matter.
- We start taking the blessings and benefits of creation for granted, believing we are owed as the center of our universe.
- We begin working and tiring out as though the weight of sustaining the universe were on our shoulders.

Setting the Context

Use these answers as needed for the question highlighted in this section.

- * • God has perfect relationship within Himself as Father, Son, and Spirit, so our creation was not a necessity but an overflow of God’s perfect love.
- Being made in the image of the triune God means we were created as relational beings. We were not meant to live our lives alone and distant from others.
- God created human beings to be blessed by having a relationship with Him.

Use the following activity to help group members see the grace of God in providing salvation for sinners who likewise deserve judgment along with the wicked.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being carefree; 10 being holy wrath), ask group members to plot their own sense of justice and judgment when they have been wronged and sinned against by someone else. Then ask group members to look at **“Salvation Through Judgment”** (p. 21) and to reflect specifically on *the means* of God’s judgment (a “10”) in comparison with our own sense of judgment. Then encourage them to see God’s amazing grace in the *salvation* column to save sinners who deserve His judgment.

Read this paragraph to transition to the next part of the study.

While the theme of sinfulness is pervasive in Genesis 3–11, so also is the refrain of God’s love and grace. Keep an eye out for the signs of God’s “salvation through judgment” as we continue our discussion.

Continuing the Discussion

Watch this session's video, and then as part of the group discussion, use these answers as needed for the questions highlighted in this section.

Genesis 3:1-7

- * Acts of sin in our own lives show a distrust of God and His Word.
- Sin is appealing to our eyes and our desires, and we can easily rationalize our choices to give in to sin.
- Sin always results in shame and broken relationships.

Genesis 6:5-8

- * We should want to live holy lives in the fear of the Lord.
- We should recognize and be grateful for the grace God has shown to us in Jesus Christ taking upon Himself the judgment for our sins.
- We should care for the sinners who remain under God's judgment, and we should share with them the reality of God's judgment and the good news of the Savior who came to rescue us.

Genesis 11:1-9

- * Sin rejects the wisdom and authority of Creator God, who made us and everything around us.
- Sin is choosing to go my own way instead of God's way, essentially making myself the god of my own life.
- Sin takes advantage of people, putting one's own interests above the interests of others, so that we see people beneath us and ourselves as supreme.

Share the following statement with the group. Then direct them to record in the space provided in their book at least one way they will apply the truth of Scripture as a sinner who knows of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

+ MISSIONAL Application

Because we are recipients of God's grace through Jesus, we proclaim the reality of God's righteousness and grace to others so they may join His family and be saved from the coming judgment of sin.

Close your group in prayer, asking God for wisdom to identify sin for what it truly is and to help others do the same so we can find grace and forgiveness in Jesus.