Bible Study

Genesis 1 - 11

City Presbyterian Church

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Not much of this material is original or unique since we are striving to present historic Christianity to the 21st Century world. Therefore, we are building on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Please feel free to use this material in discussions with others and even in other Bible studies. Feel free to adapt and modify for your own purposes.

All Scriptures come from the English Standard Version, Crossway. Used by permission.

City Presbyterian Church is a missional community that seeks to worship Christ and serve Oklahoma City. Our goal is to Love God, Love People and Love the City. You can learn more about us at citypresoke.com.

Sources for this study include: sermons by Rev. Tim Keller and Rev. Fred Harrell
The Gospel

At City Pres, the gospel is our greatest treasure – it truly is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, and that continues all throughout our Christian lives. However, in our day and culture, there is confusion as to just what the gospel is. The following article, adapted from an article written by Pastor Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, clearly defines the gospel.

The Third Way of the Gospel

The Gospel means “good news.” It is the basic message that: “God made (Christ), who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). The gospel says that we are so sinful, lost and helpless that only the life and death of the Son of God can save us. But it also says that those who trust in Christ’s work instead of their own efforts are now “holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Colossians 1:22-23).

The gospel tells us that our root sin is not just failing in our obedience to God but relying on our obedience to save us. Therefore, the gospel is a “third way,” neither religion nor irreligion. The religious person may say, “I am doing the right things that God commands”1 and the irreligious person may say, “I decide what is right and wrong for myself.” But both ways reject Jesus as Savior (though they may revere him as Example or Helper). Both ways are strategies of self-salvation – both actually keep control of their own lives. So the gospel keeps us from legalism and moralism on the one hand and from hedonism and relativism on the other.

The Gospel’s Power for Change

The gospel is not just the ABC but the A-Z of the Christian life. The gospel is not just the way to enter the kingdom but is the way to address every problem and is the way to grow at every step. If we believe we can find our own worth and meaning through performance, then we will become either proud or disdainful of others (if we reach our goals), or else discouraged and self-loathing (if we fail our goals). But the gospel creates an entirely new self-image.

The Gospel tells us that we are more wicked and sinful than we ever dared believe but more loved and accepted in Christ than we ever dared to hope – at the same time.

In fact, if the gospel is true, the more you see you sin, the more certain you are that you were saved by sheer grace and the more precious and electrifying that grace is to you. So the gospel gives us enormous power to admit our flaws. Then secondly, the knowledge of our acceptance in Christ makes (for the first time) the law of God a beauty instead of a burden. We come to use it to delight the One who has enriched us so mightily, instead of using it to get his attention or win his favor. The first way makes the moral and sacrificial life a joy; the second way makes it a burden.

Therefore the gospel changes everything. It brings down racial barriers by melting away facial pride or inferiority. It brings down psychological problems by melting away self-inflation or self-hatred. It brings down personal facades, for we are free to admit who we are. It effects the way we do everything… how we motivate people, how we help them work through counseling problems, how we worship, how we take criticism.

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1 “Our core problem, say St. Augustine, is that the human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to lift itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself. The person who reaches toward God and wants to please God gets, so to speak, stretched by this move, and ennobled by the transcendence of its object. But the person who curves in on himself, who wants God’s gifts without God, who wants to satisfy the desires of a divided heart, ends up sagging and contracting like a little wad. He desires are provincial. ‘There is something in humility which, strangely enough, exalts the heart, and something in pride, which debases it.’” – Cornelius Plantinga, Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be, p. 62, (at the end quoting Augustine, The City of God)
How to Do This Bible Study

With those important preliminaries aside, we’re excited that you have decided to join us in exploring some of the foundational truths of the Christian faith. Whether you are investigating Christianity or have been a believer for as long as you can remember, we hope that this study will be fruitful for you. You may come with lots of questions or even with some apprehensiveness. Whatever the case, we earnestly desire this to be a time where you can honestly ask questions and explore the foundations of Christianity.

You may have been in a Bible study before, or you may be joining us for the first time. I want to make a note on our method of study. In each of the texts before us, we will use the simple O-I-A method of study: Observation – Interpretation – Application.

**Observation**
We simply want to know what the text actually says. The answers are sometimes so obvious that you may feel like it’s a trick question, but it’s not. In observing the text, we want to ask, “What does the text say?”

**Interpretation**
This admittedly is the toughest part of studying the Scriptures. Usually, we’ll be comparing Scripture with Scripture. We are interested in how the Scripture speaks to us, not in what we may want it to mean. Here, we are asking, “What does the text mean?”

**Application**
This is where the rubber meets the road. Sometimes in observing the text and understanding its meaning, the application flows naturally. Sometimes, we will need to do some discussing to work it into our lives. Having understood and accurately interpreted the text, we now ask, “So what?” How does this affect my beliefs, my words, my actions, my community?

**Attendance**
If you are working through this study in a group, please commit to coming each week. Not only will you benefit by this commitment, but the other people in your group will by your presence. It can be really discouraging for each week’s study to be only optionally attended. While coming each week is by no means a badge of righteousness for you, it will mean something if you put this as a priority in your week’s schedule and make every effort to be there.
Genesis 1
The Beginning

**Read Genesis 1**
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

**Opening Questions**
What is something you created or made that you are proud of? Tell that story and describe what it is, how you made it and how you feel about it thinking back to it.

Where do you have chaos in your life right now?

**Genesis 1**
Consult a study bible (like the ESV Study Bible for example). Who would most scholars say wrote the book of Genesis?

What was the context of it being written?

What do you think of the Bible’s opening sentence? How does it strike you?

Do you know how old the earth is? Does this question concern you? How can we figure out how old the earth is?

*Creation Community*
Why do you think God created the world?

There are some clues in this chapter about what Christians call The Trinity. Can you find them?

Why might the Trinity matter in the world? How does the Trinity demonstrate community and love?

How does community work in your life? Where do you find true and real community? Where do we see this in our culture?

*Creation Design*
Where have been the most beautiful and amazing places you’ve been? Why do these places capture your heart?

Genesis 1 says that God created everything and called it all good. What are the implications of this observation?
As we read Genesis 1, there seems to be an order to the creation as its explained. How does a design and an order matter for us in our daily lives? What happens when we use something (like a tool) against it’s designer’s intentions?

Can you think of a way that something gets used against its design in your current world, and how that messes things up?

When you see or use something that has been well designed, what does that make you wonder about? Give an example.

Does the design and order of the world point back to an ultimate Designer? A Creator?

*Creation Question*

How have you gone against God’s design for you and your life?

We only read about hints of the Trinity in Genesis 1. Consider John 1. What does John 1 say about Jesus and his role in Genesis 1?

What happened to Jesus at the end of his life?

How was Jesus “uncreated”?

Why was Jesus “uncreated”?

How might this matter for you today?

Genesis is about the new creation when God made all things. What could be new for you today?

How might Jesus enter the chaos in your life and create order?

How might not only the Creator but also the Redeemer enter your life and what would that look like for you today?
Genesis 2
Made for Marriage?

Read Genesis 2
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
Think of and be ready to tell a few stories about weddings you’ve attended or heard about.
What is the last wedding you attended? What is the strangest wedding you attended?
What marriage is in the news right now? How does that affect your view of and thoughts about marriage?

Genesis 2
It’s Not About Marriage

Remember the context of the original writing of this book of the Bible. Why might this chapter not be about marriage per se?

What does this passage say about the dignity and respect due for all people?

What does it mean to be created in the image of God? You may need to look up this term in a study bible.

Who has been created in the image of God? Why might this matter? What implication might be drawn from this?

How does this dignity and respect work in regards to both men and women? What implications might be drawn from this?

When in Genesis 2 does God say something isn’t good? Why does he say that? What isn’t good about it?

There seems to be something about needing each other in this passage. There is a deep friendship of diversity here. What do you make of that?

Think about how there was something bad in paradise. What does paradise look like for you?

What does this chapter say about what cannot be missing from paradise?

Reflect on true and good community in your life. Do you have it? Why or why not? In what ways do you promote true and good community? In what ways do you subvert it?

It Is About Marriage

What does this chapter say about marriage and why does that matter? What is God’s design for marriage?

Where did you get your view about marriage? What is your current view?

Do you know of any healthy marriages among your family and friends?
What do healthy marriages do for people? Are they possible?

How do healthy marriages help people to:

- Grow up
- Stay together
- Improve their financial condition
- Satisfy their sexual identity
- Raise children

Why do you think so many marriages fail?

What do you think a marriage is actually designed to do?

What do you think you have to have to have a healthy marriage?

[You might consider reading Tim Keller’s book *The Meaning of Marriage.*]

*Marriage Is About Jesus*

What does this statement mean: “Your marriage cannot save you”?

Read Ephesians 5:31-32. What is really surprising about these verses?

What does Paul mean when he says he is talking about the church?

Read Revelation 19:6-9. What is happening in this passage? So what is marriage about and why?

Is that how you’ve been taught to think about a relationship with God? What is your normal paradigm or picture of that relationship?

What are the implications of a Bridge-Bridegroom relationship and how is this unexpected and unusual?

Where are places in your life where that way of relating to Jesus would look different?

How would you think different or act different if this were the way the relationship actually was?

What is Jesus was your bottom line? What is he “competing with” for that spot?
Read Genesis 3
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
It shouldn’t be hard to think of things in the world that are not supposed to be that way. Think of some situations or things that fit into small, medium and big examples of the way things aren’t supposed to be.

How do these things make you feel?

Genesis 3

Everything is broken - Satan leads us into bondage, and we go willingly

Things started so well in Genesis 1 and 2. How do you feel about Genesis 3?

Not everyone believes this story as the way evil entered the world. What are other reasons for evil that others propose? What do you believe and why?

Who is this talking serpent? What does he say?

What is cynical about the serpent’s first words? What is the nature of what he says and how does that cast doubt on the situation?

What are you cynical about? What aren’t you cynical about?

What’s the problem with cynicism as a way of life?

What is the serpent actually going after with his second statement? What is his goal here?

Why is it so effective if he can cast doubt on God’s goodness?

Where do you doubt God’s goodness for you and your life?

How does the serpent succeed?

What happens to the world after this?

What do you think about your own heart and your own life?

Does Satan have a very hard job these days? Why or why not?

[You might consider CS Lewis’ interesting novel The Screwtape Letters as an exploration on demons and their work.]
One of the scariest Bible verses is Proverbs 14:6, “There is a way that seems right to man but in the end it leads to death.” Why is this verse so scary and what does it have to do with Genesis 3?

How did believing and following Satan break Adam and Eve’s relationship with God, with each other, and with the world?

How do we see this bearing out all these years later?

*All Things New – We Have a Redeemer, and He Seeks Us*

What did Adam and Eve do after they sinned? And what did God do? Why did he do that?

There is always a cost to a search and rescue mission. Can you think of any famous ones?

How does God provide something basic Adam and Eve need in this passage?

What do you think about the judgment God pronounces here?

What judgment does God pronounce on Satan?

The word there “offspring” is a singular noun. It seems to point ahead to one person. Who might that one person be?

Look around in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul writes that Jesus is the second Adam. Why might that matter?

How does Jesus defeat Satan and fulfill Genesis 3? How will he finalize that someday soon to come?

If we understand these things, how can it help us in faith in God?

How can it help us in dealing with the wrongs of our world?

How can we help to break our cynicism?

[Paul Miller has some excellent thoughts on cynicism in his book *A Praying Life.*]
[Consider picking up the Cornelius Plantiga’s *Not The Way It’s Supposed to Be.*]
Genesis 4
The Way of Nature and the Way of Grace

Read Genesis 4
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
What are ways you have used others to get what you want?
How have you apologized to get out of a jam?
Does worship matter?
When have you doubted God’s goodness?

Genesis 4
Cain’s name means “to get.” What are ways you see him trying “to get” for himself?

How do you try “to get” for yourself?

Does it matter that Cain sacrificed the fruits of his labor?

What does Cain’s sacrifice tell us about the way he sees himself?

What does Cain’s sacrifice tell us about the way he sees God?

Jesus said he looks for those who worship “in spirit and in truth.” Does Cain do that?

Why is Abel’s sacrifice better? (hint: the author of Hebrews has something to say about this)

God tells Cain “sin is crouching at the door” which means Cain’s struggle is gradual. Do people often start out “really bad?”

How does Cain get to the point where he kills his own brother?

Many of us have heard that the world is getting progressively worse. How does the story of Cain and Abel speak against that?

What do you make of Cain’s “apology” to God?

How does God’s pronouncement upon Cain give us insight into the difference between vengeance and justice?

Seth’s name means “appointed.” Can you think of others places in Scripture that show God’s power in history and time?

If you were the original audience (the Children of Israel wandering in the desert to the Promised Land), would Seth mean anything to you?

It seems Seth shows up at a time in which God’s promises were hanging in the balance. How does that speak to your life?
We read that “at that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.” Does the Bible use that phrase elsewhere?

Does calling upon the name of the Lord just mean “God I need you” or is there something deeper?

Do you think this passage can speak to God’s promises in times of real doubt and trouble?

What does this passage tell us about Seth and his family’s worship?

How does this passage point us to Christ?

This text gives us the idea that Abel’s blood cried for justice. What does the blood of Christ provide?
Genesis 6-9
I Trace the Rainbow Through the Rain

Read Genesis 6-9
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
What is something that has happened recently where you realized injustice had just happened to you?
What is some injustice that has been in the news recently? What do you think and feel about it? Does it bother you?

Genesis 6-9
Have you ever gotten out of judgment? How and why?

We Search for Truth. We Seek Justice. The Courts Require It. The Victims Cry Out For It. And God Demands It.

What do you think should happen to evil in the world?

What if evil is just natural? What are the potential problems a “natural” view of evil?

Read Genesis 6:5 – what do you think about this verse?

Why did God judge the word?

What has to happen for something to be fixed that has gone wrong or been broken?

Can you think of a simple example in your life where you had to pay to make things right?

What about bigger issues? How does payment and justice work on those ways?
Type in the section heading above [We search for truth…]. Was justice truly served? Why or why not?

Can God just let things go? Can he just forget about it? Why not?

Does God save good people? Did God save the good people in Genesis 6-9?

When Through Grace Our Trust Is, Justice Smile and Asks No More

Is God happy about the situation of Genesis 6? How do you know?

Why does this matter?

God saw. God cared. God acted. Is that a pattern for God? Is it a pattern for you?

How is correcting injustice a loving thing to do?
God destroyed destruction. How does that make you feel? Do you think he should have done that?

Why are there so many songs about rainbows? (that’s a question Kermit the Frog asks)

What promise does God make in Genesis 9?

The sign of that promise is a rainbow. The word in the original language is “bow.” What sort of bow does that picture?

Are there other signs and symbols in your life? How does those work?

Where do you see yourself in this Genesis 6-9 story?

How do you see faith in Noah’s life?

How was the very vehicle of justice for some also the salvation of Noah?

There are storms in all of our lives. That’s the only time you see a rainbow? Where might this truth help you in your life right now?

God cared enough about the world to bring about justice. Do you care about the world?

God cared enough about people to bring about justice. Do you care about people this way?

God cares about our relationship with him. How does Genesis 6-9 point us to Christ?

What does faith mean today for you?

If that bow was pointed toward God, did it ever get fired? How? Why?

On the cross, we see love and justice kiss. What does this mean?

What does this mean for you today?

Let Us Love And Sing And Wonder
Let us wonder grace and justice Join and point to mercy’s store
When through grace in Christ our trust is Justice smiles and asks no more
He Who washed us with His blood Has secured our way to God
Genesis 11:1-11
Towers, Names and Cities

Read Genesis 11:1-11
Underline, highlight, and/or circle anything that stands out to you or that you might have questions about.

Opening Questions
What is the biggest, tallest building you’ve ever been in?
What is the strangest name of someone you know?

Genesis 11:1-11

Building Towers

What happens in Genesis 11? What are the people doing? Why are they able to do this?

Is there something wrong with building a tower?

Why doesn’t God like this?

This tower wasn’t just social or technological. It was also spiritual. How was that so?

We “build towers” in our lives. What does that mean?

What are the towers you build in your life?

Why do we do this?

Are these towers wrong? Why or why not?

Making Names

We see the concept of the tower and the name come together in 11:4.

What does “making a name” for themselves mean?

How do people make names for themselves?


How do you make a name for yourself?

Are these names wrong? Why or why not?
Rebuilding and Renaming in the City of God

What does God do? Why does he do this?

Why is this another gracious judgment from God?

Does God still do this sort of thing today? Can you think of an example in your life?

What do you think God thinks about cities?

Look at Revelation 21 and read it. What sort of future does God describe?

Why does this matter?

Why are cities good places?

Why are cities broken places?

How can you be a part of the city of God and of your current city?

How does it matter that we don’t build towers and we don’t make names, but yet we still actively engage in the city in building and naming?

What does it mean that God gives you the name “Christian”? How does that make you feel? What does that make you think?

How does that name re-form your identity? How should it?

Where do we see Jesus in this Genesis 11 story?