

# Genesis 1-19



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Adults • Personal Study Guide • Winter 2023-24 • CSB

## ORIGIN STORIES

In recent years, Hollywood has discovered a way to expand the world of some its most valuable franchises. In the past, studios simply released a sequel when one of its movies hit it big. That still works, but they've also added another tool to their toolbox: the origin story.

More than a prequel, an origin story digs into the early lives of individuals, usually characters that have created a special bond with audiences. As consumers, we like to know more about the heroes on the screen. We want to see where they came from and what shaped their lives. It's important for us to connect the dots and to understand how the storyline got from Point A to Point B. And the movie makers are happy to scratch that itch.

Our fascination with origin stories can probably be traced, at least in part, to a longing to understand our own backstory. We dig into the lives of superheroes and special agents, magical characters and mythical beings, to make sense of our own roots. We find security and purpose for our future when we understand our past.

In Genesis 1–19, God pulls back the curtain and reveals humanity's origin story in vivid detail. We see the first days, the first marriage, and the first family. We also see the first sin—and how that single sin opened the door to injustice and depravity on a global scale.

Thankfully, we also get our first hints of God's plan to restore His fallen creation. His promise of a Redeemer in Eden, His preservation of a remnant after the flood, and His calling of Abram to build a new nation all remind us that stories can change. We can flip the script of sin.

God has made that plot twist possible through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. If you're ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here's what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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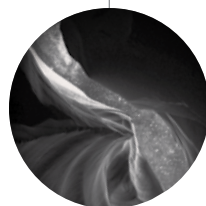
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\*Evangelistic Emphasis



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# FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

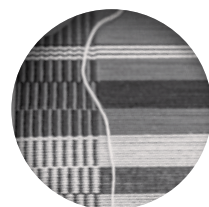
I recently had an early flight to catch. To get to the airport on time, I was in my car and on the road before the sun came up. The drive was dark, unhurried, and serene. It was a far cry from my typical morning routine. Then, the sun began to rise. In a matter of minutes, the entire landscape came to life. A new day was unfolding—it was majestic. In the quiet moments, I felt hopeful curiosity. What would this day bring? These first magnificent moments hinted that good things lie ahead.

Genesis offers a similar beginning. While all of God’s Word reveals who He is and what He is like, Genesis lays important groundwork. This quarter we will study God’s design for all He has created and His plans for His people. God’s character shines through these initial pages of Scripture. He is creative, holy, and merciful. God makes promises, then faithfully keeps them. Studying Genesis gives us a front row seat to learn about God and His relationship to His people. And knowing God, getting deeper glimpses into who He is, makes me hopeful for what’s to come.

In Him,

**Amber Vaden**

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# WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

**Abel** [AY buhl]—second son of Adam and Eve (Gen. 4:2); offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than his brother Cain, who murdered him (Gen. 4:4-5,8; Heb. 11:4); name means “breath, vapor, meadow” and is associated with the shortness of life

**Abram** [AY bruhm]—personal name means “father is exalted”; God changed his name to Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude” (Gen. 17:5)

**Babylon** [BAB ih lahn]—translated from the same Hebrew word as Babel (Gen. 11:9); eventually became a large empire and absorbed the nation of Judah and destroyed Jerusalem

**Cain** [KAYN]—firstborn son of Adam and Eve; murdered Abel his brother (Gen. 4:1-8)

**Canaan** [KAY nuhn]—the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River

**Eliezer** [el ih EE zuhr]—the servant born in Abraham’s house who would have been Abram’s heir if he had remained childless (Gen. 15:2)

**Hagar** [HAY gahr]—personal servant to Sarai; given by Sarai as a concubine to Abram; mother of Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-16)

**Haran** [HAY ran]—the city that became Abraham’s home until he left it in response to God’s call (Gen. 11:31-32; 12:4-5)

**Isaac** [IGH (eye) zik]—only son of Abraham and Sarah; name means “he laughs”

**Ishmael** [ISH may el]—son of Abraham by the Egyptian concubine Hagar (Gen. 16:11)

**Lot** [LAHT]—Abraham’s nephew (Gen. 11:27); rescued from Sodom by two angels (19:12-16)

**Mamre** [MAM rih]—place near Hebron where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived (Gen. 13:18; 35:27), famous for its oak trees; name means “grazing land”

**Sarai** [SEHR igh (eye)]—wife of Abram/Abraham; when she was almost 90 years old, God changed her name from Sarai (“princess”) to Sarah (an alternate form of “princess”) and promised her a son, whom she bore a year later (Gen. 17:15-16; 21:1-7)

**Shinar** [SHIGH nahr]—located in the plains of Mesopotamia and came to be known as Babylonia; place where the tower of Babel was built

**Zoar** [ZOH uhr]—the town Lot and his family fled to when leaving Sodom; originally known as the town of Bela but called Zoar (meaning “small”) to remember how Lot described it to the angels (Gen. 19:20-22)

# BIBLE READING PLAN

## DECEMBER

- 1. Genesis 1:1-5
- 2. Genesis 1:6-8
- 3. Genesis 1:9-13
- 4. Genesis 1:14-19
- 5. Genesis 1:20-23
- 6. Genesis 1:24-25
- 7. Genesis 1:26-27
- 8. Genesis 1:28-31
- 9. Genesis 2:1-3
- 10. Genesis 2:4-7
- 11. Genesis 2:8-9
- 12. Genesis 2:10-15
- 13. Genesis 2:16-17
- 14. Genesis 2:18-22
- 15. Genesis 2:23-25
- 16. Genesis 3:1-4
- 17. Genesis 3:5-7
- 18. Genesis 3:8-13
- 19. Genesis 3:14-19
- 20. Genesis 3:20-24
- 21. Genesis 4:1-5
- 22. Genesis 4:6-12
- 23. Genesis 4:13-16
- 24. Genesis 4:17-24
- 25. Genesis 4:25-26
- 26. Genesis 5:1-5
- 27. Genesis 5:6-11
- 28. Genesis 5:12-20
- 29. Genesis 5:21-24
- 30. Genesis 5:25-32
- 31. Genesis 6:1-4

## JANUARY

- 1. Genesis 6:5-8
- 2. Genesis 6:9-13
- 3. Genesis 6:14-16
- 4. Genesis 6:17-22
- 5. Genesis 7:1-5
- 6. Genesis 7:6-10
- 7. Genesis 7:11-16
- 8. Genesis 7:17-24
- 9. Genesis 8:1-4
- 10. Genesis 8:5-9
- 11. Genesis 8:10-14
- 12. Genesis 8:15-19
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- 15. Genesis 9:8-11
- 16. Genesis 9:12-17
- 17. Genesis 9:18-23
- 18. Genesis 9:24-28
- 19. Genesis 10:1-20
- 20. Genesis 10:21-32
- 21. Genesis 11:1-4
- 22. Genesis 11:5-9
- 23. Genesis 11:10-26
- 24. Genesis 11:27-32
- 25. Genesis 12:1-3
- 26. Genesis 12:4-9
- 27. Genesis 12:10-16
- 28. Genesis 12:17-20
- 29. Genesis 13:1-4
- 30. Genesis 13:5-9
- 31. Genesis 13:10-13

## FEBRUARY

- 1. Genesis 13:14-18
- 2. Genesis 14:1-7
- 3. Genesis 14:8-16
- 4. Genesis 14:17-24
- 5. Genesis 15:1-6
- 6. Genesis 15:7-16
- 7. Genesis 15:17-21
- 8. Genesis 16:1-5
- 9. Genesis 16:6-10
- 10. Genesis 16:11-16
- 11. Genesis 17:1-5
- 12. Genesis 17:6-8
- 13. Genesis 17:9-14
- 14. Genesis 17:15-22
- 15. Genesis 17:23-27
- 16. Genesis 18:1-5
- 17. Genesis 18:6-8
- 18. Genesis 18:9-15
- 19. Genesis 18:16-21
- 20. Genesis 18:22-26
- 21. Genesis 18:27-33
- 22. Genesis 19:1-5
- 23. Genesis 19:6-11
- 24. Genesis 19:12-14
- 25. Genesis 19:15-17
- 26. Genesis 19:18-22
- 27. Genesis 19:23-26
- 28. Genesis 19:27-29
- 29. Genesis 19:30-38

# BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Genesis is a book about beginnings. It records how God created the universe by His word in six days and then rested on the seventh day. It records the creation of plants, animals, and the first humans. It reveals who the first man and woman were, the first marriage, where they lived, and the first occupation. Genesis also records the first sin, the first demonstration of the consequences of sin, and the first promise from God to defeat sin and death.

Genesis begins what theologians call salvation history, the activity of God to save people from their sin. All of this is recorded in just the first three chapters of the book. The importance of Genesis to the rest of the Bible cannot be overstated. It lays the foundation for everything else in the Scriptures. Therefore, it is impossible to fully appreciate the remainder of the Scriptures apart from a firm understanding of Genesis.

Since early in Israel's history, people in both the Old and New Testaments, along with the biblical writers, believed that Moses wrote Genesis and the other first five books of the Bible, often called the Torah ("law," "instruction") or the Pentateuch ("five scrolls/books").

They referred to the Pentateuch as "the Book of Moses," "the Book of the Law of Moses," or as "Moses." Jesus indicated His understanding that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as well (Matt. 19:3-12; John 7:22-23).

When Moses wrote Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch, the people of Israel were preparing to enter into the promised land. All the information contained in Genesis was key for them because it contained essential revelation of who God is, what He had done, and what He was planning to do. Genesis reveals who the people of Israel were and God's purpose for them as His chosen people.

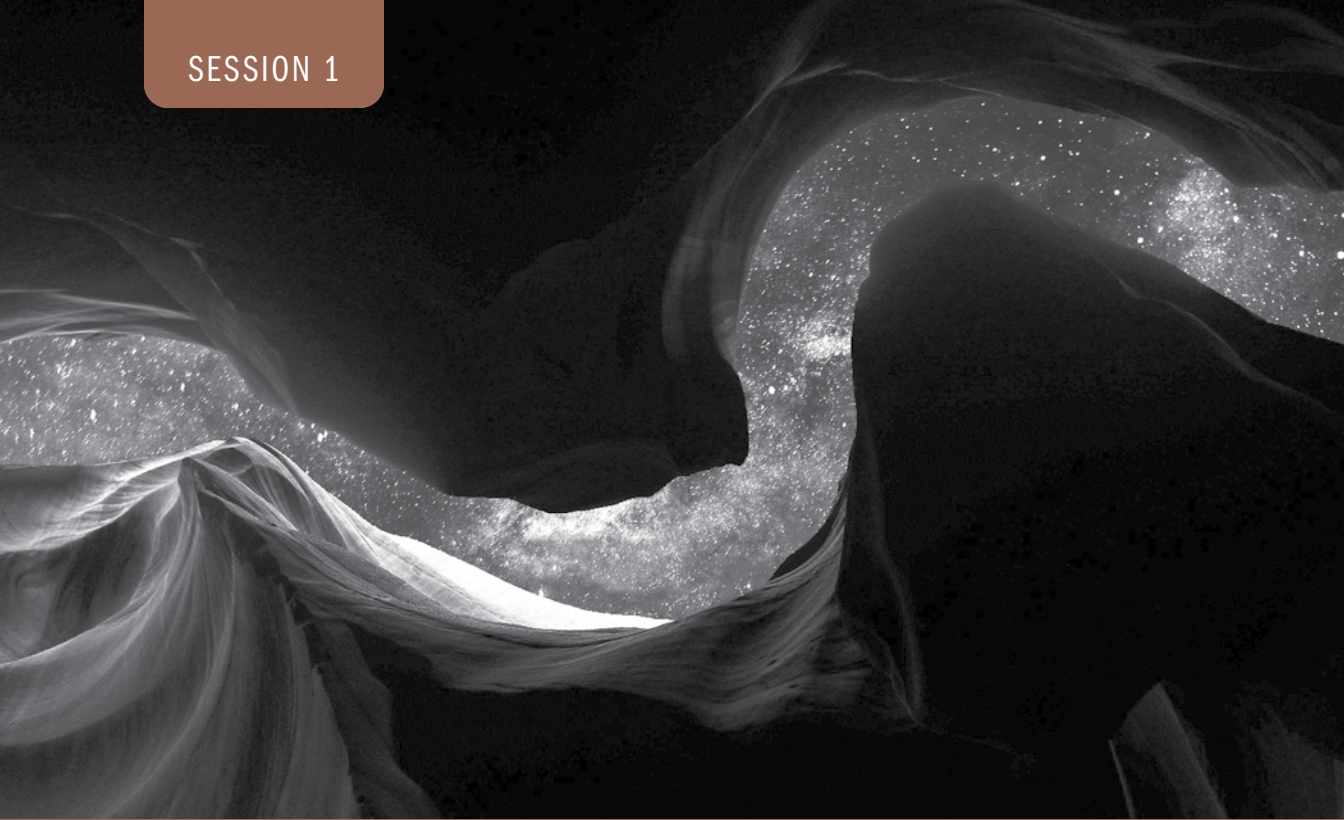
For the same reasons, it is vital for God's people today to study and know this book. This quarter's study focuses on chapters 1-19. Here, God reveals that He is both our Creator and Redeemer. Genesis 1-11 is often called "primeval history." It reveals how all of humanity fell into sin and God's response to humanity and its sin. Chapter 12 begins the "patriarchal history" that focuses on Abraham and his offspring, and how God worked in their lives to lay the foundation for the coming of Jesus, "the Son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).



# OUTLINE

- I. God's Perfect Creation (Gen. 1:1-2:25)
- II. Humanity's Fall (Gen. 3:1-24)
- III. Adam's Family and Sin's Results (Gen. 4:1-6:8)
- IV. Noah's Family and the Flood (Gen. 6:9-9:29)
- V. The Nations and the Tower of Babylon (Gen. 10:1-11:26)
- VI. Abraham and God's Covenant (Gen. 11:27-19:38)
- VII. Isaac and the Promise (Gen. 20:1-25:11)
- VIII. Ishmael's Family (Gen. 25:12-18)
- IX. Rivalry: Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:19-35:29)
- X. Esau's Family: Father of the Edomites (Gen. 36:1-37:1)
- XI. Jacob's Family: Joseph and His Brothers (Gen. 37:2-50:26)





# The First Week

*God created all that is, including humans who bear His image.*

## **GENESIS 1:1-5,26-2:3**

When we look at the earth and beyond it into space, there are many breathtaking wonders to see. In Arizona, there is the expansive geological wonder of the Grand Canyon. Near the Arctic Circle is the phenomenon of what appear to be the dancing lights of the Aurora Borealis. On the border of Nepal and China rises the highest summit on the planet, Mount Everest. And as we look up at a clear sky on a moonless night, we might be able to see the splendor of the Milky Way. God created it all.

What should be our response to the Creator?

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# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **GENESIS 1:1-2:3**


Genesis 1:1-2:3 reveals several important truths about God. He is a God who wants us to know Him. One might think that what Genesis first reveals about God is that He is the Creator. However, as the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write the first five books of the Old Testament, God was demonstrating His desire that we know Him.

Given this revelation of Himself, God reveals that He is the Creator. This truth reveals as much about who God is as it does what He has done. While it is essential that one believes God is the Creator of all things, it is also vital to recognize the significance of this truth. First, it means that God is eternal; He existed before He created the universe, and everything comes from Him. Psalm 90:2 says, “Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, you are God.”

Second, because God is Creator, everything belongs to Him. Moses proclaimed to Israel, “The heavens, indeed the highest heavens, belong to the LORD your God, as does the earth and everything in it” (Deut. 10:14).

Third, the truth that God is the Creator demonstrates He has the authority and power to sustain His creation. Jeremiah declared that God “made the earth by His power, established the world by his wisdom, and spread out the heavens by his understanding. When he thunders, the waters in the heavens are in turmoil, and he causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and brings the wind from his storehouses” (Jer. 10:12-13).

Therefore, when the Bible reveals that God is the Creator, it is stating as much about who He is as it is about what He has done. To recognize God as the Creator recognizes not only that He created everything but also His omnipotence and sovereignty over all creation.

 **As you read Genesis 1:1-2:3, consider what God revealed about Himself.**

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# EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

## **THE BEGINNING** (GEN. 1:1-5)

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

### **VERSE 1**

It is no coincidence that the beginning of the Bible and the beginning of all things begins with God as its subject and source. Everything begins with God, and He is the central subject of the Scriptures. Failure to acknowledge this truth is a great error. The fact that God ***created the heavens and the earth*** assumes that He existed before He created the totality of the cosmos. He is eternal (Heb. 1:10-12). Further, to say that God is the Creator means He is distinct from His creation. We are creatures; He alone is Creator.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The Hebrew word translated “create” in the Old Testament is used to describe the activity of God alone. People and even animals can make things, but only God is able to create something out of nothing.

### **VERSE 2**

To say that the earth was ***formless and empty*** means that it was uninhabitable and uninhabited. The following verses describing the six days of creation depict how God formed and filled the world with abundance and order. The Scriptures associate the Spirit of God with the breath of God, life, and creation. The verb ***hovering*** is used to describe an eagle protectively fluttering over her young (Deut. 32:11). The creative, calming, caring, life-giving, sustaining, protective presence of the Spirit of God was actively involved in creation. Indeed, there is no life apart from the Spirit of God.

## VERSES 3-5

Verse 3 begins the narrative describing the six days of creation (vv. 3-31). The description of the first day establishes the pattern for all six days: each begins with a creative word, the result, an assessment that it is good, and then a concluding statement indicating which day had just transpired.

**Then God said** is recorded seven times throughout this section. God spoke the words in authority and power, and it was more than sufficient to create the universe as He pleased. This account of creation clearly teaches that God created the totality of the universe through His authoritative, powerful decrees and nothing else. God's creative word brought into existence with precision every cell and molecule. The Gospel of John reveals that Christ is the Word, who in the beginning was with God and was God, and "all things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created" (John 1:3).

### ***The Lord Himself was the light that shined.***

God's command, **Let there be light**, is just two short words in Hebrew, yet it broke through the darkness described in verse 2. It is also noteworthy that the first thing God created was light, and the rest of creation will happen in the light. As the apostle John spoke of Jesus at creation, he indicated that Jesus is the light that "shines in the darkness," and that "the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5). Later, in John 8:12, Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world." The light did not shine from the sun, which was not created until the fourth day (Gen. 15-16), but the Lord Himself was the light that shined (see Matt. 17:2).

In verse 4, God observed the light and saw that it was **good**. It is the first of seven times that God evaluates something as *good* in His creation. Light dispelled the darkness that had been over the earth. Whatever produces life, promotes life, and preserves life is good. God's separating the light from the darkness is the first of three separations He performed in creation (1:6,9).

In verse 5, God named the light **day** and the darkness **night**. The act of naming something or someone not only recognized existence but also demonstrated that the one who does the naming has authority over what or whom was being named. This prerogative was given to Adam when God permitted him to name the animals (Gen. 2:19), indicating that God had given man dominion over them. Following God's naming the light *day* and the darkness *night*, this day ended as each of them did

with a literary scheme stating, *There was an evening, and there was a morning*, followed by the number of the day it was.

○ What is the importance of God being the One who initiated creation?

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### KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. (See Psalms 8:3-6; 19:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17.)

## THE IMAGE BEARERS (GEN. 1:26-31)

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” <sup>29</sup> God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, <sup>30</sup> for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

### VERSE 26

Before looking at what happened on the sixth day of creation, it is worthwhile to summarize what God did on days two through five. On the second day (vv. 6-8), He separated the waters below from the waters above, that is, He divided the waters on the earth from the atmospheric moisture above. The space between is the “expanse.” On the third day (vv. 9-13), God separated the waters, the “seas,” from the dry land, the

“earth.” Next, God commanded that the earth produce vegetation and trees “bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.” On the fourth day (vv. 14-19), He created the light-bearing bodies of the moon and the stars for the night and the sun for the day to distinguish the seasons, days, and years. On the fifth day (vv. 20-23), God created the creatures of the seas and skies with each kind differentiated by its species.

Then in verse 26, God declared His intention to create humanity, saying: **Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.** As the Spirit of God and the Son of God were intricately involved in creation, it makes sense that God the Father would use the plural, *us* and *our*, as He declared His intention regarding the creation of humankind.

### VERSE 27

In verse 27, God created the human race, both **male and female**, as bearers of His image. This is the climax of God’s creative activity. At the very least, being created in the image of God means that every person has communicated attributes that came with the inbreathing of the breath of life from God (2:7). Thus, humans are spiritual beings with a moral conscience, having the capacity to represent God on earth and carry out His will.

Being created in the image of God is closely tied to God’s purpose for all of humanity. We are to represent God even though He alone possesses deity, and we do not. Nevertheless, God creating male and female in His image communicates the supreme value He places on every human life. Both male and female are His image-bearers, and the two genders are a function of God’s creative purposes.

### VERSES 28-31

It is significant that **God blessed them.** God’s blessing is a major theme in Genesis. *Blessed* means that God enriches people beyond what is normal, giving them a special status and ability to succeed in what He has called them to do. Therefore, with His blessing, God instructed people, **Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.** Blessing encompasses both God’s provision and purpose for humanity.

God communicated His intention to provide for every living creature all the sustenance they needed to flourish. God’s generosity was such that there would be enough vegetables and fruit for everyone. It is noteworthy that God said **I have given you.** He is humanity’s personal Provider. It demonstrates the truth of James’s words that “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (Jas. 1:17).

Finally, after the work of God was complete at the end of six days, He evaluated all that was done and saw ***it was very good indeed***. All that God had accomplished was worthy of the highest commendation. What began as “formless and empty” was now transformed into fullness, beauty, and life that pointed to the glory of God. David wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands” (Ps. 19:1). Concerning God and His creation, Paul declared, “For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made” (Rom. 1:20).

○ **How does being created in the image of God point to the task God has assigned humanity?**

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## ***God leaves no work undone.***

### **REST (GEN. 2:1-3)**

<sup>1</sup> **So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed.**  
<sup>2</sup> **On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.** <sup>3</sup> **God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.**

### **VERSE 1**

Verse 1 appears to be a simple statement of fact with little theological significance. However, this verse reveals some essential truths God has revealed about Himself. First, summarizing the six days of creation, the Hebrew text suggests God created everything in an organized way, and that He purposed it to function according to the order He established in it.


Second, God leaves no work undone. His work of creation was complete. Therefore, as new creations in Christ, believers have the joyous assurance that He will complete the work He has begun in them (Phil. 1:6).



### VERSES 2-3

The seventh day is different from the first six. On the seventh day, after God completed His work of creation, He ceased His work and rested, setting an example for His people and establishing the principle of Sabbath day rest (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-14). God's completion and cessation of His work in creating the universe does not mean He is done working in it. Jesus makes this clear in John 5:16-17.

Unlike the previous six days, God uniquely ***blessed the seventh day and declared it holy***. The Sabbath is blessed because it is on the seventh day that God rested from all of His work of creation. God declared that day a day when no work was to be done and a day that was to be especially devoted to Him. The Sabbath should be a reminder to all believers of the rest they have in the Christ (Matt. 12:8; Heb. 4). Ultimately, Jesus is our Sabbath rest.

 **How does observing a day of rest affirm God's activity in creating all we know and see?**

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**BIBLE SKILL:** *Use Other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

To gain a deeper insight into the creation story, spend time reading and meditating on other passages in Scripture that speak of God's creative activities in the beginning. Begin by understanding creation as an act of God's will (read Isa. 45:18; Rev. 4:11). Next look at the pinnacle of creation (Ps. 8). Study the agent of creation (Ps. 33:6-9; John 1:1-3,10; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-2). Close in worship by reading Psalms 104 and 136:1-9.

# APPLY THE TEXT

- + God created all that is with purpose.
- + God created humanity to represent His interests in His creation.
- + God set aside the seventh day to reflect on God's creative work.

**Discuss what impact Genesis 1:1 should have on your group as you seek to fulfill God's calling to serve Him. How is God's supreme authority over all of life connected to His being the Creator?**

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**What impact should it make on your life when you recognize God created you with a purpose to be fulfilled?**

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**Memorize Genesis 1:1.**

## *Prayer Needs*

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