

1 The Origin

This is the first talk outline in The God Story Sermon Series. The related chapter of The God Story book is Chapter 1, *The Origin*. The books in the Bible this chapter corresponds with are Genesis, Psalms and Job.

Teaching Outline

Key aims

To explore the beginning of all things, the essence of God (the Trinity), the story of the 'creation week' and the original design for humankind.

The God Story storytelling method

The God Story Storyteller understands that to teach The God Story effectively a dual teaching method is required. This is the art of teaching in a way that both **unfolds the eternal purposes of God through history and also releases them into personal encounter**. Practically this will mean prayerfully considering in each talk outline what parts you want to 'go deeper' in and what parts you want to mention at a headline level. We trust the Spirit will inspire and guide you to find the right cadence as you aim to give a passionate sweep of the unfolding narrative while also narrowing the focus in certain places to emphasise personal application and encounter.

Key Bible passages

You may want to read a short passage of scripture before you begin your talk. The passages below are the ones we believe are most relevant to this particular talk.

We recommend you choose one of these:

[Genesis 1](#)[Genesis 2](#)[Psalm 8](#)

Teaching notes

The notes provided will equip you to understand more of the context and more of the story as you prepare your talk. Generally speaking the talk outline follows the structure of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book. We feel the key sections in the Talk Outline below relate to the main flow of the unfolding scriptural narrative and so we have included key Biblical passages and quotes from The God Story to assist you in this. We recommend using these sections to shape your talk but please choose the parts which you feel are most helpful for your context.

Opportunity for application or reflection

Throughout the teaching notes there are a few places we identify as an 'Application Opportunity' to enable preachers to think about suggested responses or a call to action. At the end of each talk outline we have included the 'Questions for Reflection' section contained at the end of the respective chapter in The God Story book. We hope this may serve as a resource to help preachers think about how they could encourage more application and reflection among their listeners. If your church is also following the associated 'The God Story Small Group Guide' you can instruct listeners that these questions will make up the main part of their small group discussion in the corresponding week.

Continue to the sermon 

Introduction

Talk overview

The first four words of the Bible (“in the beginning God”) introduce us to God - God before all things, self-existent, outside our self-made categories, beyond what we can imagine. The Origin narrative goes on to describe how, out of nothing, God created everything. This is the story of how the Eternal Family - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - existing in perfect love and belonging, birthed history and carried it forward ever since. The story of how all things were created by Love and through Love and for Love. The story which tells how God’s voice is creation’s ultimate source of power, speaking into existence a universal canvas of exuberant beauty, which would be held together in an exquisite sacred order. This story crescendos with the crown of God’s creation, human beings, made in God’s own image, the details and intricacies of which we are still unable to fully understand. Love’s greatest longing had been satisfied. The Eternal Family’s dream had been realised. God is with Adam and Eve. They are with God. Everything is right in the world. This is home.

Talk Outline

Key Teaching Sections

1 ‘In the beginning God’ (Gen 1:1)

explore how these four words at the beginning of The God Story define everything that is!

≡ Key quote

“A. W. Tozer once claimed, ‘what comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.’¹ We agree. Identity. Behaviour. Purpose. Meaning. EVERYTHING flows from what we believe about God. It’s that important. If we miss God we miss everything; if we know God we gain everything. The God Story, before it is anything else, is God’s way of telling us who God is and who we are in light of God.”²

2 God is love, the eternal family

emphasise how an understanding of God as Triune is critical for how we understand The God Story's unfolding plot (even though what we now know as 'The Doctrine of the Trinity' did not come until later in Church History). Main point to emphasise:

- + From the beginning, God has never been alone - the Hebrew word for 'God' in this opening verse is 'Elohim'. 'Elohim' is plural and implies 'divine beings': God is a plurality. God is an Eternal Family of perfect love and belonging.

≡ Key quote

*"As Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God eternally exists as perfect love...The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ascribe ultimate worth to each other without any competition. Their eternal life together consists in the divine joy of expressing the absolute value each has for the other."*³

3 Out of nothing comes everything

emphasise the principle of 'creation ex nihilo' and how God created everything that is out of nothing (see The God Story p.7)

- + The question might be asked, "Why did God create the heavens and the earth?" Creation can only be understood as an overflow of perfect love, a grace-filled intrusion into our world. It is an extraordinary invitation to share in the divine nature; to be caught up in the love of the Eternal Family.

≡ Key quote

*"...all things were created by Love and through Love and for Love. Divine desire has birthed history and has carried it forward ever since."*⁴

4 'Formless and empty' (Gen 1:2)

focus on how God brought (brings) order out of chaos.

- + Explain the phrase, 'tohu wa-bohu' - 'Tohu' means 'unordered' or 'formless'; 'bohu' means 'uninhabited' or 'waste'
- + The role of the Spirit - Focus on how 'the Spirit was hovering' over the 'nothingness' of the earth, brooding over emptiness, ready and waiting to burst forth with goodness.

» Application opportunity

"The Spirit is not hovering over the presentable places of our lives - the social media story we want everyone to see or the most glamorous versions of ourselves we parade before others. Rather he is moving over the tohu wa-bohu parts of our hearts, the broken and disordered parts, the empty and formless parts. Scale this up to unordered parts of our communities and uninhabited places in our nations. Here the Spirit is hovering, longing to create something more beautiful than we could ever imagine. God is drawn to emptiness. And this is good news" ⁵

5 The power of his voice (Gen 1:3-30)

emphasise how everything which came into being did so through 'the Word of the Lord.' God spoke and all sorts of life came into being.

+ *See The God Story p.10 for an Imaginative Reflection on the power of God's voice*

6 The first week of creation (Gen 1:3-30)

summarise the creation week, highlighting how the text reveals two distinct 3-day panels.

- + Day 1-3: God is ordering the unordered; God separates and parts (light and dark, day and night, water and dry land.)
- + Day 4-6: God is inhabiting the uninhabited; God populates and fills what was separated and parted (birds fill the skies, fish swarm the seas, animals populate the land and humans inhabit the earth.)
- + Sabbath: Emphasise how the literature structure is broken to indicate the seventh day is different. "Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy." (Gen 2:3). The prose shifts. The rhythm is broken. Sabbath is supposed to look different. It is supposed to feel different.

≡ Key quote

"God introduced a sacred equilibrium to ensure a harmonious creation. Sabbath is a heavenly metronome to allow us all to keep singing in tune." ⁶

7 The crown of creation (Gen 1:27-28; Gen 2:7)

take time to describe the creation of humankind.

- + *See The God Story, p.13 for an Imaginative Reflection on the Creation of Adam and Eve and the first time Adam opens his eyes.*

- + Emphasise God's delight in the creation of his own image:

≡ Key quote

*"Imagine God delighting in the reflection of himself in his very own image-bearing son, like the wide-eyed wonder of a parent holding their newborn baby for the first time. God is gazing into the wonderstruck eyes of his child through whom his dream for the world, his very own nature, will be multiplied. And it fascinates him. Every person will fascinate him forever."*⁷

- + Further define the image of God by teaching on what the original glory of humankind involved in the garden of Eden.

- **Relationship to God:** humankind was created to live in God's presence and pleasure. We were born to walk with God. (Gen 3:8)

≡ Key quote

*"God did not make robots! He could never force humankind to love him or it wouldn't be perfect love. God's holy love speaks of ultimate freedom. God was not laying down a demand to love him in the creation of humanity, rather he was carrying a hope in his heart, a hope that we would freely return the love he has for us."*⁸

- Explain how life in the garden revolved around two trees.
 - The Tree of Life symbolised God's desire for humankind to find their life in God and live their life with God.
 - The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil symbolised humankind's pride and independence to do what seems right in their own eyes.
- Describe how the Father-heart of God is revealed in Adam and Eve's freedom to enjoy Eden but also to take seriously the one prohibition which is for their own good and flourishing.

≡ Key quote

*"Like any good parent establishes boundaries to enable life to flourish because he/she loves their children and seeks their best, here we witness the perfect Father set loving terms for his relationship with humankind. These guardrails allowed room for exquisite wonder, exhilarating freedom and the protection from harm."*⁹

+ **Relationship to one another** (Gen 2:18): describe the first 'not good' of creation i.e. the sense of Adam's aloneness.

- Teach how aloneness is not part of the original glory. We were created for family, designed for friendship. It is not good for humankind to be alone because God is not alone.
- Highlight how the Eternal Family kept the best gift Adam could ever dream of to last - woman!
- Teach how Adam and Eve's union points to the Eternal Family's desire for an extended family on the earth.

≡ Key quote

*"We are loved by a Father and formed in a family."*¹⁰

+ **Relationship to creation** (Gen 1:28): explain the divine vocation God placed upon humankind. I.e. Adam and Eve were not just called to enjoy Eden but to co-partner with God in creating it.

≡ Key quote

*"The original glory of humankind's vocation involved nothing less than the expanding of the borders of Eden throughout the whole earth, multiplying the blessing of God and extending his loving reign. Adam and Eve, as God's vice-regents and trusted rulers, were delegated authority to work on God's behalf, co-creating in relationship with God for the flourishing of creation."*¹¹

8 Helpful summary of creation narrative

≡ Key quote

“And so as we conclude this opening chapter of which many beautiful and profound themes have been woven together to describe the Origin of all things, let's allow the Spirit to draw us into the holy mystery at the heart of The God Story. The breath of God has birthed time and space. Divine desire will carry history forward from this point. Love's greatest longing has been satisfied. The Eternal Family's dream has been realised. God is with Adam and Eve. They are with God. Everything is right in the world. This is home.”¹²

Opportunity for Application or Reflection

How does it make you feel to know you have been invited into the love of the Eternal Family?
How does understanding the three elements of your original design (relationship with God; relationship with others; stewarding creation) help you understand God's call upon your life?

Three Sacred Themes

The closing page of each chapter in The God Story book includes a summary shaped around three sacred themes which we believe helps knit the overarching storyline together. Feel free to use this as an extra resource to The God Story Sermon Series if you feel this would be helpful to summarise each talk. You will find this for *The Origin* on pg 21.

End of sermon

1 A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*; (New York, Harper and Row, 1961), p.1

2 Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.4-5

3 Greg Boyd, 'A Brief Theology of God's Love', ReKNEW, 2016, <https://reknew.org/2016/08/brief-theology-gods-love> as per Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.6

4 Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.8

5 Ibid, p.8-9

6 Ibid, p.12

7 Ibid, p.14

8 Ibid, p.16

9 Ibid, p.16

10 Ibid, p.18

11 Ibid, p.19

12 Ibid, p.19

*All Bible passages quoted are taken from NIV unless stated.