

WEEK 1

Introduction

PREPARATION

Genesis 1:1 - 2:7



LESSON AIMS

To understand a) the Bible is one story, b) more about the God whose plan we are studying.



Genesis means 'origins' or 'beginnings'. The creation stories found at the beginning of Genesis are foundational to our understanding of who God is, who we are and why our world is as it is. Christians have sometimes avoided studying these chapters, because the science issue and disagreements between Christians as to whether the creation account should be understood literally or figuratively can make us nervous. However, this is God's revelation about himself and we must start where he starts. We do well to let these chapters speak for themselves and shape our thinking about God rather than try to make them answer our questions or support a particular point of view.

1:1 'In the beginning God' - God was there in the beginning. He has always existed and he created everything out of nothing.

1:2 The earth was 'formless' and 'empty'.

1:3-13 These verses show how God created 'form' in our world out of formlessness, order out of chaos. The world was brought into being by God's word. Each step required a creative act of God so each step begins with a word of God.

1:3 And God said the first day.

1:6 And God said the second day.

1:9 And God said

1:11 Then God said the third day. On the third day God speaks twice, indicating that there was no spontaneous 'evolution' of elements to living plants. The beginning of life was a creative act of God.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Day Night (colour black)	Sky Sea	Land Sea

1:14-31 These verses tell us how God filled the 'emptiness'. The pattern seen in the first 3 days is repeated.

1:14 And God said the fourth day.

1:20 And God said the fifth day.

1:24 And God said

1:26 Then God said the sixth day. On the sixth day, as on the third day, God speaks twice. This indicates that there was no spontaneous 'evolution' of mankind from animals. The creating of mankind was a separate creative act of God and was the climax of creation.

Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Sun, stars, moon	Birds, fish	Land animals, humans

The things God created in days 4-6 fill the structures created in days 1-3:
 day 4 filling day 1
 day 5 filling day 2
 day 6 filling day 3.

2:2-3 God rested. This is important; the creation culminated in rest. God did not rest because he was worn out but because the creation was finished. The goal of creation had been achieved. We will meet the theme of rest during this course so it is important to draw attention to it here.

What does this tell us about God?

- ◆ He was there at the beginning - he was not himself created.
- ◆ He made everything out of nothing.
- ◆ He is more than one. We have God, the Spirit of God (v.2) and the Word of God active in creation.
- ◆ He is orderly and purposeful in his creating. He forms the world then fills it.

What does this tell us about ourselves?

- ◆ We are special; we are made in the image of God. We are like God in all kinds of ways. As we look at each other we see creativeness, management, relationships and speech and we are reminded of God.
- ◆ We are not the same as animals. The making of man was a separate creative act.
- ◆ Men and women are equally created in God's image.
- ◆ We were made to take responsibility for our world and rule over it as God rules over the whole of Creation.

What does it tell us about our world?

- ◆ Creation seems to be made ultimately for man (this is made clearer in the Eden narrative in ch.2).
- ◆ It was very good (1:10,12,18,21,25,31).
- ◆ It was finished (we should not expect further development).
- ◆ Our world was not formed by accident; it was formed and filled by the will of God.
- ◆ There was no spontaneous evolution of living things.
- ◆ Sun, moon and stars are not gods and do not control us. They were created by God just like us. (This is less of a problem to us than to previous generations, but astrology is still an issue in our society.)

Lesson Summary

God created the world out of nothing. He did it in an orderly and purposeful way and everything he made was good. The climax of his creation was the making of mankind in his image. The goal of creation was rest. The creation tells us much about what God is like and helps us to understand ourselves and the world we live in.



What Story?

Prior to the session select 6 books that are familiar to the group and copy out a paragraph or two from the middle of each one onto separate pieces of paper. Number the papers from 1 to 6 and stick them up around the room. Divide the group into twos or threes and ask them to try and guess from which books the story excerpts come and what part of the story is being portrayed. The winner is the small group which gets the most right.

Point out that this is not generally how we read a book and may lead us to totally misunderstand the story. Yet if we already know the story (as some of them will) it is not a problem to dip in and out like this.

Lesson Plan



1. Focus activity.
2. Prior to the lesson write a very short story, consisting of a couple of sentences, about something amusing or embarrassing that has happened to you. Write out each word of the story on separate pieces of paper and give the individual words to the group in order. Get the group to read out the story, one word at a time.

Although the story came in different parts, read by different people, it was all part of one story, written by the same person. It's much the same with the Bible, where we see God's one story.

The Bible is actually one story, just like the novel, different in that it's true, but one story nevertheless. However, when we study the Bible we often study individual passages without being really clear about the whole story. This series is all about understanding the whole story of the Bible.

Use a jigsaw, in pieces, in a box. Pick out one piece (carefully selected in advance) and ask the group to describe it and guess the picture from which it comes. How would they find out whether or not they were right? Look at the picture on the box to see how right they were. When you can see the whole picture it is much easier to understand what you are looking at on the individual pieces. When we study the Bible we tend to look at individual stories and passages like examining individual bits of a jigsaw. To have the whole story of the Bible in our minds is like being able to visualise the picture on the box. This makes it much, much easier to fit the individual Bible stories together and understand what is there.

3. Photocopy the Bible passage for each group member. Supply felt tip or highlighter pens. Read the passage and establish what things were like at the beginning.
Get them to highlight or underline all the 'And/Then God said' phrases in one colour and the 'Day' phrases in another. This will make it easy for them to see the pattern.
4. Get them to highlight what was made on each day using the same colour for days 1 & 4, 2 & 5 and 3 & 6. This makes clear the forming and filling pattern.
And/or draw the days of creation chart (see page 10) and then fill it. This is best done as a group activity.
5. Go through the 3 'What does this tell us about ...?' questions, eliciting the answers from group members. You may need to help by giving verse numbers or clues. Be prepared to supply some of the answers. Summarise the answers on a board or flipchart.
6. If time permits, read Colossians 1:15-20 and John 1:1-3 and ask what further information this gives us about creation.