

# BEGIN WITH GOD

Zero Week

## A study of Genesis 1–12

### GENERAL REVELATION

Imagine a young man running home to tell his dad about something he had found. “I found the most perfect grass you’ve ever seen. There were no weeds, it was all the same color and same height. It made a perfect lane for a long way. At the end of that lane was a circle of grass that’s even shorter. The only imperfection was a hole in the middle. It’s amazing that patch of ground has randomly decided to be uniformly perfect—except for that hole.”

It’s not too hard to imagine what the young man’s father would reply, “That’s a golf course you idiot.”

In keeping with our illustration of the golf course, we realize several things. First, no grass is that perfect. In fact, golf course ground-keepers spend thousands of hours and even more dollars perfecting and cutting that grass. Second, seeing the layout of that cut grass and hole you can assume a purpose. The very shape of the fairway and green tell even non-golfers that this place has a purpose. It’s not laid out randomly, there is thought and intentionality behind everything.

We would consider someone a fool who could not instantly recognize the intelligent mind behind the layout and perfection of a golf course. Even without seeing another soul around, you know that it didn’t just happen. Yet, how much more complicated is our planet and the life it contains—from it’s biomes to the cells of organisms. Realizing that this world didn’t just happen can be observed through what is called “general revelation.” However, to meet its Maker, you need “special revelation.”

If our world was created by a Being, that means that Being exists outside of our creation. If that’s true, then we have no capacity to communicate with such a Being because we are inside creation. This would be infinitely more difficult than a fish trapped in a tank trying to ask its human about the décor. All of this means that the Creator being must communicate with us if we are to know anything about our Creator. The crazy thing is—he did.

### PSALM 19:1–2

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky displays his handiwork. <sup>2</sup> Day after day it speaks out; night after night it reveals his greatness.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The book of *Genesis* touches on the BIG questions of life—where did we come from, why are we here? Unfortunately, for the modern reader, we are often left with more questions than answers.

This area of our study seeks to provide some resources for further study to learn more about the things that we don’t have space to address. As an example, scan the QR code to the right for a shocking documentary on the debate regarding science and intelligent design.



### DISCUSSION

What has been the best thing and most challenging thing from your Summer break?

1. What does the Psalmist say bears witness to God’s attributes? (1-2)

2. What can be seen from...

The heavens? (1)

The sky? (1)

Day? (2)

Night? (2)

3. What’s the difference between what can be known about God through Creation versus through his Word?

4. Has there been a time when you’ve sensed God’s presence or power in nature? Where were you?

God’s Creation, nature, teaches us a lot about him. It helps us experience his power. However, it doesn’t teach us how to spend eternity with him. If you have questions or want to learn about a relationship with God, talk with your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

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### STUDY NOTES

#### “LET MY PEOPLE GO!”

Most people are at least familiar with the story of Moses. Egypt enslaved the nation of Israel. Moses stood before Pharaoh and commanded these famous words, “*Let my people go!*” (Exodus 5:1). Pharaoh didn’t honor the request, but instead made the work harder.

God sent ten plagues on Egypt, and finally Pharaoh relented after his firstborn son lay dead (Exodus 12). After 430 years of captivity, Israel left Egypt a free nation. Pharaoh chased them to the Red Sea. One of Egypt’s greatest gods controlled the water, and Yahweh sliced him in half, delivering Israel yet again. Finally, Moses led Israel to Mt. Sinai and from there to the land of promise—aka, the Promised Land. Because of the false report of scared spies, Israel had to wonder in the wilderness for 40 years before entering.

As we open the book of *Genesis*, this is the timeframe. *Genesis* was written to a newly freed nation sometime between Sinai and the wilderness wanderings. It seems most likely that Moses penned *Genesis* in his meetings with God at Sinai, but we can’t be sure. While understanding the *Who?* and the *When?* is important, understanding the *Why?* is critical.

#### WHY STUDY GENESIS 1–12?

*Genesis* hinges on two primary themes: blessing and cursing. God freed Israel to be his people, his representatives, on the Earth. Through this nation, God would redeem the world. That blessing was fulfilled, but that’s getting ahead of ourselves. For Israel to share the blessings that come only from God, they needed to understand and experience it themselves. This new nation needed to understand Who called them, where they came from, and what they were supposed to be like in order to receive God’s blessing.

Studying *Genesis*, teaches us many things about God. We’ll only name a few. 1) We learn that God is universal. He is the Creator-King of *all* people, not only Israel. 2) God is invisible and immaterial. Life is more than what we see. 3) God is moral. God has unchanging standards. He doesn’t teach how to be a “good person,” he makes a way for people to be righteous. 4) God is beyond nature. God is separate from Creation—he is not a life-force, he does not exist in rocks or trees, and we are not all interconnected in some ambiguous form of spirituality without faith. 5) God loves and wants to be loved. God is personal and wants a relationship with people. This was as mind-blowing in the ancient

world as it is today. 6) God values people. Humans alone are created in God’s image. We will discuss this at length in coming weeks. 7) God grants human rights. All humans have dignity and rights whether they know and follow God or not.

#### HOW DID WE GET HERE?

*Genesis* provides context for the world in which we live. *Genesis* records the beginning of a long story that is being played out through the entirety of human history. The central figure in this drama isn’t any person, it’s God Himself. The story begins with God and ends with God. Although I’m tempted to make my life all about me, when I understand the context of God’s story, I’m given a perspective on this world I’d never achieve on my own.

It’s hard to stand on a mountain peak, gaze at a sky full of stars, or look out over an endless ocean and not realize there’s more to life than what I can see. As the Psalmist writes, “***The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky displays his handiwork. Day after day it speaks out; night after night it reveals his greatness.***” Even when we don’t know God, it’s hard not to marvel at the magnificence of the world he created.

Yet, life isn’t always mountain peaks and long walks on the beach. In fact, people reject God and deny his existence. *Genesis* shows us in graphic detail why this world is both incomprehensibly beautiful and horribly tragic at the same time. If all we read is Genesis 1 & 2, we might say, “This doesn’t represent the world in which I live.” However, after Genesis 3, we understand why sickness, death, and evil reign in this world. Israel needed to know about sin to understand the evil of slavery, but even with the explanation, it’s a bitter pill to swallow.

Although Creation declares the glory of God, *Genesis* helps us understand the world as it is—that people are sinners and *exchange the truth of God for a lie* (Romans 1:25). People dismiss *Genesis*, the Bible, and God because if these things are true, then it will demand something from them. Despite the glory seen in nature, general revelation is insufficient to know God. Therefore, God spoke into Creation through His Word.

This “special revelation” helps us understand whose handiwork it is we see in Creation. It answers the question, “How did we get here?” But more importantly, it shares with us the blessing of God’s Son. Christ came through the nation of Israel to be a blessing to the whole world. He died to redeem humanity from the sin that began in Genesis 3 so that one day we might experience the perfection of Genesis 1 & 2.