



THE BOOK OF *Genesis*

UNDERSTANDING THE AUTHOR'S HEART The book of Genesis was written by Moses, a key leader among the Hebrews. He likely penned Genesis during “the desert years,” between 1446 BC—1406 BC. Moses wanted us to know where we came from and why we’re here. So the first words of Genesis depict God creating the universe. With a word, God spoke the earth into being. He also created the first man and woman, but because of their eventual disobedience, humankind became separated from God. We’ve been living with the consequences ever since.

CONNECTING WITH GOD'S STORY The word *Genesis* means *beginning*, and that’s the story of this book. Genesis tells the beginning—of this world and humanity, of beauty and brokenness, of you and me. It also shows us where we can find hope and healing. In Genesis, we enter into God’s story. Humanity connects with a divine narrative that has a clear arc and plotline throughout the entire Bible. Genesis sets the scene, introduces the characters, and explodes with a love story between God and the human beings He creates. The evil that threatens them and God’s plan for salvation are all put into motion in the first few chapters.

CONNECTING WITH OUR STORY Through Genesis we understand the origin of our own brokenness. We also see the seed of hope as God promises to provide a way for restoration. Genesis is the starting point, not only for all of life, but also for our own journey. Through the stories that unfold, we trace the fingerprints of God, moving on behalf of His people.

As you read Genesis, you’ll also find devotions on these themes:

- *Beautiful Brokenness*
- *Better Together*
- *Everyday Leadership*
- *Hope in the Hard*
- *Imperfect Hospitality*
- *Intentional Gratitude*
- *Second Chances*
- *The Scared Brave*

THE CREATION

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.^a

² 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. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

⁶ Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water." ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse "sky."^b Evening came and then morning: the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so.

¹² The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ Evening came and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons^c and for days and years. ¹⁵ They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars.

¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God said, "Let the water swarm with^d living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹ So God created the large sea-creatures^e and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." ²³ Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man^f in^g our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth,^h and the creatures that crawlⁱ on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in^j the image of God; he created them male and female.

²⁸ 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^k on the earth." ²⁹ 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,

^a1:1 Or *created the universe* ^b1:8 Or "heavens." ^c1:14 Or *for the appointed times* ^d1:20 Lit *with swarms of*
^e1:21 Or *created sea monsters* ^f1:26 Or *human beings*; Hb 'adam, also in v. 27 ^g1:26 Or *as* ^h1:26 Syr reads *sky, and over every animal of the land* ⁱ1:26 Or *scurry* ^j1:27 Or *man as his own image; he created him as* ^k1:28 Or *and all scurrying animals*

The Fall

GENESIS 3

The lady made it sound so simple. All I had to do was fill out a short application to be approved for a credit card with a reasonable limit for a beginner. It sounded so easy. Not only would I have a financial backup in the case of an emergency, I would also have the opportunity to build my personal credit history. As I signed my name across the dotted line, I remember feeling a bit of concern. My parents had warned me about the perils of consumer debt and had encouraged me to talk to them about major financial decisions. But I was an adult now. I figured that as a freshman in college, it was the right time for me to start making some decisions of my own.

A few weeks later the shiny new credit card arrived in the mail. My intentions were only to look at it. It was nice to know I owned a piece of plastic with my name on it that gave me more purchasing power than I had on my own. And for a while, that's exactly all I did—look.

However, the day inevitably arrived when some clothing I wanted cost more than the cash that I had to pay for it, and I remembered the shiny plastic card that I carried around in my purse. I convinced myself that this one purchase wouldn't harm anything, so I reached inside of my wallet to grab that card and put it to use. Initially, nothing terrible happened. But I'd crossed a boundary line that had been put in place for my protection and I knew it. And it wasn't long before the consequences of that one lone signature started to show up. The balance on the card increased over time, and the unintended consequences of burdensome debt resulted.

Like the warning my parents had given me, God gives us warnings and instructions for our own good. In the beginning, God created the world and everything in it and called it good. Yet only three chapters in, the first man and woman make a decision that forever changed things for every person that would come after them. Adam and Eve didn't take God at His Word. They engaged in conversations, thoughts, and, eventually, actions that moved them away from the original plan God had for them.

In Genesis 2:16-18, God gave clear instructions not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 3, we see what happens when we don't take seriously the guidelines and boundaries that God gives us.

One day, Satan showed up in the form of a serpent and did to Eve what he has continued to do to all people throughout history. He deceived her. He started by questioning God's Word and omitting God's goodness (v. 1). God granted them freedom to eat from all trees in the garden with the exception of one. Satan focused Eve's attention on what she couldn't have instead of everything God had given her.

Not only did Satan recount God's Word incorrectly, Eve did too. She added to what God said (v. 3). Then after Eve's attempt to offer a rebuttal to Satan's false claim, Satan flat out called God a liar (v. 4) and told Eve that there would be no consequences, when God had clearly said otherwise.

Eve fell for it. She chose to go with what made sense to her in the moment and ignore the warning God had given her and her husband. She invited her husband to participate in disobeying God. As a result, their perfect life in the Garden of Eden came to an end as a consequence of their sin.

The good news is that God still pursued a relationship with them. First, He went looking for Adam and Eve. He sought them out even when they were hiding from Him in guilt and shame (vv. 8-9). God invited them to face their sin and be honest about what they had done (v. 11). He cursed Satan and provided a solution for victory over him through the birth of Christ Jesus (v. 15). While Adam and Eve still had to face the consequences of their choices, God covered them (v. 21). He showed them tough love by protecting them from doing more damage than they'd already done (vv. 22-24).

Most of us have experienced, either firsthand or by watching others, what can happen when we don't follow God's direction. We call the sin of Adam and Eve "The Fall" but the truth is we all fall. Like Eve, many of us focus more on what we can't have and show a lack of gratitude for what God has provided. When we don't embrace the truth of God's Word, there will be consequences. Some consequences are immediate and obvious. Others appear over time and subtly erode God's plan for our lives. In either case, one consequence is always the same—sin separates us from fellowship with God.

But even when we fall, and we all fall (Rm 3:23), there is good news. First, the same God that showed mercy, grace, and redemptive love in Genesis is the God who offers us the same gift today and every day. Like He covered Adam and Eve, He is willing to cover us with His saving, redeeming blood.

Second, we have the opportunity each and every day to choose to obey God's Word. Believing what God has said is our powerful defense against the deception of the enemy and the pitfalls and consequences that may follow.

Eventually, the consequence of my decision to buy things on credit became so overwhelming that, despite the shame and guilt I felt, I talked to my parents about it. They were disappointed in my choices but also expressed their commitment to guide me to a better financial place. The good news was they were willing to cover me with love and wisdom as I moved forward. They did, however, require me to cut up the card.

God always provides a way for us to regain fellowship with Him. God offers forgiveness and a solution to the consequences that we face because of the victory we have in Jesus Christ. God desires to cover us. It is not His desire that any of us should perish spiritually or experientially. While sometimes that involves showing us tough love, His love is always aimed at our ultimate good.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Have you faced consequences for your disobedience to God?
- How did God correct you?
- How did you experience God's protection and compassion through His correction?

Second Chances

Devotional Reading Plan, page 1834

Author Index, page 1844

Meet Eve

A WOMAN OF
Second Chances
GENESIS 3

Eve desired wisdom, and she believed the serpent when he said that God was holding out on her. She broke God’s law and did the one thing He asked her not to do. Eve learned the hard way that God wasn’t the one who lied. It was the serpent who deceived her. But God didn’t leave her in her brokenness. The first mistake in history also led to the greatest second chance. While there were consequences for her actions, God promised to redeem her and make her the mother of all the living. He also promised that her offspring would one day crush the serpent and destroy his hold over humanity. God was faithful to fulfill His promise, too, bringing about redemption through the Second Adam—Jesus Christ.

really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden?'

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. ³But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴"No! You will not die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"In fact, God knows that when[^] you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God,[^] knowing good and evil."

⁶The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

SIN'S CONSEQUENCES

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,[^] and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰And he said, "I heard you[^] in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

¹¹Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹²The man replied, "The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate."

¹³So the LORD God asked the woman, "What is this you have done?"

And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent:
Because you have done this,

^A3:5 Lit on the day ^B3:5 Or gods, or divine beings ^C3:8 Lit at the wind of the day ^D3:10 Lit the sound of you



the
New Testament

THE BOOK OF *Matthew*

UNDERSTANDING THE AUTHOR'S HEART Although the author does not identify himself in the text, the early church remained steadfast in its affirmation of Matthew as the author. Matthew was a tax collector, called by Jesus to become one of the twelve disciples. His words are an eyewitness testimony to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Matthew wrote with a Jewish audience in mind as he made repeated references to the Old Testament—identifying Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

CONNECTING WITH GOD'S STORY Matthew's Gospel account opens with a genealogy that connects the two testaments, with Jesus as the central figure. He then alternates narratives with Jesus's discourse to paint a clear portrait of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. Without a doubt, Matthew's contribution to the biblical canon is a definitive case for Jesus as the promised Savior.

CONNECTING WITH OUR STORY A journey through the Gospel of Matthew reassures every heart that God is faithful to keep His promises. He had a plan for redemption in motion since before the beginning of time, and we can place our trust in Him because He is always true to His word.

As you read Matthew, you'll also find devotions on these themes:

- *Beautiful Brokenness*
- *Better Together*
- *Daily Grace*
- *Everyday Leadership*
- *Friendship on Purpose*
- *Imperfect Hospitality*
- *Intentional Gratitude*
- *Second Chances*



THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID

- ² Abraham fathered ^a Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
- ³ Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram,
- ⁴ Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,
- ⁵ Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,
- ⁶ and Jesse fathered King David.

FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

- David fathered Solomon ^b by Uriah's wife,
- ⁷ Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa, ^c
- ⁸ Asa ^c fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, ^d Joram fathered Uzziah,
- ⁹ Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,
- ¹⁰ Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, ^e Amon fathered Josiah,
- ¹¹ and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

FROM THE EXILE TO THE CHRIST

- ¹² After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,

- ¹³ Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor,
- ¹⁴ Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud,
- ¹⁵ Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob,
- ¹⁶ and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations.

THE NATIVITY OF THE CHRIST

¹⁸ The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged ^f to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ **See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, ^g which is translated "God is with us."**

^a1:2 In vv. 2-16 either a son, as here, or a later descendant, as in v. 8 ^b1:6 Other mss add King ^c1:7,8 Other mss read Asaph ^d1:8 = Jehoram ^e1:10 Other mss read Amos ^f1:18 Or betrothed ^g1:23 Is 7:14

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her ²⁵ but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son.^a And he named him Jesus.

WISE MEN VISIT THE KING

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.”^b

³ When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Christ would be born.


⁵ “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

⁶ **And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”^c**

⁷ Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”^d

⁹ After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was.


¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him.^e Then they opened their treasures and presented



Meet *Tamar*

**A WOMAN OF
Second Chances
MATTHEW 1**

Tamar became the wife of Judah’s son, Er. When he died, custom required that she be given as a wife to the next oldest son, Onan. However, he was a wicked man, so the Lord put him to death. Judah then promised to give Tamar to his youngest son, Shelah, but he did not follow through on his promise. So Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute and became pregnant by Judah. After being neglected for so long, Tamar came to live with Judah. Her son Perez became an ancestor of King David, and eventually Christ. The Lord allowed Tamar to be one of four women named in the genealogy of Jesus Christ and forever remembered as a woman with a beautiful story of redemption.



^a1:25 Other mss read to her firstborn son ^b2:2 Or to pay him homage ^c2:6 Mc 5:2 ^d2:8 Or and pay him homage
^e2:11 Or they paid him homage

What God Can Do with the Unlikely

MATTHEW 1

I remember the first time I felt like I needed to hide from Jesus. I was at a Christian retreat my freshman year of college. I was hungry for God and wanted to know more of who He is. I believed that, as I was surrounded by His people at the retreat, I would learn more about Him. The Bible was newly alive to me, and with each phrase I was blown away at how it spoke to me and how I could understand it. I wanted more.

I tuned in as the speaker gave his talk, hanging on every word, until he said something that shook me. The speaker asked, "What would you do if Jesus walked into the room right now?"

The immediate thought that came to my mind was: *I would hide.*

If Jesus came into the room, I would hide. I would go and bend down behind one of the worn couches and make sure He couldn't see me. Because He wouldn't want to see me—He, being holy and good, and me, being filthy and having done awful things. I was not clean. I was dirty. A holy God shouldn't see a dirty girl.

Shame.

I shared my thoughts with my small group, thinking they were obvious and made sense, and someone from the group spoke life to me, "You wouldn't have to hide," she said. "Jesus knows everything you've done and everything you're going to do and He loves you anyway. If He were to come into this room, He would embrace you and put His hands on your face and call you 'daughter.'"

Daughter.

"But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name" (Jn 1:12).

I had no need to stay in my shame. I was His daughter whom He loved in spite of all the filth. I was His daughter because I believed in Him and because I trusted Him with my life. Isn't that the most extraordinary thing about God? He takes in the harlots, the outcasts, the dirty, the thieves, and the liars, and He makes them—He makes us—His sons and daughters. Then He makes us new: holy, righteous, perfect.

"For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified" (Heb 10:14).

God uses the unlikely to make His name known. Did you know there are only four women named in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew chapter 1? Yep, only four women named: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Mary. Tamar played the harlot, deceived her father-in-law, and had his twin sons. Rahab was a harlot. Ruth was not only a foreigner, but one of the cursed Moabites (Dt 23:3). She even initiated a relationship with Boaz after being instructed to do so by her mother-in-law Naomi. And Mary was a young, pregnant, unmarried virgin.

These women were a part of bringing Jesus to earth, and they are named in the lineage of Christ. God wanted us to know their names. God wanted us to know that Tamar—even though she tricked her father-in-law into sleeping with her—was worthy of being named because she was righteous by faith. God wanted us to know that even a harlot, Rahab, was humble and faithful and, by His grace, had given birth to a son who would become King David's great-grandfather. God wanted us to know that Boaz had redeemed the young