

ACT 1: ORIGIN



You may miss a day; just pick it up where you left off or skip ahead to catch up.

Keep going!

The point isn't to accomplish a task; the point is to spend meaningful time in Scripture.

The Bible is the living word of God meant to shape us as we read it. Our understanding of the text may change as we experience more of life and a closer relationship with Christ.

ENGAGING THE BIBLE FOR THE FIRST TIME OR THE THOUSANDTH TIME

The Bible is full of thought-provoking material. It is beautiful, challenging, and breathtaking in its scope. At other times, it is heartbreaking, violent, offensive, sensual, and occasionally boring. It contains the drama of Greek tragedies and the grand claims of a towering empires, yet those very claims suggest only the likes of a little child may reap the benefits of its narrative.

We read it in private, in public, in sports arenas, even on coffee cups and bathroom stalls. It's been used to gain power and rule nations, yet many are inspired to give their lives and possessions away in response to its message: That a man, who was also God, came to live among us, die on our behalf, and rise in a cosmic act of love and redemption.

SOME ADVICE AS YOU BEGIN: BE MINDFUL

You may have many different reactions to the material. When you encounter tension points or tricky topics, if you feel confused or bored, disappointed or angry, God seems absent, or punishing, or if there's immorality, take notice of it all without judgement or fear. Keep going!

QUESTIONS TO ASK AS YOU READ

A – Awareness – What are you becoming aware of as you read? About God, people, or yourself?

W – Wonder – What makes you say, “Wow!” or stirs wonder and curiosity?

E – Engage – What thoughts and feelings are you having as you read? Ask yourself: “What is this passage saying to me in my life and context?”

The Bible was traditionally spoken out loud, not read in private. As you encounter questions, it can be helpful to discuss your thoughts with another person.

The weekly readings align with the sermon series and are further divided into daily sections. Whether you choose to read in larger or smaller sections, we hope you will engage in a regular practice of reading and reflection.

A WORD FOR THOSE WITH BAGGAGE

Every time you open yourself to God's transformation, there is a risk. Perhaps at some point in your journey of faith, the Bible has been used as a tool for manipulation inconsistent with God's love. As you enter the text with an open heart, keep in mind that God's word is intended to encourage us towards flourishing. Trusting this is the case, we are invited to approach the Bible with humility, openness, and courage.

WHY GENESIS?

The purpose of this Genesis guide is to assist in understanding the complex narrative of this book. Every book of the Bible has its own complexity, and we want you to have a good grip right from the start.

INTRO TO GENESIS READINGS

Genesis is the story of the promises God makes to humans—promises that God begins to carry out throughout the rest of the Bible. Key themes of creation, human failure, redemption, promises, people, place, covenant, and blessing are revealed through these important characters: God, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham & Sarah, Jacob, Judah, and Joseph.

THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND PROMISES OF GENESIS

God: “*Yahweh*” the Hebrew word for God.

Adam & Eve: They provide the reference point for what it means to be fully human—whole in our spirit, soul, and body. (Gen 1:26,28; 2:24; 3:14-15)

Noah: Responds to God's revelation and builds the vessel of deliverance. Like Noah's ark, our lives are called to be vessels of hope as we embody Christ. (Gen 9:1-3)

Abraham & Sarah: Promises of blessings are given to them which now extend to each of us, though we too may find God's timing frustrating—even laughable. (Gen 11:27, 12)

Isaac: Shows us that, in spite of being a recipient of God's promises, our souls still need refining. (Gen 22:18, 25:19)

Jacob: Offers a picture of trying to earn or steal what God wants to freely give. God's relentless pursuit of Jacob reveals God's character as merciful and gracious. (Gen 28:16, 37:2)

Judah: A jealous brother becomes a sacrificing servant leader, showing us that God transforms people. (Gen 44:18-34)

Joseph: Favored by his father but mistreated by his brothers, he inspires us to trust God's promise that all things are redeemed through Him. (Gen 50:20)

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

GENESIS 1-3: CREATION

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE TEXT?

- God speaks over the waters of chaos and creates a world of beauty and order.
- God creates humankind in His own image and likeness.
- Adam and Eve are to be God's representative of love and care to all creation.

THE PLAN IS DISRUPTED

God instructs Adam and Eve not to eat of a certain tree. Their ability to honor this command represents their trust in God.

BUT! They break this command, trusting the serpent's deceiving words instead of God's way instead of God's way, effectively saying, “We know better than God!”

So, that good plan God had for the world He loves begins to spiral. Instead of all creation flourishing, we see relationships fracturing at every level: *Shame. Blame. Deception. Murder. More Murder.*

Even as it Spirals—we glimpse God's **goodness** and **grace**:
Genesis 3:15 → points to a self-giving rescuer!
Genesis 3:21 → points to God as a reliever of shame!

QUICK REVIEW

What did God do in this story? Were there any repeated words? Where did you sense tension? What glimpses of hope do you notice even as a spiral of darkness ensues?

“AWE” CHECK: Refer to the beginning and reflect on the acronym **A.W.E.**

GENESIS 4-11

BUT! Despite chances to do good, humanity continues to choose things that do not reflect God's character to the world!

Cain murders **Abel** in a jealous rage. Cain builds a city where violence and oppression reign!

Lamech comes along and brags about being more violent and vengeful than Cain ever was.

GOD IS DEEPLY GRIEVED

*Humanity is ruining God's good creation.
They are ruining one another.*

ENTER: Noah, The Friend of God. God sends a great flood to destroy the evil overtaking the world, but God protects Noah and his family.

The corruption runs deep. Even with a fresh start, things get messy. The people of Mesopotamia come together in a place called Babylon and build a tower of bricks. Bricks were the new technology of the day and with this technology, they could reunite heaven and earth! The tower was an attempt to prove their greatness apart from God and God's ways.

*The world is spiraling **again**. The BIG question is this:*

WHAT WILL GOD DO?

Reflection Questions

- How have these "spirals" touched or tempted you?
- What has done or might be doing as an invitation to break the spiral cycle?

"AWE" CHECK: Refer to the beginning and reflect on the acronym **A.W.E.**

GENESIS 12

God calls a man named **Abram**, later known as **Abraham**, to go to a land called **Canaan**, also known as the "promised land." God makes Abram a **promise**.

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will make your name great and I will bless you."

Notice this is **very different** from the folks building the tower who were going to make a great name for themselves.

WHY IS GOD GOING TO DO THIS?

So that all the families on earth will find blessing in you! (Gen 12:3)

God makes this promise so that the world God loves and created might flourish in the way it was intended. They make it a covenant: if Abraham follows God's way, God will be faithful in all He has promised.

APPLICATION QUESTION

You've read a few chapters. You've asked key questions and responded in A.W.E. All of creation in this section is now waiting on God's promises. Did you know God has promises for you? In what ways are you waiting? In what ways do the stories of Genesis offer you encouragement as you wait?

"AWE" CHECK: Refer to the beginning and reflect on the acronym **A.W.E.**

GENESIS 12-48

Like any family, **Abraham's family is complicated**, and they don't always honor their part of the covenant. However, time after time, God shows this group of people that He is a God who **faithfully provides**.

GOD provides...

- ...Abraham and Sarah a son at a very late age.
- ...a ram to sacrifice at the altar in place of Isaac .
- ...a way forward for Hagar and her son, Ishmael.
- ...Jacob continued protection even when he messes up big time!
- ...for Jacob's son, Joseph, when his brothers sell him into slavery in Egypt.

At the end of the book, Joseph has been elevated by Pharaoh to second-in-command over Egypt. During a time of famine, Joseph saves many people, including all of Egypt and his brothers who betrayed him.

Joseph has this to say to his brothers: "You planned all this for evil, but God planned it for good, to save many lives" (Gen 50:20).

These words summarize the heart of the book of Genesis:

God will not leave humanity to destroy themselves.
 God will honor His promise and continue to be faithful.
 God will bring about wholeness and blessing to all creation.

This is God's heart for the world.

QUICK REVIEW, A QUESTION, AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT

There is so much tension in this book, including betrayal, fear, racism, wrath—but also hope, healing, reconciliation, and mystery. Where did you feel the most tension while reading? What if the text was written so you would feel that tension? If that is the case, why is the tension there?

“AWE” CHECK: Refer to the beginning and reflect on the acronym **A.W.E.**

GENESIS 49-50**You did it!**

You made it to the end of Genesis... which is really just “the beginning” (that’s what Genesis means!) of the entire story of Scripture.

In Genesis 49, as the book is nearing its close, an aging Jacob offers a poem of blessing to his twelve sons. When Jacob comes to his fourth son, Judah, he says Judah will become a tribe of Israel’s royal leaders. Jacob predicts that eventually, a king will come from this tribe who will command God’s people with obedience and fulfill God’s promise to restore the garden blessing to all the world.

In short, God will continue to bring about good to the world through Abraham’s descendants. Even as humanity chooses their own will, God will continue to be faithful to His creation just as He promised Abraham. Eventually, the serpent that represents evil and deception will be crushed by Jesus, our wounded victor and loving rescuer. The garden of goodness will be restored.

Consider reading aloud these final words of Genesis and the words offered by Joseph to his brothers in **Genesis 50:15-26**.

WRAPPING UP GENESIS

How do you see the themes of Genesis as a whole reflected in these final words of Joseph:

Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives...

...I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Picking up on Joseph’s words, he tells his brothers not to fear—that what they meant for evil, God turns towards good. What small or larger fears are you living with? How might God be fulfilling promises, bringing about blessing, or “coming to your aid”? How might you be a catalyst to bless someone this week?

Reflection Questions

- How has your reading practice been a challenge and an asset to you this past month?

“AWE” CHECK: As you wrap up the reading of Genesis, refer to the beginning and reflect on the acronym **A.W.E.**

NEXT STEPS:**QR CODE**

Want to learn more about some of the tough spots of Genesis? Check out the weekly interview, daily reading guide, and other resources.

churchbcc.org/rooted

Email questions: staff@churchbcc.org

Come worship at any Bethany location Sunday mornings. Times vary.

NOTES:

Horizontal lines for writing notes.

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