

# **The Book of Genesis, Teacher's Guide**

## **Lesson 1: In the Beginning: God Creates**

### **Genesis 1:1-2:3**

#### **Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)**

This opening lesson carries enormous doctrinal weight, because almost everything else in the Bible rests on it. Genesis 1 establishes that God is eternal and self-existent, that He alone is the Creator of all things, that the material world is His purposeful work and genuinely good, and that human beings are not one more animal among many but a special creation made in His own image, male and female, with dignity, responsibility, and accountability. Your aim is to help students hold these truths clearly and confidently, especially the claim that creation is the deliberate work of God and not the product of blind, undirected chance. This is the foundation for everything the rest of Scripture will say about God, sin, redemption, and human worth.

At the same time, be careful not to let the lesson collapse into a single debate. Genesis 1 is not first of all an argument against a particular scientific theory. It is worship. It is the unhurried, majestic announcement that this is God's world and we are His creatures. Keep the emphasis where the text puts it: on the Creator and on humanity made in His image. On the secondary questions that believers sometimes divide over (the precise age of the earth, the length of the creation days), teach the text faithfully and humbly, and do not make a particular view of those details a test of fellowship.

This passage was never meant only to inform the mind. It is meant to reshape the way a person lives. A student who really believes she was made on purpose, by a God who called His work good, will carry herself differently, treat other image-bearers differently, receive her body and her daily work as gifts, and learn to rest. So aim at both targets. Send students home with a firmer grip on the doctrine of creation, and with a heart that is more grateful, more dignified in how it treats people, and more at rest in the God who made them.

#### **Question 1**

##### **Student Question:**

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). What does this verse claim about God's relationship to everything that exists? Why does it matter that the universe had a beginning, and a Maker, rather than always existing on its own?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Begin with the staggering simplicity of the first verse. Genesis does not try to prove God or argue Him into existence. It assumes Him and announces what He did. "In the beginning, God created." The God of the Bible stands outside of time and matter, before the universe existed,

and brings it into being. This is the doctrine of creation out of nothing. The world is not made out of God, as though it were a piece of Him, and it is not eternal alongside Him. It is His handiwork, summoned into existence by His will.

Press on why a beginning matters. If the universe simply always existed on its own, then it needs no explanation outside itself, and there is no Maker to answer to. But Genesis insists the heavens and the earth had a starting point, and a Cause greater than themselves. That single claim reframes everything. It means reality is personal at its root, not impersonal. Behind the atoms and galaxies stands a Someone, not merely a something.

Help students feel the authority this gives God over creation. Because He made all things, He owns all things, and He has the right to define what they are for. The potter has authority over the clay (Isaiah 45:9; Romans 9:20–21). Our lives are not our own invention to define as we please. We are creatures, and the first and most basic fact about us is that we belong to the One who made us.

This is also the ground of all genuine hope. The God who could speak a universe out of nothing is not stumped by the problems in your life. The same power that said “Let there be light” is the power at work in the gospel, where God “who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Creation tells us what kind of God we are trusting.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Creation out of nothing (ex nihilo): the universe is not eternal and is not made of God, but called into being by His word.
- God as eternal and self-existent, dependent on nothing, the uncaused Cause of all things.
- God’s ownership of and authority over all creation, including human life, because He made it.
- The personal nature of ultimate reality: a Creator stands behind the cosmos, not blind matter or chance.
- The link between the God of creation and the God of redemption (2 Corinthians 4:6).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What practical difference does it make whether the universe simply happened or was made on purpose by God?
- If God made and owns all things, what does that mean for the idea that “my life is my own”?
- How does the power God showed in creation give us confidence as we bring Him our problems?

## **Question 2**

**Student Question:**

*Many people quietly carry the feeling that their life is random, that they simply happened. Where do you sense that feeling in yourself? How would living as someone deliberately made by God change the way you face an ordinary Monday?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This is the first of the self-examining questions, and the goal is not guilt but grounding. Many people carry, often without naming it, a quiet sense that they are an accident, a statistical fluke, here for no particular reason. That feeling shapes how they handle disappointment, boredom, and their own worth. Genesis speaks directly to it: you were made, deliberately, by a God who does nothing by accident.

Help students connect the doctrine to the ordinary. The truth that we are created on purpose is not just for moments of crisis. It changes a routine Monday. The believer who knows she was made by God can receive her ordinary day as a gift and an assignment from Him, rather than as a meaningless stretch of hours to survive.

Be gentle here. Some in the room may be carrying real wounds (a sense of being unwanted, unplanned, or overlooked). The answer Genesis gives is not a slogan but a Person. Whatever the circumstances of someone's birth, no human being is outside the deliberate, creating intention of God. That truth can begin to heal a deep place.

Move the conversation toward something concrete. It is one thing to agree that we are made on purpose, and another to live like it tomorrow morning. Encourage students to name an actual situation, a relationship, a task, a worry, and to ask how it would look different if they faced it as someone made and known by God.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Human worth grounded in being made by God, not in performance, productivity, or others' approval.
- The difference between feeling like an accident and living as someone deliberately created.
- God's intention behind each life, even where the human circumstances seemed unplanned.
- Receiving ordinary time as a gift and assignment from God.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where do you most often feel like your life is random or pointless?
- How would tomorrow look different if you faced it as someone deliberately made by God?
- What lie about your worth do you most need to replace with the truth of Genesis 1?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*Again and again the chapter says, “And God said... and it was so.” God creates by speaking. What does the power of God’s word in creation reveal about Him, and how does John 1:1–3 connect that creating Word to Jesus?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Notice the rhythm that drives the whole chapter: “And God said... and it was so.” Ten times God speaks, and reality obeys. There is no struggle, no resistance, no raw material fighting back. God simply speaks, and what was not, is. This tells us His word is not like ours. When God speaks, things happen. His word carries His power.

Draw out what this reveals about God. He is sovereign, effortless in His might, and utterly trustworthy. If His word is strong enough to make galaxies, it is strong enough to keep His promises. The same God who said “Let there be light” later says “Let there be forgiveness” through the gospel, and it is so.

Then turn to John 1:1–3, which deliberately echoes Genesis: “In the beginning was the Word... All things were made through him.” John is telling us that the creating Word of Genesis is a Person, the Son of God, who would later become flesh. The One through whom the world was made is the One who came to redeem it. Creation and redemption come from the same hands. Colossians 1:16 makes the same point: all things were created through Christ and for Him.

Help students stand in awe without losing the personal note. The Word that flung the stars into space is the same Word that calls to them in the gospel and speaks peace to their fear. The voice that made the world wants to be heard in their lives.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The power and authority of God’s word: He speaks and it is so.
- God’s effortless sovereignty over creation, with no rival or resistance.
- The pre-existent Word (John 1:1–3) as the agent of creation, identifying the Creator with Christ.
- The unity of creation and redemption: the same God, the same Word, accomplishes both.
- The trustworthiness of God’s promises, grounded in the power of His word.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it tell you about God that creation required no effort, only His word?
- How does John 1:1–3 deepen your understanding of who Jesus is?
- If God’s word is powerful enough to make worlds, how should that change the way you listen to Scripture?

### **Question 4**

**Student Question:**

*God looks at the sea, the land, the animals, the human body, and calls them “good.” Do you tend to treat the physical world and your daily, bodily life as good gifts from God, or as obstacles to endure? How might seeing creation as good reshape your gratitude this week?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Seven times in the chapter God evaluates His work and pronounces it “good,” and at the end, “very good.” This is one of the most important and most neglected truths in Genesis 1. The physical world is not evil, not a prison, not a mistake. Matter matters to God. Bodies, food, work, marriage, the soil, the sea, all of it came from His hand and earned His delight.

This corrects two common errors. One treats the physical world and the body as low or shameful, something to escape. The other treats the physical world as everything, an idol to be worshiped. Genesis steers between both: creation is good because God made it good, but it is not God. It is a gift, meant to point us back to the Giver.

Help students see how this reshapes gratitude. If the world is good, then a warm meal, a night's sleep, the laughter of a child, and honest work are not distractions from the spiritual life. They are mercies to be received with thanks. Paul says everything created by God is good and is to be received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4).

Bring it home to the body and to daily life, where many believers carry needless shame or weariness. To receive your body, your appetites rightly ordered, and your ordinary days as good gifts is itself an act of faith in the goodness of the Creator.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The goodness of the material creation, against the idea that matter or the body is inherently evil.
- Creation as a good gift that points to the Giver, not an idol to be worshiped in itself.
- Gratitude and thanksgiving as the fitting response to a good creation (1 Timothy 4:4).
- A healthy view of the body and physical life as God's good gift.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- In what ways have you been tempted to see the physical world or your body as bad rather than good?
- What good gift of creation do you most take for granted?
- How could practicing thanksgiving for ordinary things change your week?

### **Question 5**

**Student Question:**

*On the sixth day God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (1:26). What does it mean that human beings are made in the image of God? How does this set humanity apart from the rest of what God made?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Here the chapter reaches its summit. With everything else God simply spoke, but now He deliberates: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Human beings are not just another creature. We are made to resemble God, to reflect Him, to represent Him in the world. The image of God is the crown of creation.

Spend time on what the image means. It includes our capacity to reason, to choose, to love, to create, to know right from wrong, and above all to know God and to be in relationship with Him. It also means we are God’s representatives, placed in the world to rule it under Him, as a king might place his image in a province to show whose it is. We are made to reflect God’s character into His world.

This sets humanity decisively apart. The difference between a human being and an animal is not merely one of degree, a little more intelligence or a bigger brain. It is a difference of kind. Only human beings bear the image of God. This is the bedrock of all human dignity and the answer to every philosophy that reduces people to mere animals or mere machines.

Note carefully that the image of God is not earned and is not lost when we sin. Even after the fall, people are still said to be made in God’s image (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). It is why murder is an assault on God Himself, and why every human being, born and unborn, weak and strong, has worth that no one can take away.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The image of God as the defining truth about humanity: reason, will, moral capacity, relationship with God, and rule under Him.
- Humanity as different in kind, not merely degree, from the animals.
- The image of God as the foundation of human dignity and worth.
- The image of God retained after the fall (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9), grounding the sanctity of every human life.
- Humanity as God’s representative, made to reflect His character into the world.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean, practically, that you are made to reflect and represent God?
- How does the image of God set human beings apart from the rest of creation?
- Why does the image of God make every human life sacred, including the weakest?

### **Question 6**

**Student Question:**

*If every person is made in God's image, then the people around you, even the difficult ones, carry His likeness. Who is someone you find it hard to treat with that kind of dignity? What would change in how you speak to them or about them if you truly saw the image of God in them?*

**Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question turns the doctrine of the image of God outward, toward other people. It is easy to affirm human dignity in the abstract and much harder to honor it in the person who irritates us, opposes us, or has hurt us. Yet Genesis gives no exceptions. The image of God is stamped on the coworker who annoys you, the relative who wounded you, the stranger whose politics you despise.

Help students feel the weight of James 3:9, where it is called inconsistent to bless God and curse people who are made in His likeness. The way we talk to and about others is a direct test of whether we really believe Genesis 1. Contempt for a person is contempt for the God whose image they bear.

Make it concrete. Ask each student to picture an actual face, someone hard to honor, and to consider what would change if they truly saw the image of God in that person. Often it changes our tone before it changes anything else: less mockery, less dismissal, more patience, more respect.

This is not sentimentality, and it does not mean approving of everything people do. It means refusing to treat any human being as worthless or beneath dignity. That refusal is deeply Christlike, for Jesus consistently treated the overlooked and the outcast as image-bearers worth His time and His love.

**Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The dignity of every person as an image-bearer, including enemies and difficult people.
- The inconsistency of praising God while demeaning those made in His likeness (James 3:9).
- Speech as a test of whether we honor the image of God in others.
- Honoring dignity without approving of sin: respect is not the same as endorsement.

**Discussion Prompts**

- Who is someone you find it hard to treat with dignity, and why?
- How does the way we speak about people reveal what we believe about them?
- What is one concrete way you could honor the image of God in a difficult person this week?

**Question 7****Student Question:**

*God made humanity “male and female” (1:27), blessed them, and gave them fruitfulness and work. What does this reveal about God’s intention and design for human beings, and about the goodness of being made man and woman?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Genesis 1:27 states it with care: “male and female he created them.” The two sexes are not a human invention or a cultural accident. They are God’s design, both fully bearing His image, both blessed, both given the task of filling and ruling the earth. Man and woman together display something of God that neither displays alone.

Draw out the goodness and intentionality here. Being made man or woman is not a problem to be solved or a limitation to be escaped. It is part of what God called “very good.” The complementary design of male and female is woven into creation itself, and it is the foundation on which God will build marriage and the family in chapter two.

Note the blessing and the calling that come with it: “Be fruitful and multiply.” God invites humanity to share in His creativity by bringing forth new life and filling the earth. Children, family, and fruitfulness are presented from the very start as good gifts and good work, not afterthoughts.

Keep the tone measured and warm. Some in the room may be wrestling with these matters personally or in their families. The point of the text is not to wound but to anchor: God made us male and female on purpose, He called it good, and our identity as men and women is a gift from the Creator, received rather than self-defined.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Male and female as God’s intentional design, both fully made in His image.
- The goodness of being created man or woman, received as a gift rather than self-defined.
- The complementary design of the sexes as the foundation for marriage and family.
- Fruitfulness and the bringing forth of new life as a God-given blessing and calling.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean that both male and female fully bear the image of God?
- How does our culture tend to view being made male or female, and how does Genesis differ?
- How can we hold this truth with both conviction and compassion toward those who struggle with it?

### **Question 8**

**Student Question:**

*God placed humanity over creation to “subdue it” and “have dominion,” giving them real work and responsibility. How do you usually view your daily work and the things entrusted to you? What is one way you could do your work this week as a steward serving under God, rather than just a task to finish?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

From the beginning, God gives human beings work. Before there is any sin, before the fall, Adam and Eve are told to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. Work is not a curse or a punishment. It is part of being made in the image of a working God, who Himself labored over creation for six days.

Clarify what dominion means and does not mean. It is not permission to exploit or destroy. It is stewardship, the careful rule of a caretaker who answers to the true Owner. We manage the world on God’s behalf, and we will give an account for how we treated what He entrusted to us.

Bring this to the student’s actual work. Most people spend the bulk of their waking lives working, and many secretly believe their job is spiritually meaningless. Genesis says otherwise. Whether the work is changing diapers, fixing engines, teaching children, or running a company, it can be done as service to God and stewardship of His world.

Encourage one concrete shift. Doing work “as for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23) usually does not mean changing jobs. It means changing the why and the how: more diligence, more integrity, more care for the people and things in our charge, all offered up to God.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Work as a good, pre-fall gift, part of bearing the image of a working God.
- Dominion as stewardship and care, not exploitation; accountability to the true Owner.
- The dignity and spiritual meaning of ordinary work.
- Working “as for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23) by changing the why and how, not necessarily the job.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Do you tend to see your daily work as meaningful to God or as merely necessary? Why?
- What does it look like to treat your responsibilities as stewardship under God?
- What is one specific way you could do your work this week as service to the Lord?

### **Question 9**

#### **Student Question:**

*Genesis presents God as the purposeful Creator of all things, and humanity as specially made in His image, not the product of blind, undirected chance. How does this account shape the way a Christian thinks about where the world came from, about human dignity, and about a purely*

*natural explanation that leaves God out? And where Scripture does not spell out every detail (such as the exact age of the earth), how can we hold those secondary questions with humility while standing firmly on what the text clearly teaches?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This is the doctrinal heart of the lesson, so give it room. Genesis presents a clear and confident claim: God is the purposeful Creator of all that exists, and humanity is His special creation, made in His own image, male and female. The world is not the product of blind, undirected chance, and human beings are not merely highly evolved animals who happen to think. We are creatures made on purpose, for a purpose, by a personal God. Help students hold this firmly. It is the foundation of human dignity, moral responsibility, and the entire gospel.

Make plain what is genuinely at stake. A purely naturalistic account, one that explains everything by chance and natural processes with no Creator, cannot finally ground human dignity, objective morality, or meaning. If we are only accidents of matter, then notions like human worth, right and wrong, and purpose hang in the air with nothing to support them. The Christian does not believe that. We affirm, with the whole of Scripture, that God made the heavens and the earth, and that He specially made humanity in His image. On the question of human origins, that the human race is the deliberate creation of God and not the unguided product of nature, the Bible speaks clearly, and we should too.

At the same time, lead the class with humility on the secondary questions, and model the difference between a central truth and a debated detail. Sincere believers who hold equally to the authority of Scripture have understood the length of the creation “days” and the age of the earth in more than one way. Genesis was given to tell us Who made the world and that He made it good and on purpose, not to settle every question of chronology and mechanism. Teach the text faithfully, let students see where Scripture is clear and where it leaves room, and do not allow a particular view of the earth’s age to become a test of fellowship. Keep the weight where God puts it: on the Creator, and on humanity made in His image.

Guard against two opposite mistakes in the room. The first is timidity, quietly conceding that science has disproved creation and that Genesis is only a nice story. It has not, and it is not. The second is turning a secondary detail into a wall that divides brothers and sisters who both bow to the same Creator. Aim students at confident faith in God as Maker, combined with a gracious humility about the things He did not spell out.

Finally, keep returning to worship, which is where the chapter itself lands. The right response to the doctrine of creation is not mainly to win a debate but to fall down before the Maker.

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things” (Revelation 4:11). A student who leaves convinced that this is God’s world, and that she is His creature made in His image, has grasped what Genesis 1 most wants her to know.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God as the purposeful Creator of all things, against a worldview of blind, undirected chance.
- Humanity as the special creation of God, made in His image, not merely an evolved animal (against naturalistic evolution as the account of human origins).
- Human dignity, objective morality, and meaning as grounded in creation by God.
- The clarity of Scripture on human origins, held alongside humility on secondary questions (the age of the earth, the length of the days).
- Refusing to make a particular view of those secondary questions a test of fellowship.
- The authority and trustworthiness of Scripture, including Genesis, as God's reliable word (Hebrews 11:3).
- Worship, not merely debate, as the fitting response to God the Creator (Revelation 4:11).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why can a worldview that leaves God out struggle to ground human dignity and morality?
- Where does Genesis speak clearly about origins, and where does it leave room for humble disagreement?
- How can we be both confident about God as Creator and gracious toward those who differ on secondary details?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Look back across the whole passage, from the first "Let there be light" to God resting on the seventh day. Name one specific way the truth that God made you, and made you on purpose, is reshaping how you will live, work, or treat others this coming week.*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Use this final question to gather the whole lesson into one personal resolve. The chapter moves from light to life to the image of God to rest. Now the student is asked: given all of this, how will I live differently this week?

Resist letting answers stay general. "I'll be more grateful" is a fine start, but press for the specific: grateful for what, toward whom, when? The truth that we are made on purpose is meant to touch a real relationship, a real task, a real worry, a real person who bears God's image.

Point students toward the rest that closes the passage. God finished His work and rested, not from exhaustion but in satisfaction, and He blessed the day. Our lives, too, are meant to have a rhythm of work and rest under God. For Christians, the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, is the day we gather to worship the risen Christ, and our whole week is meant to flow out of that rest in Him.

Close by lifting their eyes to Christ. The God who made you in His image is the same God who, in Jesus, came to remake you. The story that begins “in the beginning, God created” leads all the way to a new creation in Christ. To be formed by this lesson is to walk into the week as a creature gladly belonging to her Maker.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Personal application of the doctrine of creation to specific relationships, work, and worries.
- The rhythm of work and rest grounded in God’s own pattern (Genesis 2:1–3).
- The Lord’s Day as the Christian’s weekly gathering to worship the risen Christ (Acts 20:7).
- Creation pointing forward to the new creation in Christ.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What is one specific way this lesson is changing how you will live this week?
- How might a healthy rhythm of work and rest reflect trust in your Creator?
- How does seeing yourself as God’s creature prepare you to receive His work of new creation in Christ?