

## Notes And Helps to Instructors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a group through the treasures of God's word! You may feel overwhelmed or inadequate, but you can do this! The leader notes are designed to help you grow in knowledge and love for Christ and for you to help pass what you have received to your group. Here are some suggestions to help equip you to grow in your teaching and leading ability.

- These lessons could simply be read, and a group would receive something but that is not how they are designed. The notes are designed to grow you as a leader so you might tailor the lesson for the needs of your group. Some groups may not have much of a knowledge base in the bible, so the concepts must be brought down to their level. Other groups may have a large knowledge base and you may challenge them with more information. The key is to know your group. If you begin leading a group in one way and find that it is not connecting, it is alright to modify and bring down or raise up the level of information.
- The more preparation you do the stronger you will be as a leader. Let the study material be a joy for you! Let it feed you as you prepare! The more you are fed the more you have to give to your group.
- There is no set time on how long a lesson may take. Lessons could be slowed down and take several weeks to finish. Perhaps in leading a group, one question captivates the group and leads to a fruitful conversation. If that happens, that is good! You are in no hurry. If you can finish the material in a week, then great! But if it takes several, that is great as well! The important thing is that they receive deeply from the gospel of Jesus.
- Pray about your lesson! Pray as you prepare! Pray as you teach! Remember we do not teach or exercise our gifts in our own strength. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to move in your heart and the heart of the group.

May our merciful Triune God bless your study and your group that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In Christ,

Prison Discipleship Ministry

## Lessons in Life -- Lesson 1 – Where Did You Come From?

**Introduction:** We live in a world that says (1) You came from nothing. (2) When you die, you go back to nothing. If we believe this, then what does the present mean? It means nothing so we live as if nothing matters. We live for wine, women, and song. Yet everyone knows that murder, stealing, lying, and adultery are wrong. How are we to balance the conflict between our conscience and the values of the world? The Bible begins by telling us where we came from.

From a Bible read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3. Read it several times first from whatever translation you have. Then find a modern Bible translation such as The New King James, English Standard Version, or New American Standard. Read it several more times and answer these questions:

How many days does this account cover?

What happened each day?

Make a list of:

“And God said” (or something similar)

“And it was so” (or something similar)

What does this tell us about God? His Word?

How many times does the passage use the word “good” (or something similar)?

What does this tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about man (generic – men and women)?

How has the view “you came from nothing . . .” influenced your life?

The Bible says that God is near to the humble (Isaiah 57:15). To be humble means that you are honest about your sin. What sins should you confess to God based on this study? After confessing your sin, read 1 John 1:9 and ask God to help you believe His promise.

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How many days does this account cover?

This account covers seven days.

What happened each day?

Day 1: God created the heavens and the earth. He created the lights in the sky. God called the brighter light day and the lesser light night (1:1-5).

Day 2: God made the expanse above the waters and called the expanse heaven; what we call the sky (1:6-8).

Day 3: God gathered the waters and allowed dry land to appear. On that land he populated it with vegetation of all kinds (1:9-13)

Day 4: God created the stars in the sky (1:14-19)

Day 5: God created the swarming animals of the water, sky, and land (1:20-23)

Day 6: God created land animals and then created man (1:24-31)

Day 7: God beheld all his work and rested (2:1-3)

Make a list of:

“And God said” (or something similar)

In the ESV it says it at least 11 times. Whether they get the exact number is not important. What is important is that they see that God created by his speaking. Words and their meaning are important to God. God’s word is true and what God says happens. When men change the meaning of God’s words, men act like they are gods. For example, our culture says the meaning of gender is fluid. A person born a man can be a woman, a cat, or whatever he chooses. As creatures created by God, we must listen to what God says and learn the meaning of words as God speaks them to us.

It might be helpful to show them Psalm 29 to magnify the power of God's word:

- 1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters;  
the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.
- 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful;  
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.
- 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;  
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
- 6 He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,  
and Sirion like a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
- 8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;  
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth  
and strips the forests bare,  
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
- 10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;  
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.
- 11 May the LORD give strength to his people!  
May the LORD bless his people with peace!  
(Psa 29:1-11 ESV)

"And it was so" (or something similar)

God says it was so at least 6 times in the ESV. It is not important if they find every example. What is important is that they see that when God speaks the sky, the earth, the animals, whatever it is that God speaks, happens. Sometimes it responds to God's word in an instantaneous creation; sometimes God speaks and the "earth brought forth (1:24). The importing thing is that when God speaks it comes to be.

What does this tell us about God? His Word?

God has all power. Who's in control of all things? God is. He created all things from nothing by the word of His power. And because he is the creator of all, he is the ruler of all creation. We are His creation, His very special creation, and we are called to worship Him, serve Him, love Him, and live for Him.

How many times does the passage use the word “good” (or something similar)?

The ESV has “good” at least 7 times. Most translations will have a similar amount. It is not as important that they get the right number. What is most important is they see just how many times “good” is used to describe God’s creation. This magnifies the point that God did not make a broken creation full of evil, but a good creation full of his bounty and magnifies His goodness.

What does this tell us about God?

What is God like? He is good. His creation is good. There was no sin or evil in it. God did not make a broken creation; He made a good one! Evil is the absence of good; just as cold is the absence of heat. Evil and sin are “improper” to creation. They do not naturally come from creation. We also see the abundance of God’s goodness. He created billions of stars, filled the air, sea, and land with creatures, filled the land with billions of species of plants and filled the world with food for all his creatures. His goodness is on display in creation for all to see and is still seen today because this is our father’s world.

What does this passage tell us about man (generic – men and women)?

It tells us that humanity did not come from a long process of evolution where we advanced over billions of years from creatures of lower complexity into what we are today. We were created as a special creation of God.

We were created in the image of God. What does that mean? The rest of the scriptures help tell us what the image of God is in humanity. Some say that the image of God is a “moral” image, meaning we were to reflect the moral nature of God. Some say the image is relational, meaning we reflect the relational attributes of God (love, communication, imagination, etc.) Those are good and true. We do reflect those things, but that can be fully covered in the “functional” image of God. What we see is God’s declaring and making distinctions in his creation. God is imaging the work of the priests which is what mankind was called to be.

The garden was a garden sanctuary. It was a temple where the spirit of God dwelt. G.K. Beale says helps us when he said, “The same Hebrew verbal form (stem) mithallek...used for God’s ‘walking back and forth’ in the Garden (Gen. 3:8), also describes God’s presence in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14[15]; 2 Sam. 7:6-7).”

He brings further evidence when he says, “...it should not be unexpected to find that Ezekiel 28:13-14, 16, 18 refer to ‘Eden, the garden of God...the holy mountain of God’,

and also alludes to it as containing 'sanctuaries', which elsewhere is a plural way of referring to Israel's tabernacle (Lev. 21:23) and temple (Ezek. 7:24; so also Jer. 51:51). The plural reference to the one temple probably arose because of the multiple sacred spaces or 'sanctuaries' within the temple complex (e.g., courtyard, holy place, holy of holies)... Ezekiel 28 is probably, therefore, the most explicit place anywhere in canonical literature where the Garden of Eden is called a temple."

We read in Gen 2:15 that man was to guard and keep the garden. These are the same verbs to describe the work of the priests in the temple. Beale again says, "Genesis 2:15 says God placed Adam in the Garden 'to cultivate (i.e., work) it and to keep it.' The two Hebrew words for 'cultivate and keep' are usually translated 'serve and guard [or keep]' elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is true that the Hebrew word usually translated 'cultivate' can refer to an agricultural task when used by itself... When, however, these two words... occur together in the Old Testament..., they refer either to Israelites 'serving' God and 'guarding [keeping]' God's word... or to priests who 'keep' the 'service' (or 'charge') of the tabernacle (see Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14)... the writer of Genesis 2 was portraying Adam against the later portrait of Israel's priests, and that he was the archetypical priest who served in and guarded (or 'took care of') God's first temple."

So man was to act as a priest in the garden temple that held the presence of the Lord. He was to make distinctions between what is good and evil, keep the garden free from the defiling of sin, and reflect the moral and relational righteousness of God. Man was to rule as God's vice regent; his priestly king who heard from the voice of God. He was the first prophet, priest, and king.

And moreover, we were created with a command and a blessing: "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' (Gen 1:28 ESV)"

How has the view "you came from nothing . . ." influenced your life?

Listen to them here. There is no right answer here. Let them share their heart.

We often say to our classes that the culture teaches you that you came from nothing and when you die you go to nothing. If you came from nothing and go to nothing, what does the present mean? It means nothing so why not eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. If I am a product of time and chance, if life has no meaning, then why not live for my lusts: wine, women, and song? It is our goal in this question that our students will begin to see how the culture has influenced them in very bad ways.

The Bible says that God is near to the humble (Isaiah 57:15). To be humble means that you are honest about your sin. What sins should you confess to God based on this study? After confessing your sin, read 1 John 1:9 and ask God to help you believe His promise.

This is a question for personal reflection. If they share it out loud let them share and listen well. This is the chance to bring the gospel to their heart.

You might consider a time of silent prayer asking the group to pray silently to God about their answers to these last two questions. Also, you might invite them to speak with you privately about these matters.