

Small Group Materials - Genesis 1

Study Summary/Leaders Note: The chronology of the Creation account in Genesis 1 is a very controversial topic in Christianity today. Godly believers hold vastly varying opinions on what the exact meaning of “day” is in this passage as well as what creation looked like. Our purpose here is not to solve these dilemmas but to explore the theological truths that are central to this passage regardless of chronology. If your group wishes to explore the various theories regarding the timing of creation, please have them do so at another time.

Just like today, in Hebrew culture repeating a word or a phrase shows the importance of that word or phrase. Think about when your mother said your name twenty times in a row. It meant more than if she said it just once (unless, of course, she included your middle name).

In today’s lesson we will be exploring the repeated words and phrases that are used in the creation account of Genesis 1. Those words will serve as a guide to what is theologically significant in the passage.

As we journey through the passage, we want to provide you with two options. The first is to tell your group the number of times they’ll find a particular phrase in the passage. The second is to allow them to identify the repetitions themselves. As you look through the questions, you’ll see many phrased in two different ways to accommodate these methods. Choose whichever you prefer.

Pray for your time together in God’s Word!

Read passage out loud as a group. Option: Give group 3 minutes to look at the passage on their own.

Genesis 1

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

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

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Section 1: Words and Power

Ask the Group: What is the greatest thing you have ever done with your voice?

Leaders Note: This opening question is designed to get your group talking. Answers will vary depending on those present. You may need to give an example from your life if your group does not know where to go with this – like the time you shouted ‘fire’ in a crowded theater.

Possible Answers: saying ‘I Do’ at their wedding, singing, giving testimony in court, being sworn in, or taking an oath (e.g. citizenship.)

Ask the Group: The phrase “God said” appears ten times in this passage (v. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28 and 29.) What does God accomplish through His speech?

(Alternate Question: Look through the passage for where God speaks. Where do we see God speaking in this passage, and what does His speech accomplish?)

Possible Answers: Creating (v. 3, 6, 14), organizing (v. 6, 9, 14) causing growth (v.11), planning (v.26), commanding (v. 28, v.29)

- **Ask the Group:** What do the results of His speech say about the person and power of God?

Possible Answer: It shows that God is more powerful than we are and that His words are not empty.

- **Ask the Group:** What significance does God's power in His speech have for you today?

Possible Answer: It allows us to trust what He says.

- **Ask the Group:** Are you trusting in what He's said to you?

Leaders note: This application question is provided in the event that you feel that the group could go deeper at this point in the lesson.

Section 2: Declared "Good"

Ask the Group: The word "good" or the phrase "it was good" and the phrase "it was very good" appear seven times (3, 9, 11, 18, 21, 25, 31.) Looking back at the passage, what do these phrases signify?

(Alternate question: Look through the passage for where the phrase "it was good" or "it was very good" appears. From what we have seen, what is the significance of this phrase here in Genesis 1?)

Possible Answers: It shows the goodness of God as revealed in creation; it highlights that what God made was not bad or flawed.

- **Ask the Group:** In Luke 18:18-19 we read "And a ruler asked him (Jesus), "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." How does Jesus' understanding of good in Luke 18 help us understand the concept of good in Genesis 1?

Possible Answers: What God made in Genesis 1 is good because it was made by God; it was not corrupted and reflected the person of God by merely existing.

- **Ask the Group:** Why do you think that God does not declare creation very good until verse 31?

Possible Answers: Creation was not complete until humans were created; creation could not reflect the glory of God without humanity ruling over creation; humans are the only part of creation that reflect God's image (v. 26).

Section 3: Image Bearers—Role and Responsibility

Ask the Group: In v. 26 God says “Let us make man (humanity) in our own image. What does being in the image of God look like in verses 26-30?

Possible Answers: Ruling over and having dominion over the earth, male and female.

- **Ask the Group:** What should having dominion look like for us today?

Possible Answers: Caring for Creation. Using what God has given to us to provide for current and future generations.

- **Ask the Group:** In a world promoting being “green,” how do we walk the fine line between being good stewards of the earth and attempting to “fix” it?

Possible Answers: Having realistic expectations of what we can accomplish, checking motives.

- **Ask the Group:** How do we know when we’ve strayed too far to either side?

Possible Answers: When we actually believe that we can serve as God and fix a fallen world, or when we feel like we have license to not care at all.

Leaders Note: We’re trying to get at what is the underlying belief for each side of this argument.

Ask the Group: What significance should Genesis 1 have on how we live our lives today?

Possible Answers:

- *We should see humans as the capstone of creation—impact our understanding of our worth/value.*
- *We should look at our role as humans in creation as not simply a part of creation but as organizers and caretakers of creation.*

Ask the Group: What is our community application of this passage?

Leaders Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.