



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Vision Sunday Sermon given on Sept 17, 2023

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

THE BEGINNING OF EVERYTHING – Genesis 1



I. Introduction

Last week Pastor Rachel called us to a new beginning. She took us to Isaiah 43 and reminded us that God is all about new things. She challenged us to open our minds and hearts to the new things God might want to do in our lives and our church. So, how do we prepare ourselves for new things? How do we navigate new beginnings? How can we get this new year off to a good start? And what can we expect from God when it comes to new beginnings, and what does God expect from us?

Questions: Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is there somebody rather than nobody? Why is there someday rather than just today?

Bottom Line: When God does something new, it's always purposeful, personal and progressive.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:

Genesis 1:1-5

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.

Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

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

Acts 17:26-27

²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

Ephesians 1:4-5

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

Ephesians 3:20-21

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Bryan began the message recalling the start of his freshman year at a Midwestern college. He said that new beginnings are full of possibilities and promise. At the same time, they always come with challenges and uncertainties.

Tell us about a time when you started something new (e.g., school, job, relationship, spouse, family, church). What 1-2 possibilities and problems did you face?

2. Pastor Bryan kick started the sermon series with the biggest beginning of all – the beginning of the universe as it unfolds in Genesis.

The opening verse of the Bible reads, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* Pastor Bryan pointed out some key points from this one verse alone.

- **The Protagonist is One God:** The Genesis account stands apart from the ancient myths most notably with the idea that everything began with ONE God.
 - **The verb “created”** is used about 40 times in the Bible but only in reference to God – only God can bring something out of nothing.
 - Everything that exists was created by God.
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- While Genesis 1:1 is a commonly memorized verse, take time to slow down and meditate on the first few verses. What fresh insights or reminders are speaking to you?
 - Regarding with matters of science and faith, have you wrestled with or know someone who wrestles with the relationship between science and faith? What are your thoughts regarding Bryan’s statement “science tries to answer the questions HOW and WHEN, Genesis is concerned with WHO and WHY” – do you agree, disagree? Is this helpful?
 - How has reading Genesis impacted your worldview about God or creation?
3. For the remainder of the sermon, Pastor Bryan asks three WHY questions for us to consider.
 - Why is there something rather than nothing?
 - Why is there somebody rather than nobody?
 - Why is there someday, rather than just today?

He suggests that in learning about beginnings in Genesis 1...

- When God does a new thing, it’s always **purposeful**.
 - When God does a new thing, it’s always **personal**.
 - When God does a new thing, it’s always **progressive**.
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- Which of the three statements resonate with you the most? The least?
 - Which of the three statements intrigued you the most? Was confusing?

4. The GC Connection Pathways invites us to get personal and practical about the beginnings God may be doing in our lives. These pathways invite us to keep discovering, learning, connecting, and serving:
 - Be curious
 - Grow with practice
 - Find community
 - Make an impact

By actively seeking new opportunities with a sense of expectancy we can “perceive” the new thing that God is doing in our lives.

- What new thing might God want to teach you this year?
 - What new people does God want you to meet?
 - What relationships might God want you to go deeper into?
 - What new work does God want you to join in or to start?
5. Ephesians 3:20-21 is one of Pastor Bryan’s favorite benedictions. Read it together with your group and bless one another in prayer.

Take Home Message:

When God does a new thing, it’s always *purposeful* – even when it’s unexpected or uncomfortable. When God does a new thing, it’s always *personal* – God is prompting you to seek and reach out and find Him. When God does a new thing, it’s always *progressive* – there’s more to come.

Let’s Pray

III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

Prayers for Preparation of the heart

- Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God’s Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

Prayers for the Purposes of God

- Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

Prayers for the People of Grace

- Pray that Grace Chapel will seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

Prayers for the Person God's calling

- Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.
- Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

Prayers for Discernment

- Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

IV. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

V. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- Science is about how and when. Genesis is about who and why.
- The Bible allows for a variety of understandings of origins, and that science and faith don't have to be in conflict with each other.
- God created the heavens and earth to reveal His glory – to put His power and wisdom and goodness on display so that it could be seen and appreciated
- When God does a new thing, it is *always on purpose*. Even if you didn't choose that new thing, even if it was the result of something unintended or unfortunate or even evil, God wants to meet you in that new thing and do something good with it.
- God created mankind to share his glory with beings with whom he could have a relationship.
- When God does a new thing, it's *always personal*. It's about the people he is doing it for or with. He does new things to prompt us to look for him in those new things, and share those new things with him.
- When God does a new thing it is *always progressive*.