

## THE STORY — Week 1 Introduction To Genesis

**We all have a story...**

**Our story defines who we are...**

**Our story defines our values and where we find meaning and purpose or the lack thereof.**

“Narrative is the central function of the human mind, we turn everything into a story in order to make sense of life. We dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe doubt, plan, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative.’ In fact, we cannot avoid it. We are storied creatures.”

— James Braint, Author of *Good and Beautiful God*

“Stories are not *part* of your culture. Your culture is story. It is entirely story. Everyone’s is. We are all the stories we are told. Our being is story. Our essence is story. Our vision is shaped by story; our hearing, our morals and ethics are all story. The wiring in our brains is shaped by story. Every thought you think is framed by story.”

— Harold Johnson

### Who or what has shaped your story?

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

— A.W.Tozer, Pastor/Author/Editor

## THE STORY

**When we understand God’s story it alters our steps.**

**When I stop trying to fit God into my world/story and find my place in His, everything changes.**

### How will we engage THE STORY

#### I. From the beginning....it’s a story...HiStory

##### The First two words of Genesis 1:1 “Bereshith Elohim”

**Genesis 1:1** “*In the beginning* God...”

“In the beginning” in Hebrew is one word, **Bereshith**, and means **Beginnings**, or **Genesis**.”

“God” is the word *Elohim* in Hebrew and means spiritual being (in Genesis 1) the supreme spiritual being.

**Theologian and author Sidlow Baxter** emphasizes the importance of Genesis' writing: "[B]esides being introductory, Genesis is explanatory. The other writings of the Bible are inseparably bound up with it inasmuch as it gives us the origin and initial explanation of all that follows. The major themes of Scripture may be compared to great rivers, ever deepening and broadening as they flow; and it is true to say that all these rivers have their rise in the watershed of Genesis. Or, to use an equally appropriate figure, as the massive trunk and wide spreading branches of the oak are in the acorn, so, by implication and anticipation, all Scripture is in Genesis. Here we have in germ all that is later developed. It has been truly said that 'the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.'"

### **The Implication:**

- **By understanding Genesis we'll understand, in greater measure, the rest of the Bible.**
- **It answers: Where did we come from, who is God, who are we, and why are we here.**

## **II. From Jesus (and His followers) Perspective (Their Frame of Reference)**

**Luke 24:27 & 44** (Jesus) "*And beginning with **Moses** and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in **all the Scriptures** concerning **himself**... He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be **fulfilled** that is written about **me** in the **Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**'"*

**John 5:39 & 46** (Jesus) "*[T]he... Scriptures... testify about me... Moses... wrote about me.*"

"I don't trust in Jesus because I trust the Bible. I trust the Bible because I trust in Jesus. I love him, and I've decided to follow him, so if he talks and acts as if the Bible is trustworthy, authoritative, good, helpful and powerful, I will too."

— Andrew Wilson, *Unbreakable*

### **The Implication:**

- **We trust the scriptures because Jesus trusted the scriptures.**
- **We trust the scriptures because His disciples trusted the scriptures.**

The New Testament writers included approximately 250 express Old Testament quotations, and if one includes indirect or partial quotations, the number jumps to more than 1,000.

The New Testament has a total of 60 intimations to Genesis 1–11 specifically, and when we widen the search to include all of Genesis, the number grows to 103. For such a tiny

body of literature, the New Testament has a staggering amount of references back to Genesis.

**From Jesus and the biblical authors we learn that they saw:**

- *Moses as it's human author*
- *God as it's divine origin & authority, and the*
- *Israelites, freed from slavery, as its first audience.*

**The implication:**

- **The Bible was written for me, but not to me; you & I are the secondary audience.**
- **The Israelites, coming out of slavery, needed a new story.**

"Society not only controls our movements, but shapes our identity, our thoughts, and our emotions.. We shape our stories and then our stories shape us."

— Peter Berger, Sociology Professor

"If you want to change a society, then you have to tell an alternative story."

— Ivan Illich, Austrian Roman Catholic priest, theologian, philosopher)

### **III. From a Literary (Hermeneutical) Perspective**

#### **Rules of the Road**

**Rule #1, the Bible is a library of books written in different literary genres.**

43% Narrative - Genesis is primarily narrative/ A main character, a plot and climax.

33% Poetry

24% Discourse

**The implication:**

- **Each genre carries its own set of interpretive practices.**
- **In Genesis 1 "Elohim" is mentioned 26 times. Guess who the main character is?**

**Rule #2 The Bible must be read in Context, Context, Context.**

- The Biblical Context (The overall understanding of the scriptures tells the redemptive story, pointing to Jesus).
- The Ancient Cultural Context (ie. The cosmology of the ancient world)

Reading the Bible, including Genesis 1, is a cross-cultural experience. We have to step into a different cultural worldview to understand what its authors are trying to communicate. It is only when we step outside the controversial debates of our contemporary culture and try to read Genesis 1 in its ancient context, that we can make headway in true understanding of this chapter's meaning. Tim Mackie

- The Situational Context (The Israelites who were newly freed from slavery in Egypt)

**The implication:**

- **Our frame of reference (when looking at the scriptures) has to be the context in which it was written over the context in which we live.**

**Rule #3 The Bible must be read with an understanding of the language and words used by its authors.**

**The implication:**

- **Repeated words** are a primary way the Biblical authors communicate the dominant themes throughout the scriptures.

## **VI. From a Meditative (prayerful) Perspective**

**Psalms 1:1-3** "*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.*"

"The scriptures show us God in a garment of words." — St Ephrem (300s)

"Scripture is an infinite forest of meaning." — St Jerome

**The implication:**

- **We will be blessed, more fruitful, and more prosperous**

## **V. The Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. (The Bible Project)**

**John 1:1-3 & 14** "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, (Jesus) who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*"

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

Take a few minutes to check in with each other to see how everyone is doing, then do the following mixer and questions.

**Ice Breaker/Mixer Q:** Talk with one another about the idea that we all have a Frame of Reference. Do you think most people are aware of their Frame of Reference or not? Try to list out, as a group, a few 21 century Frames of Reference that we tend to bring to the Bible, and especially Genesis.

As time permits, go around your group a couple of times giving everyone the opportunity to first answer question 1, then 2, or 3, then #4 & finally, #5.

1. How are we inclined to be all wrapped up in our “stories” and miss “THE STORY”? What are the implications to our lives when we do so?
2. The title to the first book in the Bible (Genesis) comes from the first word, *Bereshith*/Beginnings. Pastor said that understanding Genesis will deepen our understanding of the whole Bible including who God is, who we are and why we are here. If we are not defined by who God says we are, then what or who defines us and what are the implications?
3. What do you think has been the dominant influence that has defined you?
4. Look back over the “Rules for Road” to Bible interpretation and comment on which of these you think stands out as new for you, or as very important to you, and why?

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The implication,

- Our frame of reference (when looking at the scriptures) has to be the context in which it was written over the context in which we live.

**Rule #3 The Bible must be read with an understanding of the language and words used by its authors.**

The Implication:

- **Repeated words** are a primary way the Biblical authors communicate the dominant themes throughout the scriptures.
5. Pastor said that the "Meditative" perspective was the way Jesus and the Biblical authors all engaged the Bible/scriptures. What do you think this might look like in your own engagement of the scriptures and do you believe in what Psalms 1 says can happen to us if we do learn to meditate on the scriptures?

**Psalms 1:1-3** "*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.*"

**Point out the list of passages below to meditate on (read, think about and pray through/maybe even SOAP) this week. Close your time by encouraging everyone to try and engage the scripture line up for this week and then ask someone to close your time in prayer.**

- Monday, Read Genesis 1 and get familiar with the content. SOAP a single verse or write down a question or a thought about something that stands out to you.
- Tuesday, Reread Genesis 1 and focus on the first verse specifically. Write down what you think the verse is wanting the reader to get a hold of. Consider how an Israelite, just being released from slavery in Egypt (a pantheistic/polytheistic culture), might have been impacted by this first verse. (Pantheism is the belief that god is in everything; the river, the sun, the moon etc... and polytheism is a belief in many gods).

- Wednesday, Read Psalms 1 and SOAP or write out what stands out to you the most.
- Thursday, Revisit Psalms 1 and SOAP another portion and/or write about the main contrast that the author is focusing on. What can you do to respond to the message of Psalms 1?
- Friday, Read John 1:1-3 & 14. Either SOAP a portion of the passage or write about how John plays off of Genesis 1:1. What are the implications of what John is saying about Jesus? How does this affect your relationship with Jesus as God?

**A few questions to process with a friend, spouse or your family.**

- 1. What are the stories that most define who you are?**
- 2. What story do you tell yourself about who God is and how does that story affect your relationship with God?**
- 3. After reading John 1:1-3 & 14 ask, If Jesus is God, and he came to live with us, becoming one of us, what does that say about God's view of us?**
- 4. Look over any of the small group questions and share your thoughts with one another.**