



LifeLight

"In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 1:4

Genesis, Part 1

—
GENESIS 1:1–25:11

LEADERS GUIDE

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Introduction

Welcome to LifeLight

A special pleasure is in store for you. You will be instrumental in leading your brothers and sisters in Christ closer to Him who is our life and light (John 1:4). You will have the pleasure of seeing fellow Christians discover new insights and rediscover old ones as they open the Scriptures and dig deep into them, perhaps deeper than they have ever dug before. More than that, you will have the pleasure of sharing in this wonderful study.

LifeLight—An In-depth Study

LifeLight is a series of in-depth Bible studies. The goal of LifeLight is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ, enjoy fellowship with the members of His body, and reach out in love to others in witness and service.

In-depth means that this Bible study includes the following four components: individual daily home study; discussion in a small group; a lecture presentation on the Scripture portion under study; and an enhancement of the week's material (through reading the enrichment magazine).

LifeLight Participants

LifeLight participants are adults who desire a deeper study of the Scriptures than is available in the typical Sunday morning adult Bible class. (Mid-to-older teens might also be LifeLight participants.) While LifeLight does not assume an existing knowledge of the Bible or special experience or skills in Bible study, it does assume a level of commitment that will bring participants to each of the nine weekly assemblies having read the assigned readings and attempted to answer the study questions. Daily reading and study will require from 15 to 30 minutes for the five days preceding the LifeLight assembly. The day following the assembly will

be spent reviewing the previous week's study by going over the completed study leaflet and the enrichment magazine.

LifeLight Leadership

While the in-depth process used by LifeLight begins with individual study and cannot achieve its aims without this individual effort, it cannot be completed by individual study alone. Therefore, trained leaders are necessary. You fill one or perhaps more of the important roles described below.

The Director

This person oversees the LifeLight program in a local center (which may be a congregation or a center operated by several neighboring congregations). The director

- serves as the parish LifeLight overall coordinator and leader;
- coordinates the scheduling of the LifeLight program;
- orders materials;
- convenes LifeLight leadership team meetings;
- develops publicity materials;
- recruits participants;
- maintains records and budgeting;
- assigns, with the leadership team, participants to small discussion groups;
- makes arrangements for facilities;
- communicates outreach opportunities to small-group leaders and to congregational boards;
- follows up on participants who leave the program.

The Assistant Director (*optional*)

This person may assist the director. Duties listed for the director may be assigned to the assistant director as mutually agreeable.

The Lecture Leader

This person prepares and delivers the lecture at the weekly assembly. (**Lesson material for the lecture leader begins on p. 9.**) The lecture leader

- prepares and presents the Bible study lecture to the large group;
- prepares worship activities (devotional thought, hymn, prayer), using resources in the study leaflet and leaders guide and possibly other outside sources;
- helps the small-group discussion leaders to grow in understanding the content of the lessons;
- encourages prayer at weekly leadership team and discussion leaders meetings.

The Small-Group Coordinator (*optional; the director may fill this role*)

This person supervises and coordinates the work of the small-group discussion leaders. The small-group coordinator

- recruits with the leadership team the small-group discussion leaders;
- trains or arranges for training of the discussion leaders;
- assists the director and discussion leaders in follow-up and outreach;
- encourages the discussion leaders to contact absent group members;
- participates in the weekly leadership team and discussion leaders equipping meetings;
- provides ongoing training and support as needed.

The Small-Group Discussion Leaders

These people guide and facilitate discussion of LifeLight participants in the small groups. (**Lesson material for the small-group leaders begins on p. 63.**) There should be one discussion leader for every group of no more than 12 participants. The small-group discussion leaders are, perhaps, those individuals who are most important to the success of the program. They should, therefore, be chosen with special care and be equipped with skills needed to guide discussion and to foster a caring fellowship within the group. These discussion leaders

- prepare each week for the small-group discussion by using the study leaflet and small-group leaders guide section for that session (**see p. 63**);
- read the enrichment magazine as a study supplement;
- guide and facilitate discussion in their small group;
- encourage and assist the discussion group in prayer;
- foster fellowship and mutual care within the discussion group;
- attend weekly discussion leaders training meetings.

Leadership Training

LifeLight leaders will meet weekly to review the previous week's work and plan the coming week. At this session, leaders can address concerns and prepare for the coming session. LifeLight is a 1½-hour program with no possibility for it to be taught in the one hour typically available on Sunday mornings. Some congregations, however, may want to use the Sunday morning Bible study hour for LifeLight preparation and leadership training. In such a meeting, the lecture leader and/or small-group coordinator may lead the discussion leaders through the coming week's lesson, reserving 5 or 10 minutes for problem solving or other group concerns.

While it requires intense effort, LifeLight has proven to bring great benefit to LifeLight participants. The effort put into this program, both by leaders and by participants, will be rewarding and profitable.

The LifeLight Weekly Schedule

Here is how LifeLight will work week by week:

1. Before session 1, each participant will receive the study leaflet for session 1 and the enrichment magazine for the course. The study leaflet contains worship resources (for use both in individual daily study and at the opening of the following week's assembly) and readings and study questions for five days. Challenge questions will lead those participants who have the time and desire a greater challenge into even deeper levels of study.

- After the five days of individual study at home, participants will gather for a weekly assembly of all LifeLight participants. The assembly will begin with a brief period of worship (5 minutes). Participants will then join their assigned small discussion groups (of 12 or fewer, who will remain the same throughout the course), where they will go over the week's study questions together (55 minutes). Assembling together once again, participants will listen to a lecture presentation on the readings they have studied in the previous week and discussed in their small groups (20 minutes). After the lecture presentation, the director or another leader will distribute the study leaflet for the following week. Closing announcements and other necessary business may take another five minutes before dismissal.

In some places some small groups will not join the weekly assembly because of scheduling or other reasons. Such groups may meet at another time and place (perhaps in the home of one of the small group's members). They will follow the same schedule, but they may use the music CD to join in singing the opening hymn and a cassette tape to listen to the week's lecture presentation. The discussion leader will obtain the tape and leaflets from the director. A cassette tape version of the lecture is available for purchase from CPH (see your catalog). Or a congregation may record the lecture given by the lecture leader at the weekly assembly and duplicate it for use by other groups meeting later in the week.

- On the day following the assembly, participants will review the preceding week's work by rereading the study leaflet they completed (and that they perhaps supplemented or corrected during the discussion in their small group) and by reading appropriate articles in the enrichment magazine.

Then the LifeLight weekly study process will begin all over again!

Recommended Study Resources for Genesis

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Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Interpretive notes on each page form a running commentary on the text. The book includes cross-references, a 35,000-word concordance, full-color maps, charts, and time lines.

Delitzsch, Franz. *A New Commentary on Genesis.* 2 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899. A careful handling of theological issues in Genesis, making purposeful use of both Hebrew and Aramaic. A valuable resource.

Leupold, Herbert C. *Exposition of Genesis.* 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1942. This commentary is a careful exposition by a conservative scholar.

Luther, Martin. *Lectures on Genesis. Luther's Works.* 8 vols. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958-70. Rather lengthy comments but patient, discerning reading of these volumes is rewarding.

Roehrs, Walter R., and Martin H. Franzmann. *Concordia Self-Study Commentary.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979. This one-volume commentary on the Bible contains 950 pages.

Genesis: The Beginning of Life and Light

Preparing for the Session

Central Focus

Because this is an introductory lesson, the focus is as much on the group as it is on the Book of Genesis. Questions are geared toward introducing Genesis while welcoming LifeLight participants.

Objectives

That the participant, as a child of God and with the Holy Spirit's help, will be led to

1. see a connection between God's purposes for creation and His purposes for our daily life;
2. grasp the primary purpose of all Scripture, including the purpose of Genesis;
3. understand the basic subject matter covered in the Book of Genesis;
4. contribute to a sense of rapport and commitment among the members of the LifeLight group.

Note for small-group leaders: Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 65.

For the Lecture Leader

The first lecture in this series becomes one of the most important messages you will deliver. It sets the tone for the presentations in the weeks ahead and will have the greatest influence on new participants, who may still be apprehensive about their commitment to in-depth Bible study. Prepare well, pray hard, and God's Spirit will be upon you, blessing every word you say.

Here are five steps for you to follow as you prepare to present the lecture effectively each week:

Step 1: Pray for God's blessing and for the guiding presence and help of the Holy Spirit. Know that you have a part in transmitting God's own holy Word. Speak that Word boldly.

Step 2: Read and study God's Word yourself. The Word will strengthen your own faith and life in Christ. The Word will also make you a faithful witness. Study Genesis as a LifeLight participant. Read the daily assignment and answer the study questions. Take part in a discussion group.

Step 3: Prepare your presentations carefully. If possible, make the presentation in your own words, using the printed lecture as a guide that you follow closely. If you do read the printed lecture, practice reading it several times so you are thoroughly familiar with it and can read it fluently in your own presentation style. Know it well enough to maintain eye contact with your audience. You do not need to stick to the printed words slavishly. Say it the way you would say it. Substitute your own illustrations and applications when these fit your situation or audience better.

If your congregation has classes throughout the week, consider making an audiotape (or even a videotape) of your presentation so that these other classes can listen to it after their small-group discussion. You can also purchase a cassette tape from Concordia Publishing House either to serve as an additional help in preparing your own presentation or as a substitute for your presentation, particularly in a home setting.

Step 4: Ask someone in your audience to help you by watching and listening for ways in which you might make your presentation more effective. Pick someone who will be a positive and helpful critic.

Step 5: Pray again. Thank God for giving you an opportunity to pass His Word along to others. Ask Him to bless your effort.

For the Director

As the director you recognize the importance of proper facilities and supplies for the success of LifeLight. Even if your group has participated in LifeLight studies before, take nothing for granted. This is a new study, probably with some new participants. Take time to

check and double-check everything and always have “Plan B” in your hip pocket (just in case). Of course, make sure that study leaflets for each subsequent session are available for distribution at the proper time.

Session Plan

Worship

Begin the session with the hymn, devotion, and prayer. The words of the hymn and prayer are printed in the study leaflet. Note that accompaniment for the hymn can be found on the music CD that accompanies this course. If you plan to use it, find it on the disk and cue it up before class.

Devotion

Read Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Let’s pretend. Let’s pretend you’re an archaeologist. One day, you stumble across the end of a braided cord of spun gold buried in the ground. You begin digging to see what is at the end of it, and the deeper you tunnel, the greater your fascination. Through each successive stratum of earth and artifacts come exciting new revelations covering thousands of years of history.

Dr. Nelson Glueck, a leading Palestinian archaeologist of our time, has said, “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”¹

Archaeology has shed light on numerous biblical stories, including a number from Genesis. Even the earliest accounts of Genesis square with archaeological research. The exact location of the Garden of Eden will probably always remain a mystery. Yet archaeology establishes the area of Mesopotamia as the cradle of ancient civilization, just as the Book of Genesis says.

Digging into the Book of Genesis not only unearths our origin but also our destination. Woven through the fabric of time and the pages of Scripture is a golden cord, a

lifeline to God, that leads us from the creation of the universe to its Savior. In Genesis, from the great prelude “In the beginning” through the history of Joseph, the darkness of humankind’s deeds reads like a historical novel—titillating, discouraging, and ever so accurate. Yet, when we find ourselves at the end of our rope, there is no despair after all. The golden cord we follow throughout Genesis eventually leads to a treasure shining bright—the “LifeLight,” Jesus Christ. He is the one for whom we have been digging in Scripture all along. As He says, “These are the Scriptures that testify about Me” (John 5:39).

Ultimately, faith rests not in archaeology, but in the inspired Word of God. It is here that we learn of our sin and our Savior. In the words of the evangelist John, “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). May God bless our excavations in these weeks ahead, knowing that the promises we unearth in Genesis are promises fulfilled in Christ Jesus!

¹Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1979), 65.

Lecture Presentation

This lecture also appears on the CD-ROM that accompanies this course. Also look at the PDFFILES directory on the CD-ROM for visual aids available for the course.

Introduction

Have you heard a good story lately? It is hard not to be captivated by the storyteller who catches our interest with artful imagery and calls our imagination to enter the action. Effortlessly and even unconsciously our interest is focused on the chain of events and on the characters who have been caught up in them. If events take a comic turn, our sides can shake with satisfying laughter. If the tale turns tragic, our hearts can hurt as we identify with the experience. Have you had such a good laugh lately? Or have you felt the pain of tragedies near or far?

1 An Important, Meaningful Story

Whatever your answer, Moses has a story for you. This story can make you laugh with joy way down inside. This story can also touch you with a deep sense of suffering and loss. This is, quite simply, the greatest story ever told. It is hard not to be caught up in the drama and high adventure of this story.

A. A Story with a Point

In fact, we can safely say that those who are bored with it have never really heard it. Perhaps their minds were somewhere else. Perhaps they thought they were listening, but they heard only the words and missed the message.

When we miss the point of a story, it can't bring us much understanding or pleasure. Sometimes missing the point causes more drastic consequences—some quite painful.

For example, for centuries scholars and students of antiquity had read Homer's grand epics—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—as great literary masterpieces. But near the end of the 19th century, Heinrich Schliemann got the point that so many others had missed. The renowned classical scholar Cyril E. Robinson tells Schliemann's own story in an entertaining way. **You may choose to tell the following story in your own words rather than read it as a quotation from Robinson's book.**

Born in 1822, the son of a small-town Lutheran minister, Schliemann was fascinated as a boy by the tales his father told him of the Trojan War. Forced to leave school at the age of fourteen to enter a grocer's shop as an apprentice, he never lost the love of learning. One evening a drunken miller came into the grocery shop and recited a hundred lines of Homer. "From that moment," writes Schliemann, "I never ceased to pray to God that by His grace I might yet have the happiness of learning Greek." His prayer received an almost miraculous answer. Leaving the grocer's shop, he became in rapid succession a messenger-boy, a clerk, a merchant, and finally—a millionaire! He was now ready to fulfill

the ambition of his childhood. He devoted his life and wealth to searching for remains of Homer's time. Trusting Homer as his guide, Schliemann unearthed a series of cities and satisfied himself that one of these was the Troy of the *Iliad*.

Cyril E. Robinson, *A History of Greece* (London: Methuen & Co., 1964), 4–5.

Even scholars who were skeptical at first eventually became as convinced as Schliemann. The splendid treasures and priceless artifacts combined with other archaeological evidence to convince the learned of that day and of ours! The checkout boy in the grocery had seen what so many professors had missed! The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were not just entertaining stories; they also described glorious civilizations that had actually existed. The practical result for Schliemann included the pleasure of possessing priceless gold masks, diadems, daggers, and drinking cups. The fame and fortune that came to Schliemann could not have escaped the notice of the scholars of that day who had missed the point of the stories they studied.

It is possible to hear a story but, by missing the point, to miss out on the real benefits the story offers. The story we are about to study has even greater possibilities of practical benefits for those who pay attention and believe what they hear.

Even so, some have heard this story, paid no attention, refused to believe, and gone on quickly to other pursuits. But some keep coming back to hear the account again and again—convinced this story continually gives them fresh insights and new life.

B. A Story with Unique Features

What is this story? Why should we keep on coming back to it? What makes its characters so compelling? How could it possibly move the human heart from laughter to tears and back again?

Several features of this story are unique. First, this story, with all of its triumphs and tragedies, is true! Its names, people, and places are real! Though it reads like a powerful novel, its plot has not been created for effect or entertainment. In fact, the more time we spend with this

story, the more clearly its truths will appear. It has that quality of genuineness that rings true to what we ourselves know about life and interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, this true story is not just about other people. It will not permit us, if we see its point, merely to sit back and observe the action. As we find ourselves caught up in it, we will discover that it changes us as it confronts us with its truth and claims.

What will especially interest each one of us is the discovery that this true story is not just about some far-off people, but it is our own family history. Just as the remembrances of grandparents fascinate us, this history describes for us those episodes and events that have made us what we are. If one of our ancestors migrated from Europe to the United States or Canada, that event, though it happened long ago, is responsible for the fact that we were born in North America and not in Europe. In the same way, this history will reveal a great deal about us as we are right now—and not just where we live but why we think and act the way we do.

Are you ready to hear this true story? Are you ready to meet your past so you might better understand your present? More than this, are you ready to apply this history in such a way that you will find not buried gold or silver, but the greater treasure of a full and free life?

2 Genesis—Its Author and Its Message

A. Meet Moses the Author

Display visual 1A from the CD-ROM here.

This true story is titled Genesis. Its author is a man named Moses. He lived in another place—ancient Egypt—during a different time—around 1500 B.C.—but he describes the very roots of our family tree. He highlights the key events and describes the crucial characters. He hides nothing. He tells the good; he tells the bad. He faces facts and insists we face them too! By listening carefully we will learn not only about our ancestors, but also about ourselves.

This remarkable history will take us as far back as we can go—to the very beginning. It will introduce us to the very first ancestors in the human race. When we face

the facts of our family tree, the whole world will look different. Our first ancestors shaped more than a part of our future; they changed the face of the earth for all future generations.

B. Hear What Moses Tells Us

God groomed Moses for the task of recounting the full sweep of our family history. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's court (Exodus 2:10) and was trained in its literature and learning (Acts 7:22).

Display visual 1B from the CD-ROM here.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Moses later used his educational training. As he begins his first book (he wrote five—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—the “Pentateuch”), he takes us back to the very beginning, telling us about our first parents (Genesis 1:27–28). In doing so, Moses invites us to consider a startling fact: Our first ancestors, Adam and Eve, were created in the image of God! The human race did not spring from some random cosmic process or from a magical convergence of the stars. Our first parents were formed by the action of a personal God (Genesis 2).

Furthermore, Moses emphasizes over and over the goodness of their world (Genesis 1) and the innocence in which they were created (Genesis 2). We come from good parents, parents created in the image of a good God!

Moses' account of our family history brings us face-to-face with the triune God, a God of love and infinite power who created the whole cosmos as a home for His human creatures.

Display visual 1C from the CD-ROM here.

As we continue to follow our family tree from Adam and Eve to Seth, to Noah, and on down the line, every episode will testify to the fact that the God who created us continues until now to be present with His people. The true tale of our family tree cannot be told without constantly stressing His gracious presence. In a profound sense, the chief character in our history is not a particular grandfather or patriarch but God Himself, who created us and who continues to call us.

Precisely at this point many stop listening. They are

frightened by the thought that God created them and is still present in their personal and family life. They would rather keep the closet closed on such a troublesome family skeleton! But, though such fear falls on all of us, *we must keep listening!* And we must urge others not to flee in fright before this fact.

C. Listen to the Story of a Lifeline

Moses' selection of events and the record of God's actions are not meant to frighten us but to fasten our faith on God's grace. To be sure, Genesis makes no effort to sugarcoat the consequences of sin. Furthermore, sin brings death and destruction. Sin denies our history—our origin in God.

While we meet the fact of sin head-on in events such as the flood, we also meet people like Noah who "found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). There have always been those people in our family tree who by His grace "got the point" of God's presence. The purpose of His promise and presence are to offer favor and mercy to all sinners. To confess our parentage in the God of Adam and Abram is to confess that He is gracious.

The story line of our history does not end in defeat and destruction. Genesis asserts that the fall into sin and all the subsequent failures into which God's human creatures fell are to be turned around through the Seed (NIV "offspring") of the woman. The story line of Genesis turns out to be not a litany of death (Genesis 5), but a lifeline (Genesis 12:3). The genealogies lead us from the light of God in creation (Genesis 1) to the light of God in the life of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1). Just as God broke the primeval darkness with the command "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), so He has broken the penetrating darkness of sin with the presence of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Life and the Light of the world (John 1:4-5).

We must view the events of Genesis and the events recorded in the inspired Gospels as the same, one, true story. God's gracious promise in Genesis is that the woman's Seed ("offspring") will reverse the dreadful consequences of the fall into sin (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 22:15-18; 49:8-12). The fulfillment of that promise, first made in Genesis 3:15, is seen in Jesus Christ. We are invited not simply to acknowledge this history as true in its description of the past and the pres-

ent, but to rely on it in faith and to live so as to reflect the light and reality of Christ's life.

By starting at the beginning, Genesis orients us for a full and free life. We now know from where we have come and, accordingly, we can live with purpose and—above all—with the gracious presence of God in Christ.

The title of our Bible study series—LifeLight—underlines the truth that our life is a story that has its beginning in God. Despite the fall of our first parents into the darkness of sin (Genesis 3), God first promised and then sent the light in the life of Jesus of Nazareth (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3). The gracious aim of this gift of the woman's Seed was that lives begun in God might also find their end in His goodness and presence. Between that beginning and that end, the light of Christ guides and guards against darkness.

Conclusion

Read the true story of Genesis as though it were your history, for it is! Hear it as the great Good News of deliverance in Christ, for it is that too!

The following eight lessons are written from this perspective. They will lead you to chapter 25 and will be followed by another nine lessons in a second LifeLight course on Genesis.

Above all else, you are invited to hear this ancient story in a fresh way. As you join in this history as your own, in episode after episode, you will see the hand of God. That hand delights in lifting the faith of Abram above his failure. It does not seek to crush and kill the children of Adam and Eve. It seeks to give them new life in Christ!

Concluding Activities

Close with a prayer thanking God for the Holy Scriptures, in which He discloses to us His marvelous plan for our salvation through Jesus. Encourage participants to read the article in the enrichment magazine titled "In the beginning God created." Then make any necessary announcements and distribute study leaflet 2.

Notes

The Lifeline Grows

Genesis 1–2

Preparing for the Session

Central Focus

This lesson focuses on a God who is both powerful and personal, whose awesome Word brought our entire universe into existence, and whose personal touch shaped clay into a man and formed a rib into a woman. Genesis 1 (the more general account of creation) emphasizes God's power, while Genesis 2 (which expands the details about the creation of man) emphasizes His personal touch.

Objectives

That the participant, as a child of God and with the Holy Spirit's help, will be led to

1. marvel at God's almighty power and wisdom in His plan of creation;
2. understand the position of human beings in God's plan of creation;
3. understand the God-intended unique relationship between male and female;
4. grow in a sense of stewardship by examining the components of the creation account.

Note for small-group leaders: Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 68.

For the Lecture Leader

Read through the lecture several times before presenting it to the large group. The theme that will run throughout this course on Genesis is the truth that God established and maintained a lifeline of hope and promise that eventually led to the Messiah. Emphasize this theme as you come across it in the lectures. You will find that this week's lecture also analyzes the

unique cultural setting in which Moses records the true account of the creation of the world.

Session Plan

Worship

Begin the session with the hymn, devotion, and prayer. The words of the hymn and prayer are printed in the study leaflet. Note that accompaniment for the hymn can be found on the music CD that accompanies this course. If you plan to use it, find it on the disk and cue it up before class.

Devotion

Read Genesis 1:2–3: "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. And God said, "Let there be light."

Have you ever committed the irony of "thinking the unthinkable"? The evolutionist Sir Arthur Keith once said, "Evolution is unproved and unprovable. Nevertheless, we believe it because the only alternative is special creation, which is *unthinkable*."¹

As we open the pages of Scripture God challenges us to "think the unthinkable"—namely, that simply by speaking His Word, God created the universe out of nothing. But why should that be so difficult to believe for people who trust in an almighty God who is able to reassemble our molecules in perfect fashion on resurrection day in order for us to live with Him forever? To paraphrase J. B. Phillips, "Is our God too small?"

Biologist Duane Gish says, "Evolution is a fairy tale for adults" (Kennedy, p. 51). Even theistic evolution, which involves God in the evolutionary process, furnishes no satisfactory answer to the causes of sin and death. As well-known churchman Dennis James Kennedy has stated, "In most fairy tales, someone kisses a frog and in a few seconds, it becomes a prince. That's called a fairy tale. In evolution, something kisses a frog and a

few million years later, it becomes a prince. That's called science!" (Kennedy, p. 51).

The Christian faith is not based on fairy tales but on history. It centers on a God who fashioned more than a universe; He also fashioned a plan for our lives that finds meaning only in Jesus Christ. Our Creator is experienced at bringing order out of chaos, and He is used to bringing light out of darkness.

Have you seen the light—the eternal light? That light is Jesus Christ, who was present before the creation began and will be seen eternally after this sinful world is destroyed. As Peter said, "We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

God said, "Let there be light," and there was. May our journey into Genesis lead us to the light of truth—the ability to "think the unthinkable," to realize that God can not only *create* a world but also *save* a world from the darkness of sin.

¹Dennis James Kennedy, *Why I Believe* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1980), 51.

Lecture Presentation

This lecture also appears on the CD-ROM that accompanies this course. Also look at the PDFFILES directory on the CD-ROM for visual aids available for the course.

Introduction

"Where did the world come from?" "When did life begin?" "How do I fit into the structure of the universe?"

Few human beings have escaped the tug of these questions. **Instead of the following, you may wish to relate a personal experience or one your audience is likely to have had.** Perhaps while leaning back in your lawn chair on some dark night you were suddenly overwhelmed by the vastness of the heavens. All those distant stars and suns seemed to reduce you to an insignificant dot. Or perhaps you have walked along the seashore and observed how the relentless rhythm of the waves erases every footprint. An unanticipated thought

causes you to pause: Will every memory of *my* presence here be swept away like footprints in the sand?

Have you ever had such feelings wash across your soul? In these and other settings our imagination is tickled and our intellect is teased with the most profound questions that can come our way: Where did it all come from? And, more pointedly and personally: Why am I here?

From the pages of history we discover that our feelings and questions are not unique to our century. From the days when people first began to record their thoughts, poets, philosophers, and peasants have asked this fundamental set of questions. And yet, after searching through the stacks in the best university libraries in our world, we realize that life's central questions remain unanswered. Our technological advances have not helped us answer the most crucial and basic concerns of our lives.

1 The Answer in Genesis

A. God, Creation's Creator

Display visual 2A from the CD-ROM here.

The Book of Genesis, written by inspiration of God some 15 hundred years before the birth of Christ by a man called Moses, gives us an answer unlike any other that has been offered. It was a peculiar answer when Moses wrote it. It remains distinctive today.

The very first sentence of Genesis sets it apart: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1).

Before anything, there was God. Genesis 1:1 does not try to prove this. It simply asserts that not matter, not chaos, not a chorus of gods, but *Elohim* [El-o-HEEM], the one true creator God, existed before everything. The very name *Elohim* in Hebrew carries the impression of majesty and sovereignty over all that is.

Someone making such a claim in Moses' day would have faced the same challenges we meet when we assert it today.

Imagine yourself for the moment at the world's greatest university in Moses' day. This center of learning is located at the heart of a sophisticated society. Ancient Egypt had

distinguished itself with previously unequaled achievements in arts and letters as well as in the sciences.

Moses, raised in Pharaoh's court, benefited from the best education Egypt could offer (Exodus 2:10). Unlike most people, Moses enjoyed leisure time to learn the literature and arts of Egypt. As Acts states, he "was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action" (Acts 7:22).

Why, Moses could have gone on a picnic with his palace friends to the Great Pyramid. This structure, already a thousand years old in Moses' day, is proof of Egypt's expertise in mathematics and engineering. The achievements of the Egyptians still astound scientists today! The Egyptian builders worked within margins of error similar to those observed in the construction of modern skyscrapers!

Moses opens his five-volume masterpiece—the Pentateuch—with a simple phrase: *In the beginning*. Moses began with Genesis and then followed with Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. All five books of the Pentateuch show his interest in mapping the family line of the people of Israel. So serious is Moses' desire to trace Israel's family tree that he takes us back to the beginning of all history!

But why? To answer that, we need to remember that more than the past was on Moses' mind! The children of Israel had spent more than four centuries in Egypt, most of that time as slaves of Egyptians. Egypt had its own explanation of the world. Particularly important to Egyptians was portraying the sun, the stars, and the earthly elements as gods.

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By beginning his account of Israel's family tree with the statement that God created "the heavens and the earth," Moses blasts these so-called "gods" off their thrones. The original Hebrew word for "create" is used only with God as the subject and refers to His special, sovereign action. Only the true God, *Elohim*, deserves credit for creating and controlling the universe! Note the word *controlling*!

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Chapter 1 stresses God's complete power over His creat-

ing in several ways. First, the text asserts that God simply calls creation into being. His word carries creative, omnipotent power! Moses' contemporaries would have caught the implication. The God of Israel—*not* the Egyptian sun god Re (Ray)—created light. *Elohim* existed before the sun itself. *Elohim* created light that existed before the sun did. Our world is created—the masterpiece, the handiwork of Israel's God!

B. The Good Creation

In Genesis 1 Moses also makes the point that God's creation was good. Over and over (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) we are told that "God saw that it was good." If this truth seems a bit tedious, perhaps we've only heard the words and missed the point. Moses' contemporaries believed the heavenly bodies were to be feared. Even animals had connections with the hidden forces displayed in the sky.

The good word that Genesis 1 brings to ancient Israel and to us is that "mother nature" is not the home of countless gods. No superstitions! No silly horoscopes! No strange sacrifices! None of these are necessary, because God created the universe. We can give thanks to Him rather than huddling in fear before the forces of the universe!

This adjective *good* evokes more than a lack of fear. It also reminds us of the joy and satisfaction we human creatures receive as we use the things God created. Do you enjoy good food? good music? a good book? a good nap? Genesis 1 says that you need not feel guilty about enjoying these good things. God has given them to you for your pleasure! He Himself took pleasure in their creation, and He wants us—His children—to enjoy them too.

Centuries later a poet of Israel praised God: "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart" (Psalm 104:14–15).

The psalmist and Genesis 1 agree that the right response when we view the world is not to make a god of it but to praise its Creator.

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C. The Human Center

Another feature on which they agree is that people are the pinnacle of God's creative work. Man and woman are not accidents! They are not incidental! They are at the center of the action! They are the high point of God's creative activity!

Genesis 1 makes this point in two ways. In the literary style of the Old Testament, the last in a series is frequently the most significant. With the creation of man and woman on the sixth day, at the climax of creation, God adds His own comment on human being's central position in the entire universe: *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"* (1:26).

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Not only are man and woman the pinnacle of creation, the climax of creation, but we alone are made in the image of God. So rich in meaning is this short phrase that it is difficult to explain fully. This "image of God" includes our imagination and intellect, our souls and spirituality, our place and position in creation. All this is included in the image of God. The image of God did not mean Adam looked like God—God is a spirit, a being with a mind and a will but without a physical body. However, Adam shared God's moral perfection in the beginning. Before the fall into sin, Adam and Eve were sinless. They lived in perfect relationship with God and with one another and with the rest of creation. Perfect love marked these relationships. Above all, that was *very good* (1:31)!

Contrast this with the Egyptian view—the view of Israel's slave masters—that the sun god Re ruled earth and the hordes of insignificant people who swarmed like ants over it. These insignificant humans existed only to serve the pleasure of Re's son, the Pharaoh. Do you see how Genesis 1 would have given the downtrodden children of Israel hope?

Centuries later, King David thought about the wonders of creation. He could not completely understand the

wonderful position God had given man and woman in His plan. He wrote:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet (Psalm 8:3–6).

It is as though David were at the same time reflecting on the heavens and on the primary position of man and woman as described in Genesis 1:26–30.

2 A Peculiar Answer

A. To Moses' Contemporaries

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In Moses' world, a world where the mighty armies and the magnificent architecture of Egypt dominated the landscape, Moses' proposal would have seemed peculiar. The great civilizations of that day had their own explanations about how the universe came into being and about the place of humankind in it.

The intricate economies, lavish public works, and unsurpassed prosperity of Egypt and Mesopotamia had seemingly demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that their explanation of the world's existence were to be believed. It's important to note that in none of them did people play a prominent part. In fact, the existence of man and woman was merely incidental. The real action was with the gods. The most humanity could hope for was to survive.

One of Moses' royal associates might have challenged Genesis 1: "The God of Israel, *Elohim*, who has heard of Him? At most, He would be but one of those lesser, desert deities. Where is His temple? His city? His land?"

Yet, confidently and clearly, Moses makes the claim. Humanity is not the result of a chance contest among the gods. Human beings are the special creation of the

one true God. We are made in the very image of this true God—the God who has also *chosen Israel*. Chosen Israel for what? We will get to this in later sessions, but here's a one-sentence summary: God chose Israel to be the nation through whom He would send the world's Messiah, the world's Savior from sin.

B. To Our Own Contemporaries

Has this peculiar perspective of Genesis 1 lost its punch for us? Perhaps we should examine the claims of our contemporaries. Have they come up with better answers than the people of Moses' day?

Display visual 2G from the CD-ROM here.

In our time an excellent representative and articulate spokesman for an alternative answer is the British philosopher Bertrand Russell. This well-known thinker wanted to express his conclusions about the human situation. And he wanted to do it in a way that would get his point across.

After inviting several photojournalists to join him on an excursion boat into the North Sea, Russell waited for the right moment. When the craft crossed the path of a small iceberg, Russell signaled the captain. The crew, previously informed of the philosopher's intent, carefully lowered him onto the little island of ice. From his precarious perch atop the ice, Russell called for the shipboard photographers to snap shots of his position.

Several weeks later, the British, European, and American press prominently featured the philosopher. He had communicated! He had captured the world's attention! More than this, Russell supplied a commentary on the photo, suggesting that it was a parable on his conclusions concerning humanity.

In a word, our condition on planet earth is that of a man on a melting iceberg. With time, Russell added, our sun will grow dim and finally burn out. So the human race will sink into the coldness and darkness of the universe as surely as a lone man will slip from safety into the vastness of the sea. Life is a meaningless journey into nothingness!

It was quite a sermon. Many people believed it. Many people still believe the message and live by it!

Genesis 1 paints precisely the opposite picture of our position in the universe. God arranged all of creation for humanity's welfare and pleasure. He created the universe as a home for His human children! Verse 14: "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." Only human creatures count and mark seasons, days, and years! Verse 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.' " "Yours"? Ours! Fruit trees bear fruit for us! Wheat fields sway in the summer sun for us!

Far from being caught in the meaningless mess of a hostile universe, Genesis 1 positions man and woman at the center of the Creator's good work.

3 The Answer Close Up

The wide-angle view of creation in chapter 1 is followed by the close-up view of the sixth day in chapter 2. Some have imagined an alternative or even contradictory account of creation here. But in reality Moses, inspired by God, simply zeros in to portray a snapshot view that conveys more detail. He doesn't want us to miss the point. Humans are unique in all creation. God's creative plan centers on *us*!

A. Formed by God

The importance of man and woman in God's creative plan could hardly be clearer. Here we see the care with which man is formed in the image of God. Verse 7 of chapter 2: "The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." The verb for "form" suggests the work of a potter carefully molding the clay into its final shape (Isaiah 29:16; 44:2).

God's direct involvement is also accented by the act of breathing (2:7) "into his nostrils the breath of life." God's attention to man's needs continues as He provides a place for man to live—a home (2:8): "Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed." The beauty

of that garden home is difficult to imagine. In verses 9–16, we get a glimpse of the balanced arrangement of its rivers, the splendor of its plants, and the remarkable resources of its setting.

B. Created as Man and Woman

The second chapter of Genesis closes with the creation of woman. The details of this account may be familiar to us, but there is a continuing charm about how God brought man and woman together.

Verse 18, which states, “It is not good for the man to be alone,” sets the stage for the creation of woman.

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We should not miss the point that people were meant to be with one another. This chapter contradicts the idea that we can be truly happy only when we are not tied down. Adam, when he was completely alone, may have been able to do what he wanted without having to consider someone else, but he lacked that helper he needed. It was not good!

Some have even suggested that Eve’s creation as Adam’s companion and mate was one more aspect of being created in the image of the triune God. The relationship between these two separate and distinct personalities may well reflect the community of persons within the Godhead itself!

As Adam names the animals (vv. 19–20), the text makes it crystal clear that there was (v. 20) “no suitable helper” for him.

Moses describes God’s presentation of Eve to Adam in Scripture’s first poem (v. 23). “This,” Adam exclaims, is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” These words express great delight. The joy the man and the woman find in one another is immediately linked to the institution of marriage with its primary claim over all other relationships, even those we enjoy with parents (v. 24). The chapter concludes (v. 25) by emphasizing the complete innocence of Adam and Eve.

Adam’s maleness and Eve’s femaleness belong to God’s divine design that they should “become one flesh” (2:24). The fact that they were without clothing *and* without shame is a moving commentary on the good

and happy world that God had created *in* them and *for* them.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest point that our world has missed in Genesis 1 is the original goodness of God’s created universe. In a tragic turn of events—one that Adam and Eve also experienced—human beings today try to exclude God from our use of His good gifts. This omission only twists us into knots.

But before studying that tragic fall in chapter 3, we need to pause and consider. You see, the purity and peace Adam and Eve enjoyed in Eden is not just a long-gone memory, an unrecoverable memory. Christ promises that same peace.

When Jesus directed John the Baptist to His mighty works, there could be no question that *in Jesus* creation was being restored to its pristine purity (Matthew 11:5): “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”

It is a short step from Adam to Jesus, from Eden to Israel. When we take that step we will be struck by the significance of Genesis 1–2 as we live each day in Christ.

Concluding Activities

Invite participants to read along in their Bibles as the lecture leader reads, slowly and reverently, Psalm 8. Or conclude with a prayer, praising God for His majesty and power. Encourage participants to read the article “Paradise: Before and After” in the enrichment magazine. Then make any necessary announcements and distribute study leaflet 3.

Notes