

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS

THE GOD WHO CREATES

VOL. 1 | Genesis



1

From the creators of *The Gospel Project*, *Gospel Foundations* is a six-volume resource that teaches the storyline of Scripture. It is comprehensive in scope yet concise enough to be completed in just one year. Each seven-session volume includes videos to help your group understand the way each text fits into the storyline of the Bible.

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CONTENTS

About <i>The Gospel Project</i>	4
How to Use This Study.....	5
God's Word to You: A Summary of the Bible.....	6
SESSION 1 God Creates.....	8
SESSION 2 Man Sins.....	20
SESSION 3 God Makes a Covenant with Abraham.....	32
SESSION 4 God Tests Abraham.....	44
SESSION 5 God Works Through a Dysfunctional Family.....	56
SESSION 6 God Gives Jacob a New Name.....	68
SESSION 7 God Redeems Joseph's Adversity.....	80
Leader Guide.....	92
Notes.....	108

ABOUT *THE GOSPEL PROJECT*

Gospel Foundations is from the creators of *The Gospel Project*, which exists to point kids, students, and adults to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout Scripture and still today, compelling them to join the mission of God.

The Gospel Project provides theological yet practical, age-appropriate Bible studies that immerse your entire church in the story of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel culture that leads to gospel mission:

Gospel Story

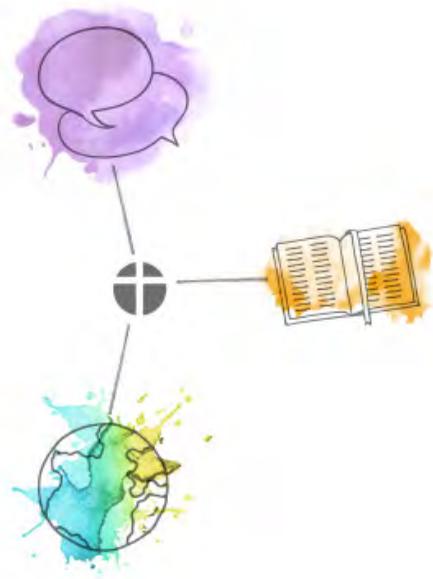
Immersing people of all ages in the storyline of Scripture: God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Gospel Culture

Inspiring communities where the gospel saturates our experience and doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

Gospel Mission

Empowering believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed.



HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible-study book includes seven weeks of content for group and personal study. Each session is divided into the following components:

Introduction

Every session contains an intro option for your group time, allowing there to be a natural transition into the material for that week.

Setting the Context

This section is designed to provide the context to the biblical passage being discussed. It will help group members to better understand the passage under consideration for each session, as well as how the biblical storyline connects between each session. It is also in this section that you will find the reference to the informational graphic for each session, once again helping students to develop a deeper understanding into the storyline of Scripture.

Session Videos

Each session has a corresponding video to help tell the Bible story. After watching the video, spend some time discussing the questions provided, as well as any additional questions raised by your students in response to the video.

Group Discussion

After watching the video, continue the group discussion by reading the Scripture passages and discussing the questions on these pages. Additional content is provided on these pages to grant further clarity into the meaning of these passages. Also, it is in this section that you find the Christ Connection, showing students how all of Scripture points to Jesus.

Head, Heart, Hands

This section is designed to close out your group time by personally reflecting on how God's Story challenges the way we think, feel, and live as a result. Because God's Word is capable of changing everything about a person, this section seeks to spell out how each session is able to transform our Heads, Hearts, and Hands.

Personal Study

Five personal devotions are provided for each session to take individuals deeper into Scripture and to supplement the content introduced in the group study. With biblical teaching and introspective questions, these sections challenge individuals to grow in their understanding of God's Word and to respond in faith.

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

A SUMMARY OF THE BIBLE

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.



SESSION 1

GOD CREATES



*IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED EVERYTHING,
AND HE CREATED EVERYTHING GOOD.*

INTRODUCTION

Every story has a beginning. The story of the Bible begins with four astounding words: “In the beginning God...” (Gen. 1:1). Often, people are tempted to take God’s presence in the beginning for granted and fail to recognize the power it implies. In fact, God wasn’t just there at the beginning; He was there before the beginning.

Every physical thing in the universe has an origin. That’s as true of you and me as it is of the most magnificent stars in the farthest galaxies. Everything that exists once did not. If you were to travel back in time, you would reach a point when everything and everyone in existence fades into nothingness.

Everything and everyone, that is, except God. Before the first four words of Genesis 1, before the stars filled the night sky, before God breathed life into the dust and made man, God alone was there. “In the beginning God...” (Gen. 1:1) is really just another way of saying, “Before the beginning, God was there.”

▶ Both science and the Bible point to a definite beginning of the universe. What are some conclusions about God’s nature we can draw from His creation of the universe?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

God was there at the beginning of the story line 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. 10) shows just some of the ways the centrality of Jesus in Scripture was the plan of God from the very beginning.

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 non-tangible realities such as courage, love, and laughter came from Him as well. All of this came from the heart of God at the beginning.

SEEING JESUS IN GENESIS

<i>OLD TESTAMENT</i>	<i>NEW TESTAMENT</i>
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)

SESSION VIDEOS

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

- ▶ What ideas or phrases stood out to you most in the video? Why?
- ▶ In what ways is the biblical truth that human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation affirmed in our culture? Denied in our culture?

GROUP DISCUSSION

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 does God call each step of His creation good?
- ▶ Is it morally good? How so?
Is it aesthetically good? How so?
Is it usable? How so?

While these things are certainly good, the ultimate purpose and design of creation is to declare God's glory and proclaim the work of His hands (Ps. 19:1) and to reveal things about God that are invisible to us, such as His eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20). Because of creation, we can clearly see and understand these things.

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

To bear God's image means:

- 1 To have a relationship with Him.

Our image-bearing started when God created us. The account in Genesis 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 directly in front of the object, we reflect God's image best when we are in close relationship with Him.

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.

GROUP DISCUSSION CONT.

▶ In what ways can your life demonstrate the priority of your relationship with God?

2 To bear God's image doesn't point only to the relationship we have with God; we also have a relationship with one another. God created us "male and female." The God who exists in community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created human beings to live in community as well.

In fact, verses 22-24 tell us that we were not created to bear God's image on our own or to have an isolated relationship with God. We reflect God best when we are in community with one another—relating to others in love and grace. Thus, reflecting God's image means we are to relate rightly to Him and to others.

▶ How are Jesus' remarks in John 13:35 a reflection of people living out the image of God in their relationships with others?

3 Reflecting God also goes beyond our relationships and is seen in the rhythms of our everyday activities and rest.

A lot of people have wrongly assumed that the command to work was a result of man's sinning and rebelling against God. But the creation narrative shows us that God created work for man as part of His good world. Work is just as beautiful as the sunset, and just as purposeful as the rain.

Work isn't something that God gave man as a curse after the fall into sin; the toil of work is what came with sin, but work itself is designed to give us fulfillment and provide us an environment to reflect God. When viewed rightly, our work can reflect God. But not only does our work reflect God, our resting does as well. In fact, God commands us to rest.

▶ How can you reflect God in your work as a student? an athlete? in a part-time job?

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 overall perspective to recognize that all things were created by 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.

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.

OUR MISSION

Head

How does knowledge of God's sovereignty over all creation influence the way you think about your circumstances?

How should the doctrine of humans being created in God's image influence the way we think about others?

Heart

How should the doctrine of humans being created in God's image influence the way we feel about others, both Christians and non-Christians?

Why should we be grieved when we see image-bearers of God living in a way that is contrary to the way God intended?

Hands

How will you begin to treat friends, family members, and even strangers differently based upon the truth that they are created in God's image?

What are some ways you can begin to reflect God by being a better steward of the world He has given us?

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 1

The point: God created everything.

Read Genesis 1:1.

In verse 1, the Bible introduces the concept of the heavens and the earth. What Person is also introduced here? How is this significant? Explain.

What was the action that occurred in verse 1? Why do you think it's important to realize that God was the one to take this action?

How does verse 1 go against what so much of our culture believes? Why is it important for believers to understand this foundational truth?

Underline the words God used to describe the earth in verse 2.

The word *create* means to bring into existence. God created everything from nothing, but even more amazing is the truth that God already was, before anything else existed. The fact that God created everything means that nothing, other than God Himself, is eternal.

While many in our culture believe that the universe sprang into existence from nothing, such beliefs are implausible, and science itself testifies to this. According to the standard scientific beliefs in cosmology, the finite universe came into existence at a certain point in time/space/history. Since both science and philosophy discredit the claim that something can come from nothing, the empirical knowledge we have makes it look more and more like the Christian worldview gets it right on the creation account.

How does knowing that we have a Creator change the way believers view our meaning and purpose?

Respond

Journal your thoughts on this: *The God who existed before the world began is the same God who made me.*

Jot down a few ways you can look at life differently, knowing that the eternal God created you, loves you, and wants a relationship with you.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 2

The point: God created everything good.

What comes to mind when you hear the word *good*? A good person? A good movie? A good day? A good game? Considering all of these phrases, what is your personal definition of the word *good*?

Read Genesis 1:3-25.

Briefly describe what God created on each day.

First Day:

Fourth Day:

Second Day:

Fifth Day:

Third Day:

At the end of each day, God was pleased with what He had made. Circle each instance of "God saw that it was good."

Why is it important that God saw creation as good? What are the implications for our lives now?

God's definition of *good* is sometimes different than our own. God's creation was good because it fulfilled its main purpose: to display His glory. Everything beautiful tells of His beauty. Everything He made is good because He is good.

Respond

If the weather permits, go outside and take a short walk. Spend a few minutes listening, looking around, and paying attention to the smell. Notice the parts of God's creation you usually pass by.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 3

The point: God created everything through His Son.

Read John 1:1-3,14.

As Christians, we believe in the *Trinity*—that *God is One, in three persons: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit* (See John 14). Combining this belief with what we read earlier this week, we know that in the beginning, all three persons of the Trinity were present: God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

List the three things John said about “the Word” in verse 1.

Read through the verses once more, replacing “the Word” with Jesus. How does this help your understanding of these verses? Explain.

According to these verses, how was everything created? Why is this important?

Summarize the truth of verse 14 in your own words. What is so significant about the fact that Jesus took on flesh and walked on earth with His people?

Read Colossians 1:15-17.

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.

Respond

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 in which you need to remember that Jesus holds all things together?

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 4

The point: We reflect God in how we rule wisely over the world.

Read Genesis 1:26-31.

Summarize verse 26 in your own words. How does knowing we are made in God's image and likeness affect the way we live and rule over His creation?

According to verse 27, both men and women were created _____
_____. Why is this significant?

Using verses 28-30, list what God instructed Adam and Eve to rule over, as well as what He told them to use.

Rule	Use

God created everything, and He has ultimate power and control over everything. Still, He made us in His image, and then gave us authority to rule over creation.

What do you think this shows about God's character? Explain.

Respond

Think about items, people, or tasks you have a responsibility to rule wisely over. What are some ways you can influence each area in a way that reflects God?

God created the world, which speaks of Him, and He created us, who bear His image. The way we interact with the world around us also speaks of Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you wisely influence the people, places, and things around you for God's glory.

PERSONAL STUDY: DAY 5

The point: We reflect God in how we relate to Him and others.

Read Genesis 2:4-9,16-25.

Verses 4-7 summarize the creation of the heavens and the earth, as well as man. Before God created man to cultivate the earth, how did things survive?

God could have sustained the earth on His own, but He made Adam to take care of His creation. This was the beginning of the first relationship—between God and man.

Considering this, why do you think it's important that God “placed” man in the garden (v. 8)?

What are the implications of God's command in verses 16-17? Why are these commands significant?

The animals weren't enough to complement Adam and be His helper, so God created another human—woman. Community and relationships are important to God. From the beginning, God didn't intend for people to be alone.

Circle Adam's job in verses 19-20.

Although God gave Adam an important job to do, even that work couldn't fulfill him. He needed a helper, so God created Eve. God had established the second relationship, this time between man and woman.

What is unique about the way God created Eve from the way He created Adam or the rest of creation?

Respond

The first relationship God created was between Himself and man, and the second was between man and woman. Our relationship with God should always come first. Does your life currently reflect this priority?

Do your current relationships bear the image God intended? What are some ways you are accomplishing God's work together with the people in your life?