



LIFEgroup Study Guide

October 21 - November 25

LIFEgroup Study Guide

This study guide follows along with LBF's current Sunday message series, and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*
[www.lbf.church/resources]

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big, contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan:*
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Genesis Introduction

Beginnings

We love origin stories because they give us insight into how things became what they eventually became. *Batman Begins* tells us who Bruce Wayne's childhood trauma and nomadic wanderings led him to become a man who would put on a bat suit and fight crime. *Solo: A Star Wars Story* tells us how Han Solo's early adventures led to him being every boy's favorite intergalactic smuggler. The play *Wicked* chronicles the story of how the Wicked Witch of the West came to be the iconic villain that Dorothy encountered in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Origin stories work because we are already interested in the later parts of the story that we know about. We love these characters and they intrigue us, and therefore we want to know how they came into being. And we think that we will better understand the later parts of their story if we understand the beginning.

Perhaps this is why most of us are instinctively interested in questions about the origin of the world and of human beings. After all, we are all deeply interested in who we are today and how the world works today. And we think we will better understand the world—and ourselves—if we understand how everything came into being. This leads us to explore the beginning.

The book of Genesis is about the beginning. In fact, the famous first words of the book are, "In the beginning." The book begins with the creation of the world, traces humanity's creation and Fall into sin, unfolds God's judgment in a worldwide flood, explains the forming of different nations, and then follows the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph as they live out the beginning of the nation of Israel. Genesis is a book that helps us understand our lives today because it explores our origins.

Themes

Genesis is not simply a book full of stories and genealogies, but a book full of foundational themes about God, humanity, and the world. We learn that God is the one and only almighty creator. We learn also that he is a holy judge and that he takes sin seriously. But as he judges sin, he also shows mercy and makes promises of a future and final deliverance.

We learn that human beings are created in the image of God and that we hold a special place in God's affections and in his universe. We learn also that we are a fallen race, having rebelled against God and therefore having brought death and brokenness into the world, into our bodies, and into our relationships. But we learn that God does profound things through weak human beings when they walk by faith in his promises.

We learn that the world is a good creation of God, but that the world was broken through the fall of mankind. The world doesn't currently work the way that it ought to because it too has fallen from its original perfection.

History or Myth

There are constant debates about how Genesis should be read. Is this straightforward history or is this simply a creative mythological way to communicate transcendent truth? This question will not be the main focus of this series. On some of these questions, there is ample room for Christians to disagree. For example, there is room for Christians to disagree on whether the world was created in six literal days, in six extended periods of time, or in some other undisclosed way that is poetically presented in Genesis 1. On the other hand, it is not up for debate that the one true God created everything out of nothing. Similarly, at Life Bible Fellowship Church, we believe that Adam and Eve were historical persons. They are presented this way throughout Scripture, including in Jesus' genealogy (Luke 3:38). We believe that human beings are not simply the result of a long process of evolution, but that we are specially created in God's image and that we all come from common parents.

As stated above, the focus of this series will not be to delve deeply into questions about the historicity of Genesis. That said, the stories will be presented as historical. But the stories are not disinterested history, but history with a purpose. The stories tell us what God did in the lives of real people, and the stories also give us commentary on how God works in the world, so that we can draw near to him and trust him.

The Approach of this Series

A series through a long book like Genesis (50 chapters) could go on indefinitely. This series, when all is said and done, will last 17 weeks. (although there will be some breaks along the way). Each week will cover an extended section of Genesis, but the sermon—and the lesson—will focus on one passage in that extended section. There will be comments on the section as a whole, but the focus will be on one part of it.

Because of this approach, here are some ways that you can best enter into this series:

1. Each week, read the entire section of Scripture that will be covered on the upcoming Sunday. Sometimes that will be just one chapter, but sometimes it will be several. Here is the breakdown for these first six lessons:
 - October 21: **Genesis 1**
 - October 28: **Genesis 2**
 - November 4: **Genesis 3**
 - November 11: **Genesis 4-5**
 - November 18: **Genesis 6-9**
 - November 25: **Genesis 10-11**
2. After reading the entire section, focus on the selected passage for each week in order to prepare for discussion with your Life Group. Here is the breakdown for these first six lessons:
 - October 21: **Genesis 1:1-5**
 - October 28: **Genesis 2:15-25**
 - November 4: **Genesis 3:1-7**
 - November 11: **Genesis 4:1-16**
 - November 18: **Genesis 6:9-22**
 - November 25: **Genesis 11:1-9**

Enjoy this journey through the book of Genesis and pray for God's work in your heart and in our church as we delve into this important book of the Bible.

GENESIS

In the Beginning

Lesson 1 • October 21 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

The entire created order is the work of the one true God.

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.”

Getting Started

1. If you were beginning to explain God to a young child, what would be some foundational things you would communicate?

2. What are some different theories about how the universe came into existence?

Genesis 1 is about the creation of the universe. It is the creation of something out of nothing. Out of nothing God creates not only the earth, but the heavens (the skies and planets and celestial bodies) as well. And God creates by simply speaking things into existence. And while it is not overt, there is a Trinitarian allusion in the opening verses of Genesis. We have God (the Father) initiating creation (verse 1). We have the Spirit of God hovering over the waters (verse 2). And we have the Word of God bringing about creation (verse 3). When John 1:1 refers to the Son of God as the Word, many scholars believe that this connects to Jesus’ role in creation. This Trinitarian hint is furthered in verse 26 when God says, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.”

Explanation of the Passage

For this lesson, read Genesis 1:1-2:3, but focus in on Genesis 1:1-5, which is copied below.

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

This passage walks through six days of creation. Christians debate whether we are to understand this story as literal (6 24-hour days), semi-literal (6 extended periods of time), poetic (a artistic way of saying that God created all things), or mythical (not historical, but simply to make a teaching point about the world). There can be disagreement among

Christians, but some things should be agreed upon. This passage definitely depicts one God creating everything out of nothing.

The six days follow a pattern of (1) separating and (2) filling. Days 1-3 are about separating. In day 1 God separates the light from the darkness. In day 2 God separates the waters below from the waters above (perhaps the clouds or a water canopy). In day 3 God separates the waters so that dry ground appears. Days 4-6 are about filling. In day 4 God fills the skies with the sun and the moon and the stars. In day 5 God fills the waters with fish and other sea animals. In day 6 God fills the dry land with animals and—eventually—human beings.

When God creates human beings, he does something new. He not only specifies that he is creating them in his image (or, as previously mentioned, in “our” image), but he personally breathes life into man. This is the crown of God’s creation, meant to have dominion over the earth and the animals, and meant to multiply and fill the earth.

Finally, after all this creating, God rests. This is not because God is tired, but because God is finished with all of his creating. When he rests, he blesses the seventh day, which is a preview of the Sabbath, which becomes very important for the Jewish nation down the line.

Regardless of your personal beliefs about how literally we are meant to take Genesis 1, the story it tells sets the table for everything that unfolds afterward. It tells us that there is one almighty God who created everything. It tells us that the creation from God is “good.” And it tells us that mankind has a unique place in the world and in God’s heart.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. We don’t get very far into Genesis 1 before God is brought up. Just from what you read in verse 1, what do you learn about God?

5. What significance do you draw from the fact that the first thing that God speaks into existence is light?

6. God repeatedly comments that his creation is good (verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31). What does this tell you about the physical world?

7. In verse 26 God creates mankind in his “image” and “likeness.” What do you think it means to be created in the image of God?

Wrestling with Issues

8. Do you think we as readers are meant to take this description of creation literally? Why or why not?

Taking it to Heart

9. If you embrace the creation story told in Genesis, how does this impact how you approach your daily life?

10. How does it impact how you approach prayer if you believe that God only needs to speak in order to bring something into existence?

GENESIS

In His Image

Lesson 2 • October 28 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Human beings have a unique purpose because they are uniquely created.

Getting Started

1. What are some ways that human beings are different than any other living thing?

2. What do you think of as the purpose for why God placed human beings on the earth?

Explanation of the Passage

For this lesson, read Genesis 2:4-25, but focus in on Genesis 2:15-25, which is copied below.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

¹⁸ The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.

²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

*²³ The man said,
"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."*

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. "

Genesis 2:4 begins with the words, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth." This sets in motion a pattern that allows us to track the progress in the book of Genesis. Throughout Genesis we have similar markers for the family line of Adam (5:1), Noah (6:9), Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1), Shem (11:10), Terah

(11:27), Ishmael (25:12), Isaac (25:19), Esau (36:1), and Jacob (37:2). The starting point of Genesis 2:4 seems to be a further explanation of God's creation of mankind and of mankind's first home.

God created first a man, partly for the purpose of caring for this new creation. He breathed life into the man and placed him in a garden called Eden. In the middle of the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. These become important later on. The description of the location of the garden is curious because the author names specific rivers that were known to be real historical places. In other words, Eden seems to be presented as a real historical place, as opposed to a mythical and generic land. While people will always debate the historicity of this story, it is noteworthy that the author places it in the context of real historical locations.

In verse 15 God gives the man a command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This command will be further explored in chapter 3. On the surface, though, it is worth observing that God purposefully gave the man an opportunity to obey or disobey a command.

God then recognizes, for the first time, that there is something in his creation that is not good. It is not good that the man is alone. God then parades the animals before the man, but none of them is a good partner for the man. So God puts the man to sleep, removes his rib, and makes a woman. The woman is both similar to the man, and yet distinct. The man rejoices at the sight of her, immediately breaking into poetry and celebration.

Then the author makes two comments. He comments that this dynamic between a man and a woman is the basis for marriage for all of society in the future. And

then he comments that the man and the woman were naked and unashamed. Sin brings about shame and shame makes us hide from one another. But for this brief period of time the man and the woman had no shame and were completely open to one another.

This passage gives us insight into why God created humanity. He created us for meaningful work, as evidenced by his desire to have someone care for the garden. He created us for meaningful decisions, as evidenced by the fact that he gave mankind the opportunity to obey or disobey when it came to the tree. And God created us for meaningful relationships, as is evidenced by the creation of the woman for the man.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Verse 15 says that God put the man in the garden “to work it and take care of it.” This is an example of work before sin entered into the world. What does this tell you about how work and productivity relate to God's purpose for us?

5. In verses 16-17 God commands the man not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why do you think God gave this command as opposed to removing the tree from the garden or not putting it there in the first place?

6. All throughout Genesis 1, God speaks of the goodness of his creation. In 2:18 he says that it is not good for the man to be alone. What significance do you draw from this sharp contrast?

7. As you read through verses 19-25, what are some things you think this passage tells us about God's intention for us as men and women?

Wrestling with Issues

8. Based on what you read in Genesis 2, what are some reasons in favor of and some reasons against taking this chapter as a historical account as opposed to a myth?

Taking it to Heart

9. When you think of God's lofty and profound purposes for human beings, what are some ways that you can live more fully in light of them?

10. What is one practical way that you could change your approach to either work, relationships, or decision-making that would more fully reflect God's purposes for you?

GENESIS

You Will Surely Die

Lesson 3 • November 4 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Human beings are estranged from God because of our willful rebellion against him.

Getting Started

1. Give some examples of ways that the created world doesn't work as it ought to work.

2. Why do you think it can be so appealing for people—even Christians—to ignore and disobey God's commands?

Explanation of the Passage

For this lesson, read Genesis 3:1-24, but focus in on Genesis 3:1-7, which is copied below.

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You

must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

Genesis 3 is about what is commonly referred to as the Fall. It is the story of how the world went from ideal perfection to brokenness. It begins with a serpent who, although not identified as Satan here, is later referred to as the devil in Revelation 20:2. The serpent tempts the woman by questioning whether or not God has really forbidden her to eat from any tree. She corrects him by saying that it is only one tree that is forbidden. At this point the serpent directly contradicts God and says that not only will she not die if she eats the fruit, but that she will become like God, knowing good and evil.

To give context, we are not directly told why God forbade the man and woman to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One reasonable explanation, though, is that God wanted mankind to live life through union with him. It is not that they would be ignorant of good and evil. It is that they would know good and evil through their union with God and their dependence upon him. If they ate from the tree they would be declaring independence from him and distancing themselves. This also makes sense of the fact that Adam and Eve don't immediately die when they eat. But they do experience a form of death in being cut off from God, the source of life.

The woman follows the advice of the serpent and eats, and then gives some to her husband, who also eats. It is notable that the man is silent and passive this entire time, although he seems to be present through the entire ordeal. As soon as they eat, they realize that they are naked and they become ashamed, hiding themselves behind fig leaves. This is a sharp contrast to Genesis 2:25 when they were naked and unashamed.

The man and woman not only hide from each other, but they hide from God, who calls out to them. When the man admits that he ate the fruit, he then shifts the blame to the woman, who then shifts the blame to the serpent. God pronounces a judgment on all three. The serpent will be despised and will crawl on his belly. The woman will experience pain in childbirth and also strife in her relationship with her man. The judgment on the man is a judgment on all creation, which will now be a frustrating place to work and to live. Now the man will work the ground, but he will not get results that are in keeping with his efforts. With this sin all of creation, and all of humanity, is impacted.

Adam and Eve are then given clothes by God, but banished from the garden so that they don't eat from the tree of life and live forever. It is not completely clear how much of this banishment was punishment (now they are not allowed to live forever) and how much was mercy (it would be painful to live perpetually in a broken world). But in the midst of the curses, God does give a promise. In verse 15 he tells the serpent that his seed will one day be defeated by the seed of the woman ("he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel"). This is the very first hint of a future deliverer. It is a whisper of what Jesus would do many years later. He was wounded by Satan, but he won the final victory through his resurrection. And his resurrection leads all of those who believe in him to final deliverance over the sin and death that entered the world through this event.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. As you read the different statements from the serpent in verses 1 and 4-5, what seems to be his strategy for leading the woman into sin?

5. According to verse 6, the woman chose to eat the fruit because it was (1) good for food, (2) pleasing to the eye, and (3) desirable for gaining wisdom. How do you think these three factors relate to the issues of sin and temptation in general?

6. What significance do you draw from the fact that the serpent chooses to focus his temptation on the woman and that the man appears to be a passive and silent observer?

7. The first result of the sin of the man and woman is that they realize they are naked and they hide themselves. By way of contrast, read Genesis 2:25. What significance do you draw from the connection between sin and shame?

Wrestling with Issues

8. In Genesis 2:17 God said to the man, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” Adam and Eve did not immediately die when they ate. How do you reconcile the statement in Genesis 2 with the story in Genesis 3?

Taking it to Heart

9. Name one way that this passage impacts your perspective toward the created world and other people.

10. In light of getting to see the serpent’s strategy in this passage, how can you best prepare for the temptations you will face?

GENESIS

My Brother's Keeper

Lesson 4 • November 11 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Violence in humanity is driven by an internal battle.

Getting Started

1. What, in your opinion, are the biggest causes of violence in society?

2. Describe what it feels like for you when you feel torn between wanting to do the right thing and also wanting to do the wrong thing.

Explanation of the Passage

For this lesson, read Genesis 4-5, but focus in on Genesis 4:1-16, which is copied below.

"Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man." ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.

³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

⁶ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

¹⁰ The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

¹³ Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me

will kill me.”

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”

Genesis 4 continues a tragic downward spiral. In Genesis 3 we see sin enter the world. In Genesis 4 we see murder enter the world. And it is not just any murder, but it is one brother murdering another.

The story begins with Eve bearing two children, Cain and Abel. Abel, the shepherd, brings a sacrifice to God from some of the firstborn of his flock. Cain, the farmer, brings some of his crops as an offering. Abel’s offering is accepted while Cain’s is not. Scholar’s debate over why one sacrifice was accepted and the other was not, but the reason is probably that Abel brought some of the best of his flock while Cain simply brought something.

Cain responds to God’s rejection with anger, and God confronts him on his anger. God assures him that he will be accepted if he does right, but that sin is crouching at the door and wants to master him. Cain’s job is to rule over his sinful desires. Sadly, Cain does nothing of the sort. He tricks his brother into going with him into a field, and then Cain kills Abel.

In Cain we see a picture of ourselves. We want acceptance—especially from God. And when we don’t get that acceptance it is easy to rage against the perceived injustice and to lash out against those who are successful. While Cain might have blamed his violence on what he considered to be difficult circumstances (God rejecting his sacrifice), God says that the real battle was internal. Cain committed

murder not because of his external circumstance, but because he yielded to sin internally.

When God confronts Cain about his murder—and after a clumsy attempt at denial from Cain—God exposes Cain’s guilt. He punishes Cain by saying that Cain will now restlessly wander the earth. When Cain cries out for mercy because of the harshness of his punishment, God promises to mark him so that anyone who attacks him will suffer a curse. Cain then leaves God’s presence and goes east of Eden.

The rest of Genesis 4 follows Cain’s descendants, which includes farmers, musicians, iron-workers, and a murderer. We continue to see the descent of humanity. But in Genesis 5 we see a more optimistic picture with the genealogy of Seth, who was born to Eve after Cain killed Abel. This genealogy provides the picture of a godlier line of people that culminates in Noah, who will figure prominently into the next section.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Cain’s offering was rejected, and then he responded with anger. What are some other responses that Cain could have had to his offering being rejected?

5. God says to Cain, “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” What does this communicate about the character of God?

10. Share at least one way that you can take a more active role in ruling over the sin that is crouching at the door.

6. God warns Cain in verse 7, “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” What insight does this give into the battle with sin and temptation and violence?

7. When you read about Cain’s actions and then God’s punishment, what do you learn about God’s character?

Wrestling with Issues

8. People debate a number of possibilities about why Cain’s offering was rejected and yet Abel’s offering was accepted. As you read through the passage, what is your best guess as to why this happened?

Taking it to Heart

9. How do the realities of God’s justice and his mercy impact the way that you wage the battle against temptation and sin?

GENESIS

An End to All People

Lesson 5 • November 18 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

God's judgment is always peppered with mercy.

Getting Started

1. Do you instinctively think of God more in terms of judgment or more in terms of showing mercy?

2. How do you think judgment and mercy co-exist?

Explanation of the Passage

For this lesson, read Genesis 6-9, but focus in on Genesis 6:9-22, which is copied below.

⁹ This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

¹⁰ Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted

their ways. ¹³ So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. ¹⁴ So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. ¹⁵ This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. ¹⁶ Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷ I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹ You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

²² Noah did everything just as God commanded him."

Genesis 6-9 is the flood story. It begins with the violence of all mankind and with God regretting that he ever created them. He decides that he will drown the earth with a flood. But before simply letting loose with

his judgment, God looks with favor at a man named Noah. He tells Noah of his intentions, and then he tells Noah to build a giant ark in order to survive the coming flood. Noah is to survive the flood, along with his family, and along with representatives from all the different animals. The world is going to be wiped out, but life will survive because of God's mercy.

Noah obeys God and works away at the ark until God instructs him to enter in and prepare for the rains. When the flood comes—forty days of rain—all life on the earth is drowned, while Noah and his family and the animals survive on the ark for over a year. Noah eventually starts sending out birds to see if they will find any dry land. The first bird, a raven, flies back and forth waiting for dry ground. The second bird, a dove, finds no dry ground and thus returns. A week later Noah sends out the dove again, and this time the dove returns with an olive leaf, demonstrating that the waters are subsiding. A week later he again sends out the dove, and the dove doesn't return because it has found a place to settle.

After Noah and his family leave the ark, Noah offers a sacrifice to God, and God makes a promise that he will never again flood the earth in the same way. In fact he puts a rainbow in the sky in order to demonstrate a symbol of his promise. God then tells Noah's family to repopulate the earth. He also gives commands that involve permission to eat any animal and also commands regarding capital punishment. God, in making a covenant with Noah, demonstrates that he is not just a judge, but that he is also a God of mercy.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Verse 10 says that Noah was a righteous man, which is amazing considering the wickedness in the world at that time. What do you think it takes for a person to live rightly in the midst of a sinful culture?

5. Focus on verses 11-13, which describe God's reasons for flooding the earth. What do God's reasons tell you about God's character?

6. In verse 18 God says that he is establishing a covenant (a promise, or an agreement) with Noah, and then he tells Noah in verses 19-21 to bring animals on the ark. What do these verses tell you about God's big-picture purpose for the flood?

7. Verse 22 simply says that "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." What kinds of challenges do you think came along with Noah's obedience to God?

Wrestling with Issues

8. Genesis 6:8 says that Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord. Verse 10 then says that Noah was a righteous and faithful man. What do you think is the relationship between God's grace and our obedience when it comes to experiencing God's presence in our lives?

Taking it to Heart

9. God is concerned enough about sin to flood the whole world. How does this reality impact your attitude toward the sin in the world and the sin in your own life?

10. God, in the midst of judgment, shows mercy to Noah and his family. How does this reality impact your attitude toward the sin in the world and the sin in your own life?

GENESIS

Confuse Their Language

Lesson 6 • November 25 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

When human beings exalt themselves, God humbles them.

Getting Started

1. In what ways do you think it is an affront to God when people live without any acknowledgement of his existence or importance?

2. Share about a time when God led you in such a way that you grew in humility.

Explanation of the Passage

For this lesson, read Genesis 10-11, but focus in on Genesis 11:1-9, which is copied below.

¹ Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ² As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

³ They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks

and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

⁵ But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶ The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

⁸ So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth."

Genesis 9 closes the flood story with a sad account of strife in the family of Noah. A drunken incident, and some disrespectful actions by Noah's son Ham, leads to a curse for Ham and his descendants, but blessings for Shem and Japheth. This, then, leads into Genesis 10, which describes how the different nations came about. Now that the flood has finished, people scatter across the world and form different nations.

Then, at the end of Genesis 11, we have the genealogy

that traces from Noah's son Shem to Abram (who would later be renamed Abraham). This section bridges the gap between Noah's story and Abram's story.

At the beginning of Genesis 11, though, we have the story of the Tower of Babel. This story begins with the clarification that the whole world had only one language. A number of people bonded together and decided that they should build themselves a city that had a tower "that reaches to the heavens." What would be the purpose of building this impressive tower? To make a name for themselves, so that they wouldn't be scattered over the face of the earth.

Many scholars theorize that the tower would have been something called a ziggurat, which was an ancient tower that served as a way to connect the gods to human beings. While we don't know for sure that this is what the people had in mind, the basic idea seems to be that the people thought they could, by their own efforts, bridge the gap to the transcendent. They could build in such a way that they would become famous, and that the divine would be at their fingertips.

God responds to the intention of these people by, first of all, commenting that if the people all put their mind to one purpose, that there is nothing they cannot accomplish. This may sound like a compliment. In a way, it is. Sadly, though, the focus that these people had chosen was self-aggrandizing instead of God-glorifying. And God is more than capable of humbling people who exalt themselves.

God chooses to confuse their language so that they will not understand one another. As a result, the tower is abandoned and the people scatter all over the earth. The city is then referred to as "Babel" as

a reference to the confusion of the language of the people.

This passage reinforces themes that have already developed in Genesis. The themes are the supremacy of God and the wickedness of mankind. Mankind has now rebelled against God in the garden, descended to the wickedness of murder, filled the earth with enough violence that God brought about a flood, and then used their God-given capacity for unity in order to glorify themselves. All the while God has shown himself supreme in creation, in judgment, in his power over the weather, and in power even over human beings' ability to communicate. This God who is revealed in Genesis is full of judgment and mercy, and he is more than capable of humbling those who exalt themselves.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Focus on verses 3-4. What do you think was the problem with the motives of the people who wanted to build the tower?

5. The motive of the builders seems connected to their desire to demonstrate their own greatness through an accomplishment. What are some ways today that people try to demonstrate their greatness through accomplishments?

10. How can you pursue growing in appropriate humility before God?

6. In verse 6 God says that nothing will be impossible for people if they share a common language. What are some positive and some negative things that can happen when a group of people are completely unified?

7. When you read through the passage as a whole, what do you think was God's main reason for confusing the language of the people?

Wrestling with Issues

8. In this story God seems concerned with humanity's desire to find glory in themselves and not in him. Do you think this makes God petty? Why or why not?

Taking it to Heart

9. What are some ways that you are tempted to bring glory to yourself instead of bringing glory to God?