



# THE GREATEST LOVE STORY BEGINS WITH LEADERSHIP

Genesis 1:1-2:3

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## ABSTRACT

The exegesis of Genesis 1-2:3 using the Interpretive Journey methodology provides a basis for understanding key leadership principles. Autocratic and Transformational leadership styles are readily identified in this analysis. These principles relate both to the ancient audience that Moses reached to today's leader. Expected leadership principles such as being creative, organized, and direct are identified along with unexpected principles such as delegation and empowerment in this pericope. An analysis of organizational concepts consistent with the rest of the Bible such as light/expanse, darkness/water, and order/separation are reviewed. The foundational creation elements of earth, heavens, life, and time are analyzed. In addition, man is introduced as being the primary follower of the main leader, God. Leadership principles are found throughout the Bible and the beginning of the Greatest Love Story proves that it starts with the creation.

*Keywords:* Genesis 1-2:3, Beginning, Creation, Leadership, Autocratic Leadership, Transformational Leadership

# INTRODUCTION

The Bible, commonly known as the “Greatest Love Story”, begins “without form and void” and concludes with a resting God after finishing creation in all of its splendor as described in Genesis 1:1-2:3. This pericope of scripture works together to show the power of God and the detail of creation that includes man. Emphasis on these key elements of scripture is rightfully placed. However, a study of the scripture also reveals important leadership principles throughout. Using Duvall and Hays (2012) as a guide, the following is an exegesis of the first seven days of creation and the leadership principles modeled by God (the ultimate leader) as both an autocratic and transformative leader.

## EXEGESIS OF THE FIRST SEVEN DAYS

Duvall and Hays (2012) lay out a five-step process called the “Interpretive Journey” for text that takes “the meaning for the ancient audience” and interprets it for today (p. 41). The following is an analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:3 utilizing the “Interpretive Journey” steps organized by Day starting at the Beginning and completing on Day Seven. This pericope of scripture ties together the story of creation to set the stage for the Bible in a succinct manner that speaks both to the ancient world and the world today.

It is believed that Moses as “guided of God” wrote Genesis from ancient documents and oral communications (Halley, 1965, p. 58). Genesis 1:1 to 2:3, called the “creation hymn,” is a “poetic description, in measured majestic movement, of the successive steps of creation” (Halley, 1965, p. 58). God is the central figure and is repeated by name directly in all but seven of the first 34 verses of Genesis (see Tables 1 thru 7). The observed format of each creation day is consistent: God creates, God gives a name to his creation, God organizes the new creation in relation to the rest of creation, God reviews, and then there is evening and morning. This order is repeated and relates well to both the ancient audience and us today. Haley (2000) makes a similar analysis by stating that each day is structured into five basic parts “announcement...command... report... evaluation...and temporal statement” (p. 4). In addition, there is “clearly a poetic dimension to the creational prologue” as displayed in the symmetry of

the first six days in relation to each other: one to four, two to five, and three to six (Fee & Stewart, 2002, p. 27).

The “Interpretive Journey” Step 4 requires that a principle be confirmed in other parts of the Bible (Duval & Hays, 2012, p. 45). The creation story fits in well with the rest of the Bible and is consistent with God being the creator of all things as “it was declared first by the Lord” (Hebrews 2:3). And then in Mark 10:6: “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’”

A tabular analysis (Tables 1 thru 7) of each day highlights a few of the overarching and repeated characteristics identified in this pericope of scripture: time (when), who, action, light/darkness/life, expanses/waters, and separation/order. And within the creation narrative of each day critical biblical themes are revealed: evening/morning, God/man, hierarchy/order of life, and work/rest. God in the role of leader is analyzed at the end of this section into a listing of leadership principles gleaned from the beginning of this love story set in the ancient world.

## Beginning and Day 1 (Genesis 1:1-5)

Genesis 1:1-5 starts with the Beginning and Day One (Table 1). God, as the Author and Creator, is the primary character of the entirety of the creation story. When does the Beginning begin? Verse 1 simply states “in the Beginning” and then introduces the central figure “God.” The primary thing that God does here is create and makes things new. In the ancient Hebrew world, the phrase “heavens and earth” means everything (Skillen, 2011, p. 117).

The gospel message found throughout both the Old and New Testament is found within the wording and analysis of verses 2 and 3 “the earth was with without form and void...and God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light...” Verse 3 introduces light. “Light is one of God’s outstanding attributes” (Bruce, 2007, p. 18). The contrast of light in verse 3 with the void in verse 2 is striking. God is the light that fills the void (our void) which is the “core of the gospel proclaimed in this text” (Peery, 2011, p. 392). Therefore, the first three verses of the Bible contain God, the creation and the salvation (renewal) message all in one.

In Genesis 1:4, God took time to evaluate His work and called the light “good.” In addition, he defined separation, contrast, and order to his creation (i.e. light contrasted/separated with darkness). Names carried significant importance in the ancient world as they helped to define their characteristics (Reinhartz, 1998, p. 189). God, heavens, earth, darkness, the deep, waters, light, day, night, expanse, evening and morning provide definition to what they are. Genesis 1:5 states “God called the light Day, and the darkness Night.”

The passage of time as marked by individual days is consistent for both the ancient audience and today. Genesis 1:6 describes two events by name making a complete Day: “evening and morning.” This pattern repeats itself again in Genesis 1:8 (Day Two), 1:13 (Day Three), 1:19 (Day 4), 1:23 (Day 5), and 1:31 (Day 6).

Table 1

*Beginning and Day One Analysis (Genesis 1:1-5)*

Verse	When	Who	Action	Light/ Expanses	Darkness/ Waters	Separation/ Order
1:1	Begin	God	Created	Heavens and Earth		
1:2a		Earth			Void, Darkness - Face of the Deep	
1:2b		Spirit of God	Hovering		Over the Face of the Waters	
1:3		God	Let There Be	Light		
1:4a		God	Saw	Light		Good
1:4b		God	Separated	Light	Darkness	Separated
1:5a		God	Called	Light - Day	Darkness-Night	
1:5b	First Day					Evening and Morning

## Day Two (Genesis 1:6-8)

Genesis 1:6-8 marks the beginning of Day 2 (Table 2). Verse 6 describes the creation of the atmosphere as “an expanse in the midst of the waters.” Hebrew does not have a word for gas (Bruce, 2007, p. 19). This language barrier between the ancient world and today is solved by using the word “expanse” or void (Bruce, 2007, p. 19). This “width of river to cross” is relatively narrow as both the ancient world and those today live in the same expanse (Duvall & Hays 2012, p. 42). The theological and leadership principle of separation is reinforced through verse 7 by waters being separated by either being above or below the expanse. The physical order of water below, the expanse, and then water above give a clear visual to both the ancient audience and today. God, as the Creator, ends His activity in verse 8 as He did on Day One in verse 5 by naming His creation, “Heaven.”.

Table 2

### Day Two Analysis (Genesis 1:6-8)

Verse	When	Who	Action	Light/ Expanses	Darkness/ Waters	Separation/ Order
1:6		God	Let There Be	Expanse	Waters	Separate Waters from Waters
1:7		God	Made and Separated	Expanse	Water Above and Water Below	Separation
1:8a		God	Called	Expanse - Heaven		
1:8b	Second Day					Evening and Morning

## Day Three (Genesis 1: 9-13)

God spoke creation into existence (Table 3) as He did for Days One and Two and creation organized itself to prepare for life as “waters gathered together...and dry land appear[ed]” (Genesis 1:9). God named His organized creation and evaluated it by calling it “good” (Genesis 1:10). Then God built on His creation by introducing life in the form of “vegetation and plants yielding seed” (Genesis 1:11-12). The patterns of the previous days are repeated: God created, evaluated His work, and marked time.

Table 3

### *Day Three Analysis (Genesis 1:9-13)*

Verse	When	Who	Action	Light/ Expanses/ Life	Darkness/ Waters/ Life	Separation/ Order
1:9		God	Let There Be and Gathered	Under Heavens, Dry Land Appear	Waters in One Place	
1:10		God	Called, Gathered, Saw	Dry Land - Earth	Waters - Seas	Good
1:11		God	Said	Earth-Sprouted Vegetation Bearing Seed		According to Their Kind
1:12a		Earth	Brought Forth	Vegetation Bearing Seed		According to Their Kind
1:12b		God	Saw			Good
1:13	Third Day					Evening and Morning

## Day Four (Genesis 1: 14-19)

The creative process (Table 4) of the first few days are repeated with detail being added into the “expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night” (Genesis 1:14). In addition, periods of time are marked by “signs” and “seasons” with “days” and “years (Genesis 1:14). These markers and relationships are consistent between the ancient audience and our world today.

Table 4

### *Day Four Analysis (Genesis 1:14-19)*

Verse	When	Who	Action	Light/ Expanses/ Life	Darkness/ Waters/ Life	Separation/ Order
1:14		God	Said and Separate	Lights in the Expanse of Heavens		Day from Night, Seasons, Days, Years
1:15		[God]	Let	Lights in Expanse of Heavens		Give Light Upon the Earth
1:16		God	Made	Greater Light Rule the Day	Lesser Light (Stars)-Rule the Night	Greater and Lesser
1:17		God	Set	[Lights] in the Expanse of Heavens		Give Light to the Earth
1:18a		[God]	Rule	Day	Night	Separate Light from Darkness
1:18b		God	Saw	[Lights]		Good
1:19	Fourth Day					Evening and Morning

## Day Five (Genesis 1:20-23)

God has built His set on the stage and is now ready for living creatures (Table 5). His creation is taking shape and is being built from the lowest priority (earth) to the highest (living creatures). Repetitive patterns of how He creates are repeated as in previous days as He speaks into existence “swarms of living creatures” in the waters and “birds” (Genesis 1:20-22). He then issues His first command to His creation by saying “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:22). The Creator has now begun to delegate and command His creation and with that “He blessed them” (Genesis 1:22).

Table 5

### *Day Five Analysis (Genesis 1:20-23)*

Verse	When	Who	Action	Light/ Expanses/ Life	Darkness/ Waters/ Life	Separation/ Order
1:20		God	Said	Birds Fly Above Earth in the Expanse of Heavens	Waters Swarm with Living Creatures	
1:21a		God	Created	Every Winged Bird	Great Sea Creatures/ Other Creatures	According to Their Kind
1:21b		God	Saw			Good
1:22		God	Blessed	Birds Multiply the Earth	[Creatures] Fruitful, Multiply and Fill the Seas	
1:23	Fifth Day					Evening and Morning



## Day Six (Genesis 1:24-31)

Day Six starts and ends as previous days with more detail of the creation being defined (Table 6). The land creatures are formed and organized “according to their kinds” (Genesis 1:24-25). And then, Day Six expands with the creation of man. The Biblical text describes man as being in the image of God with “dominion” over other life (Genesis 1:26). God’s organization for life is expanding and is now layered.

A chiasm was “employed frequently by the biblical authors” although it is not used very much today (Duvall & Hays, 2012, p. 100). Day Six has a simple chiasm as shown here in Genesis 1:27a:

God created man

in His own image

in the image of God

He created him

This partial verse states that man was created, but place the focus not on the creation, but on God (in the middle). He then repeats his command that He gave to other life by telling man, with His “blessing,” to be “fruitful and multiply with the added command to “subdue it” (Geneses 1:28). When He evaluated His creation that now contains man, He made the distinction to call it “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Table 6

*Day Six Analysis (Genesis 1:24-31)*

Verse	When	Who	Action	Light/ Expanses/ Life	Darkness/ Waters/ Life	Separation/ Order
1:24		God	Said	Earth Bring Forth Living Creatures		According to Their Kind
1:25a		God	Made	Beasts of the Earth and Creatures of the Ground		According to Their Kind
1:25b		God	Saw			Good
1:26		God	Said	Man in Our Image		Man Has Dominion Over Animals
1:27		God	Created	Man In His Own Image (repeated)		Male and Female
1:28		God	Blessed	[Man] - Multiply the Earth, Over Living Things on Earth	Over Fish of the Sea	Subdue It
1:29		God	Given	Every Plant and Tree That Has Seed		[Man] Have for Food
1:30		God	[Given]	Every Beast, Bird, Things That Creep and Have Breath		[Man Have for Food]
1:31a		God	Saw	Everything That Was Made		It was very Good
1:31b	Sixth Day					Evening and Morning

## Day Seven (Genesis 2:1-3)

God had finished His work (Table 7). With His blessing of man complete on Day Six, His creation work was now finished so He rested. God “blessed the Seventh Day and made it holy” (Genesis 2:3). Therefore, God choose to bless living creatures, man, and the Seventh Day (the Day of Rest). Genesis 2:2 and 2:3 repeat the words “God rested.” In the ancient world, these paired sentences emphasized their importance (Duvall, 2012, p. 54).

Table 7

### *Day Seven Analysis (Genesis 2:1-3)*

Verse	When	Who	Action	Light/ Expanses/ Life	Darkness/ Waters/ Life	Separation/ Order
2:1		Heavens / Earth	Finished	All Hosts on Heavens and Earth		
2:2	Seventh Day	God	Rested			From All Work
2:3	Seventh Day	God	Blessed and Made Holy	the Day		Because of All Work in Creation

## Twelve Identified Leadership Principles from the Exegesis

Genesis 1:1-2:3 has many fundamental leadership principles contained within it. Table 8 identifies twelve leadership principles along with its supporting verses from this exegesis.

Table 8

### *Twelve Identified Leadership Principles (Genesis 1:1-2:3)*

Leadership Principle (Organized by First Appearance)	Found in Verses (Genesis)
Leaders Go First and Are Directly Engaged	1:1, 1:2
Leaders Survey Closely Their Work Prior to Starting	1:2

Leaders Speak with Authority	1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:14, 1:20, 1:22, 1:24, 1:26, 1:28, 1:29, 2:3
Leaders are Creative and Innovative	1:3, 1:6, 1:11, 1:14, 1:16, 1:20, 1:24, 1:26, 1:27
Leaders Review and Evaluate Their Work	1:4, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25, 1:31
Leaders Provide Detail, Order and Hierarchy	1:4, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:12, 1:14, 1:15, 1:16, 1:17, 1:18, 1:20, 1:21, 1:22, 1:24, 1:25, 1:26, 1:27, 1:28, 1:29, 1:30, 2:3
Leaders Name Important Items	1:5, 1:8, 1:10, 1:26
Leaders Work Within Boundaries	1:5, 1:8, 1:13, 1:19, 1:23, 1:31, 2:2
Leaders Create/Develop Other Leaders	1:26, 1:27, 1:28
Leaders Delegate Responsibility, Empower and Bless	1:26, 1:27, 1:28, 1:29, 1:30
Leaders Complete Their Work	2:1, 2:2
Leaders Take Time to Rest	2:2, 2:3

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## AUTOCRATIC AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

Contemporary leadership theories include two that relate directly to Genesis 1-2:3: autocratic and transformative. One glaring omission is Servant Leadership which is commonly found in other areas of the Bible through the lives of Joseph, Jonathan and Jesus. This exegesis did not conclusively identify this style; thus, it will be excluded.

Autocratic leaders are “incredibly efficient” and exercise “complete power” over those that they lead (Amanchukwu et al., 2015, p. 10). Autocratic leaders get things done quickly and do not need (or even desire) input from others to do it (Amanchukwu et al., 2015, p. 10). God as the

autocratic leader did not need our input on the creation. He was the dominant and central figure. He modeled the way and set the example of how to get things done (Kouzes & Posner, 2017 p. 14). Lundy (2002) describes this type of leadership as a “high directive style” and “seeing things in black and white” (p. 12). Today, man often falls short when their leadership style is exclusively that of an autocratic leader.

God as the Creator was a transformational leader. He defined the unknown and organized it. Northouse (2016) states:

Transformational leaders are recognized as change agents who are good role models, who can create and articulate a clear vision for an organization, who empower followers... make others want to trust them...and give meaning to organizational life (p. 190).

Transformational leaders provide “meaning and challenge” (Burke, 2011, p. 255). God, as the transformational leader, as evidenced in the creation story, set man, who was His follower and chosen leader of life on earth, up for the challenges he would face.

## DISCUSSION OF GOD’S LEADERSHIP ON DISPLAY

This pericope of scripture starts off with God modeling the traits of an autocratic leader. He alone ascertained the situation as he was “hovering over the face of the waters” and was the sole voice in creating (Genesis 1:2-3). But as the creation story matures, He started to exhibit traits of a transformative leader especially when He decided to create and then delegate authority to man (Genesis 1:26). This shows God’s ability to pivot to match the needs of the situation as the ultimate leader He was. As Engstrom (1976) states “the leadership needs of an organization may vary from time to time” (p. 78). His leadership style displayed a willingness to get close to work at hand, assess the needs, and go first through decisive action. And then he pivots once He created man and chooses to display His ability to create and develop other leaders and empower them.

God alone is the Creator, and, on the surface, this may be viewed as too wide of a gap for us to traverse in our modern world where we think of ourselves as highly engaged in “creating” our digital environments, when we really just organize creation as God allows. “Creation as an act of God belongs to a completely different category” when compared to what we actually do (Aalders, 1991, p. 158). God could not delegate the act of creation to us. Simply, we are not creators. However, He chose to delegate responsibility and “dominion” to man His creation (Genesis 1:26). Similarly, leaders must decide what they can and cannot delegate to their followers and then do it.

Leaders when starting or transforming organizations need to be creative, decisive and detailed when they lead. God had a plan in Genesis 1: create the conditions for life to exist, create life, organize life, and lead it through man. Then in Genesis 2:1-3, He could rest and get ready for what was next. Organizational development for life on earth was laid out precisely. The hierarchy of the creation organization was simple: God over man and man over other creatures of earth, with the plants, waters, expanses, and light providing for the physical sustenance for the creation to live and grow. God as the leader was creative, detailed, provided organizational structure, named all elements in the organization, and empowered it to grow.

Leaders and organizations in our world operate within boundaries. God decided to organize and execute the launch of creation (His organization) through the time measurement of the day. He limited what He did on each day and measured progress to make sure it was “good” before moving on to the next day (Genesis 1:12b-13).

The final leadership principle identified in this analysis is that of rest once work is completed (Genesis 2:1-3). The order is important here: work complete first then rest. God also chose to rest to bless the Seventh Day which was the Day of Rest. Good leaders celebrate organizational success and God was no different. He rewarded himself with rest and gave creation the blessing of the Seventh Day. Well done, God!

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The beginning of the “greatest love story” is a magnificent display of leadership principles. God as the ultimate leader practiced different leadership styles (autocratic and transformative) throughout the creation story. Twelve distinct leadership skills were identified through the exegeses of this scripture passage. It is believed that many more leadership principles can be gleaned by studying the Genesis account of the Beginning combined with the description the Beginning found in John 1:1-3.

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