Session 1: Paradise Lost	
SESSION GOALS	
Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.	
Main Idea	
God, our purposeful Creator, is the center and foundation of all that exists and deserves our worship and praise of him.	
Worship and praise or min.	
Head Change	
To know that God, as the Creator, is the source and power animating all life.	
Heart Change	
To feel wonder at God's creative genius, transcendent power, and eternal plan to redeem the creation he loves.	
Life Change To regularly acknowledge and submit to God,	
worshipping and obeying him more joyfully as we reflect on his majesty.	
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<u>OPEN</u>	
What do you know about your family history? How does knowing something about your	
heritage provide you with a sense of identity?	
It's good to know where we came from. It gives us a sense of belonging, character, and even expectations for who we should be. Our spiritual family gives us the same kind of identity and direction.	
In this series, Dr. Charlie Dates, pastor of Progressive Baptist Church in Chicago, IL, will take us on a journey through the book of Genesis. This "book of beginnings" looks back at the creation	
of the world, the origin of sin, and the beginning of the family now known as the nation of Israel. Session one explores the wonders of God's creative process of making something orderly—yet complex and beautiful—out of absolutely nothing.	
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READ	
Genesis 1:1–31.	
Note : We have made a daily reading guide for the book of Genesis so that you can read this	
whole chapter and understand the context of this book throughout the week. You can find the reading plan at the end of this study in Go	
Deeper Section 4.	

<u>WATCH</u>	
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Charlie Dates's	
teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he	
answers the following questions.	
What does the creation of the world tell us about God's nature?	
Why did God make man and woman in his image?	
Show Session 1: Creation (15 minutes).	
Show session i. creation (15 minutes).	

<u>DISCUSS</u>	
Some verses in the Bible drip with theological truth. Charlie investigated the rich implications of	
just the first four words of Genesis, "In the	
beginning, God"	
Read Genesis 1:1–2.	
Charlie calle Canacia a "Him haalt" it's all alacut	
Charlie calls Genesis a "Him-book"—it's all about God. In the first book of the Bible, God dominates	
every theme, image, person, and subject. In a	
mystery beyond our human capacity to understand, God was already there when "the	
beginning" happened. How do you try to	
explain God's preexistence? In what ways does remembering his eternality encourage your	
faith?	
If "the nature of God is revealed in his act of creation," as Charlie said, what do we learn about God from verse 1 when he says, "Let	
there be light"?	
In what ways is God's creation of matter from	
nothing so different from how we create?	
After describing creation from the original void to	
the complex beauty of nature, Charlie told us, "When your life feels formless and void, when	
darkness is everywhere, remember that the Spirit	
of God has enough power to hover over you and to bring order out of the chaos of your life."	
What does it look like for you to rely on God	
through chaotic, confusing times? How have	
you experienced his constant, unchanging	
presence?	
Read Genesis 1:3–25.	
INCUM DELICOIS 1.5 25.	

The specifics that make our planet habitable and	
hospitable to life—from the distance between the sun and the earth, to the temperature of the sun	
and the angle of the earth's axis, to the galaxies	
far away—reveal both order and intelligence.	
What arguments have you heard about the	
origins of our world? How did Charlie's	
analogy of cake-making (leaving all the	
ingredients on the table and expecting a cake	
to form someday) strike you?	
Contrasting God to what is known as the Big	
Bang theory—which says the universe exploded	
into parts that eventually came together to make what we know today—Charlie noted that God	
was intentional, practical, and purposeful at	
creation. He had a plan and the ability to carry it	
out. When do you feel purposeless? What	
would it look like to trust God's purpose even	
when you can't see it?	
Charlie compared Genesis 1 with creation myths	
from other Near Eastern traditions, which tended	
to show gods born out of water. Genesis, by	
contrast, shows God hovering over the water— more powerful than the creation. Humans	
innately understand the power of water: too	
much of it can drown and too little of it can parch	
us. But God controls it. When you think of God's	
power over creation, how do you react? Do	
you feel more secure, more nervous, or some	
other emotion or combination of emotions?	
Why?	
Charlie said, "God has never spoken and things	
did not change." In what situations have you	
heard God speaking to you, whether through	
Scripture, a friend, a series of events, or other	
circumstances? How did you know God was	

revealing something to you? How did you change?	
Read Genesis 1:26–31.	
God created man and woman in his image as the	
apex of creation—they were his masterpieces.	
What purpose did God give them in verses 27 and 28?	
What does it mean to you that you are	
What does it mean to you that you are formed, fashioned, designed by God to reflect	
him to the world? In what ways do you use	
your gifts and abilities to exercise dominion or authority within your sphere of influence?	
Note : To explore the questions surrounding	
God's creation of the man and the woman in	
Genesis 2, go to Go Deeper Section 1 below.	
The man and woman enjoyed intimacy with one	
another and with God while they lived in Eden.	
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But their idyllic lives fell apart when they sinned.	
As we move through Genesis, we'll see the fallout	
of their sin: relationships are divided, nature	
resists and even betrays our efforts, and creation	
falls into danger and decay. What are some	
examples in your own life experience of the	
effects of sin? (It could be as simple as having	
an allergy or being stung by a bee, or	
something more serious like experiencing a	
natural disaster or relationship breakup.)	
Why do you think God allowed sin to persist?	
Note : To study the impact of the fall, or the first	
sin, in Genesis 3, go to Go Deeper Section 2 below.	

Charlie closed on a hopeful note. Read Genesis 3:21. Here, after explaining the consequences of their sin, God provided the man and woman with clothing—a covering that showed his mercy toward them in the moment as well as a foreshadowing of his future permanent answer to sin. What does God's provision of clothing tell you about his nature? How does his merciful gift to Adam and Eve influence your view of him? In what ways have you seen evidence of God's	
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gift to Adam and Eve influence your view of him?	
In what ways have you seen evidence of God's	
mercy and forgiveness in your own life?	
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After working through Genesis 1, in what ways do you see God in a fresh light? What	
could it look like for you to worship God as Creator this week?	
Note: Because Genesis is long and packed with	
significant events, people, and themes, our discussion will not cover every major concept. In	
our Go Deeper section below, you can study more in-depth several topics related to the	
creation and fall of humanity.	

LAST WORD

God is worthy of our worship every moment of every day. Consider this week what it could look like to worship the God who created you—sing a worship song, create something new, dedicate your work to God, serve your family and friends, spend time in prayer. Worship God for who he is and what he's done.

Charlie also emphasized that God is the central character of Genesis. When God created the first man and woman, he enjoyed being with them in the garden he had prepared for them. But of course, Eden didn't last long. The world has been on a journey ever since, experiencing God's plan to redeem and restore his original design. As we continue through the series, we will stop at key points along God's pathway for humanity.

Note: Session one provided an overview of the first three chapters of Genesis. There's much more to explore, and you can find deeper study and a reading guide in the **Go Deeper** section.

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GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:

- 1. It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.
- 2. These sections can also function as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Genesis.

1. The Creation of Man and Woman

While Genesis 1 celebrates humanity as the culmination of all creation, the biblical author does not include details about our origins. It isn't until Genesis 2 that we learn specifics about how both man and woman were created and what God created them for.

Read Genesis 2:7-8, 15-25.

God created the man from the dirt and put him in a garden full of nourishing, beautiful bushes and trees. He gave the man a job: to work and care for the garden. But the man was alone and, in contrast to the numerous "God saw that it was good" phrases seen in chapter 1, God remarks that the man's aloneness is *not* good.

To remedy the man's aloneness, God made the man an *ezer kenegdo*, often translated, "helper suitable." The Hebrew terms mean "strong rescue" (*ezer*) and "corresponding to" (*kenegdo*).

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With these meanings in mind, how do you	
understand God's intent in providing another human to alleviate man's aloneness? What	
qualities will his associate have?	
Note: Throughout the Old Testament, God is	
described as Israel's "helper" (ezer) who came to	
the rescue of his people in distress. For an extended study of ezer, read the following passages and	
reflect on the situations involved and the	
characteristics of God revealed: Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29; Psalm 20:2; 33:20; 70:5;	
89:19; 115:9–11; 121:1–2; 124:8; 146:5.	
God announced his plan to create the <i>ezer</i>	
kenegdo in verse 18, but before he followed	
through, he paraded the paired-up animals	
before the man in verses 19–20. It's as if he	
wanted the man to understand his aloneness by	
comparing the animals ("they have partners!") to himself ("there's no one like me here"). Have you	
ever spent time in isolation or far from those	
who knew you for an extended time? If so,	
how did that experience affect you? How did	
you feel about reuniting with loved ones?	
you real about realiting with loves ones.	
When God created a woman and brought her to Adam, Adam reacted with wonder and awe: "This	
is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!" He	
recognized a fellow human who was like himself, and he rejoiced. He continued in verse 23, "She	
shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of	
man." The words for man and woman (is and issa)	
reflect the connection between the two humans.	
Men and women together fulfill the calling that	
God put on humans in Genesis 1:28. "Be fruitful	
and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue	
it." Just as we need each other to fill the earth, we need each other to subdue it. In what ways have	
need each other to subdue it. In what ways have	

you been a part of a male-female partnership at work or school or another area of life? How did you see individuals use their gifts to contribute to your joint cause?	
The primary lesson found in Genesis 2 is that we need each other. Humans were made for relationship—husbands and wives, yes, but also team members playing sports, friends on the playground, singles supporting one another, brothers and sisters sharing family for life. Reflect on a partnership or team that has either brought you great joy or perhaps maximized your effectiveness beyond what a solo effort could have accomplished. Then spend time thanking God for providing those people in your life.	
2. The Fall of Adam and Eve The idyllic life of the first man and woman abruptly ended when they decided they wanted something else more than they trusted God, and they disobeyed God's one command. Their rebellion began a cycle of sin and pain that would define the rest of human history, a terminal illness, as it were, that only God could cure.	
Read Genesis 3:1–7.	
The serpent had promised that they would know good and evil if they decided to become like God, and he was right. Verse 7 tells us that "their eyes were opened" and they realized they were naked. They immediately hid from one another, covering their bodies, and from God when he came to the garden. In what ways do we hide when we realize we have behaved badly? In what ways have you experienced shame or	
regret over your actions?	

If you have struggled with shame over sins you either committed or that were committed against you, what has helped you overcome that shame?	
The blame game started early. Read Genesis 3:8–13.	
When questioned by God, the first couple pointed fingers. They essentially said, "It's her fault, God!" and "It's the snake's fault!" In doing so, their unity was turned to enmity. Broken relationships are not just a man/woman phenomenon—every human struggles with conflict, sin, hurt, and fractured relationships during his or her life. We are prone to self-protection rather than mutual love and care. Think of a close relationship in your life that is	
currently on the rocks. What is one action you can take to promote honesty and vulnerability despite past hurts or tensions?	
Read Genesis 3:14–19. Here God revealed to the serpent, man, and woman the consequences for their actions:	
• The serpent (3:14–15): God pronounces its eventual destruction, predicting a human offspring that would battle it and win. Acknowledging the devil's ongoing attempts to destroy people ("you will strike his heel" shows an ability to annoy and disable humans), God promises he will one day be defeated ("he will strike your head" is a fatal blow). It's a hint of hope in a dark situation. Evil will not always win. What situations in our world, or your life, need	
the hope found in Genesis 3:15?	

 Humans (3:16–19): Read Genesis 3:16–19. 	
God described the pain the woman would	
experience in motherhood and marriage.	
He also described the difficulty that faced	
the man in working the ground outside the	
garden. No longer would it be easy to tend	
to the earth, grow food, or sustain nature's	
bounty. Finding and producing food would	
be hard work. In what ways do you see	
God's words in this passage relate to our	
world today? Do you think he was	
pronouncing the way things would be	
due to sin, or how things should be from	
that time on? Why?	
After God explained the consequences of their	
rebellion, the man named his wife Eve. It's the	
first time we see her name, and it is an expression	
of hope. She will bear children to carry on the	
human race, and one day a descendent of theirs	
will defeat the evil that brought suffering into the	
world.	
Read Romans 16:20, Hebrews 2:14, and 1 John	
3:8. The New Testament writers allude back to	
Genesis 3 from a sense of victory and comfort—	
God's plan has always been to save his people	
from the true enemy, sin, and he did so ultimately	
through Jesus. Spend some time reflecting on	
these verses and thanking God for his plan to	
save you.	
3. The Story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)	
The oldest sons of Adam and Eve inherited a	
beautiful but fallen world from their parents. As	
adults they focused on different ways to work	
and fulfill God's purpose for humankind: Cain	
became a farmer, working the land so that it	
produced food, while Abel became a shepherd,	

caring for the flocks that provided meat, wool, and other needed resources for life.	
Read Genesis 4:1–8.	
Both the sons worshipped God by offering sacrifices. Each brought a sacrifice from their own field of labor. But God rejected Cain's offering and accepted Abel's. Why? There are two primary theories:	
1. Cain's offering was from "the fruit of the ground" while Abel brought an animal sacrifice. It is possible that God rejected Cain's offering because it was not an animal sacrifice. However, the word used here for "offering" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament for a grain offering (Lev 2:1) and nothing in Genesis nor anywhere else in the Bible specifies God was looking for an animal sacrifice specifically. 2. Abel brought the "firstborn" of his flock while Cain brought "some of" his produce. We learn later in Scripture that the Israelites were commanded to bring their best—or "firstfruits"— to God as their offering (Exod 23:19; 34:25; Deut 26:1–4).	
The spirit of Cain's gift rather than the substance of the offering seems the most likely reason God did not accept it. Cain and Abel worshipped with different motivations. We, too, offer our lives to God as an offering, but our sacrifices to God look more like time, finances, and the motivation behind our labor. What "sacrifices" do you offer to God? Do you tend to measure your gift in quantity or quality? In what spirit do you offer sacrifices to God?	
Read Hebrews 11:4. How does the author describe Abel and his offering?	

Read Genesis 4:8–9. Having been rejected, Cain became jealous and angry, and he murdered Abel in a field. When God confronted Cain, Cain was defensive, condemning himself with his response: "Am I my brother's guardian?"

Read 1 John 3:11–12. How does this New Testament description of Cain, along with the story in Genesis 4, reveal the condition of his heart?

Cain sinned in his anger and turned on the one God had accepted. But vengeance does not lead to justice; rather, it feeds bitterness and self-righteousness. Think of your own conflict with someone: What could you do to avoid becoming bitter and vengeful toward that person?

Sin did not end with Adam and Eve—it spread and increased across generations. What examples in today's world—your own or even national events—reveal the brokenness that plagues human relationships? What steps can you take to reconcile and heal tensions that are harming your relationships?

4. Weekly Reading Plan

Genesis is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during each of these sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God's Word. Some weeks will have more reading than others, so feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to your group.

Session one covered the first three chapters of Genesis—the story of creation and sin, and the disastrous effects it had on all of creation. The next few chapters, as the days grow more evil, God narrows his focus to a smaller group of people who remain faithful. From them, his plan to redeem all humanity will find fruition.

<u>Day 1</u>: The Creation of Man and Woman (Genesis 1–2)

<u>Day 2</u>: The Fall: Sin Enters the World (Genesis 3)

Day 3: Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)

<u>Day 4</u>: Adam's Family Line (Genesis 5)

<u>Day 5</u>: Evil Dominates the World (Genesis 6:1–8)