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FOR STUDENTS**  
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its author; salvation for its end; and  
truth, without any mixture of error,  
for its matter and that all Scripture is  
totally true and trustworthy. To review  
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# FROM THE EDITORS



**ED STETZER**

**General Editor**  
*The Gospel Project*  
President, LifeWay  
Research

“The Story Begins”—sounds epic, doesn’t it? As if you are about to embark on a great journey; as if from this moment forward, things will never be the same. I, for one, hope that is true, because we are not about to dive into a study of some ancient work that is dead but into the living Word of God. This isn’t just any story; this is the story that God Himself has been telling since the beginning of time.

The Gospel Project Chronological is going to take us through the storyline of Scripture in three years. From the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, we will see that God’s Word is not a series of disconnected writings and stories but one grand narrative with a beginning, an eternal end, and a purpose—to reveal Jesus Christ as God’s Son, our Savior and Lord.

In the Old Testament, Jesus is the promised One; in the New Testament, He has come and will come again. All of life and all of history revolve around this One to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11). And to those who are called by His name, this is our mission—our part of the story—to proclaim to the whole world Jesus as Lord, the Savior of all who believe in Him, that they would hear and give glory to the Creator of all.



**TREVIN WAX**

**Managing Editor**  
*The Gospel Project*  
Author of multiple  
books, including *Gospel-Centered Teaching*,  
*Counterfeit Gospels*, and  
*Clear Winter Nights: A  
Young Man’s Journey into  
Truth, Doubt, and What  
Comes After*

For a story to be great, it must include a great beginning. The story of the Bible, which tells the true story of our world, is no exception.

In the Book of Genesis, we see God the Creator in all His majesty and goodness as He spins the world into motion and lavishes His image-bearers with love. We have an “inciting incident” that introduces conflict into this good world, as the first humans raise their fists in defiance toward their loving Father and bring havoc into this peaceful paradise. But even here, we have a promise—God will make things right again. God will cover His people’s sins and crush their adversary. The rest of Genesis shows how even though sin spread throughout the world, God remained faithful to His promise to Eve, His promise to Noah, and His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

The Book of Genesis is a glorious and earthy tale of rebellion and redemption, of sin and salvation, of failings and faith. Here is a book that shows us who we are in our sin and who God is in His grace. May this study lead you to express gratitude for God’s love toward you and then extend His love to everyone who inhabits this world He has promised to restore.

# AUTHORS



**MATT CARTER** and his wife, Jennifer, have three kids and live in Austin, Texas, where he is pastor of preaching and vision at The Austin Stone Community Church. He is the co-author of two Threads studies and is also the co-author of *The Real Win* with Colt McCoy. Matt has an MDiv from Southwestern Seminary and a DMin from Southeastern Seminary.

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# HOW TO USE

## ▶ INTRO

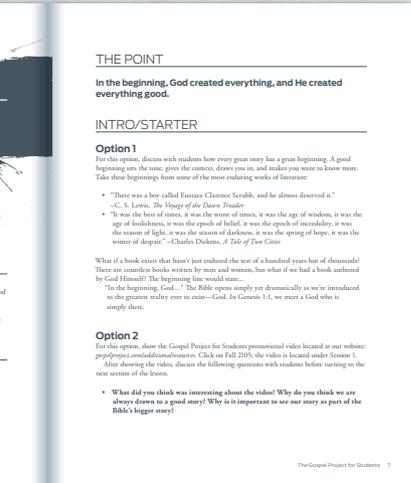
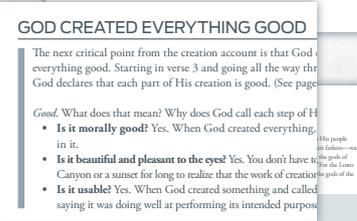
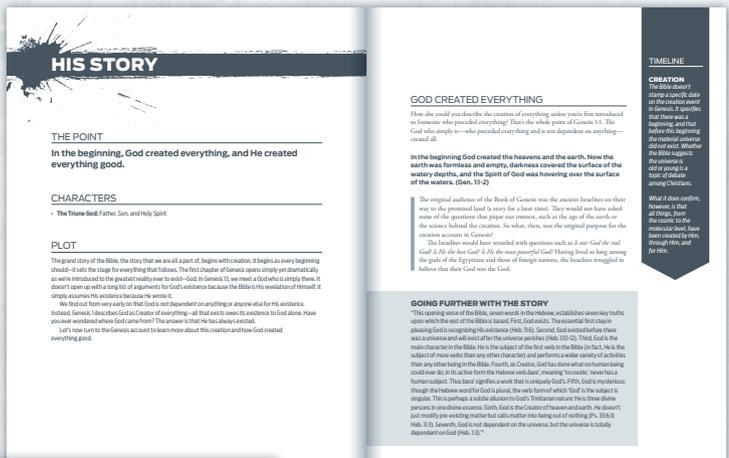
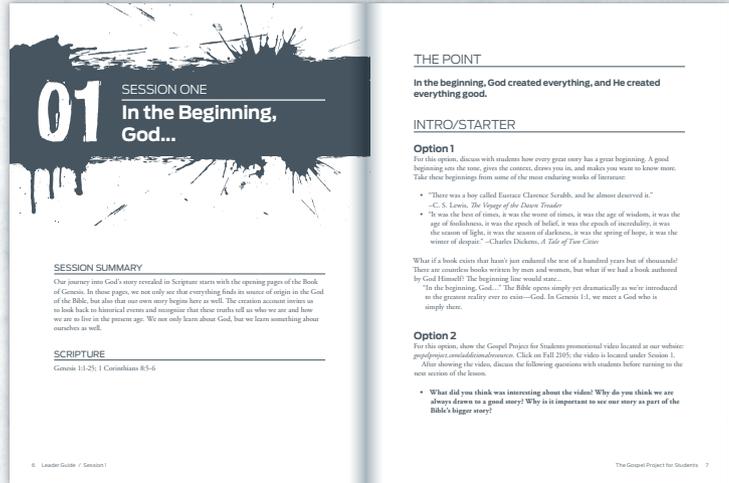
The two introductory pages begin with a summary that provides a brief overview of the session, including a list of Scriptures. The main point is also listed here, as well as two introductory options to choose from to begin the session.

## ▶ HIS STORY

The five His Story pages contain the main teaching material for each session. This section follows the storyline of the Bible, focusing on what God has done in redemptive history throughout the pages of Scripture. The first page restates the main point that is to be emphasized throughout the session and is followed by an overview of the main characters. There is also an introductory plot that serves as a transitional entryway to the main part of the session that begins on the following page.

In addition to these, there are other things to notice throughout the His Story section:

- **Personal Study Guide:** Any time you see a vertical bar in the His Story section, it indicates that the material can also be found in the student's personal study guide.
- **Timeline:** Each session features a timeline of events that corresponds to the timeline located in the student's personal study guide.
- **Going Further With The Story:** Most sessions will include at least one of these. They contain additional material that allows leaders to go deeper into the biblical story. It is up to the leader's discretion whether he or she would like to utilize this material in any way. One can simply bypass this option, however, and not miss anything vital to the session.



# THIS STUDY

- **Essential Doctrines:** Each session will also contain an essential doctrine that directly relates to the Bible study material. The essential doctrine is also located in the student's personal study guide, though in an abbreviated format.
- **Christ Connection:** Each session will end with a direct look at how the content studied connects with Christ, emphasizing to students how all of Scripture is pointing to Him. The material in the Christ Connection will also be provided in the student's personal study guide.

## ▶ YOUR STORY

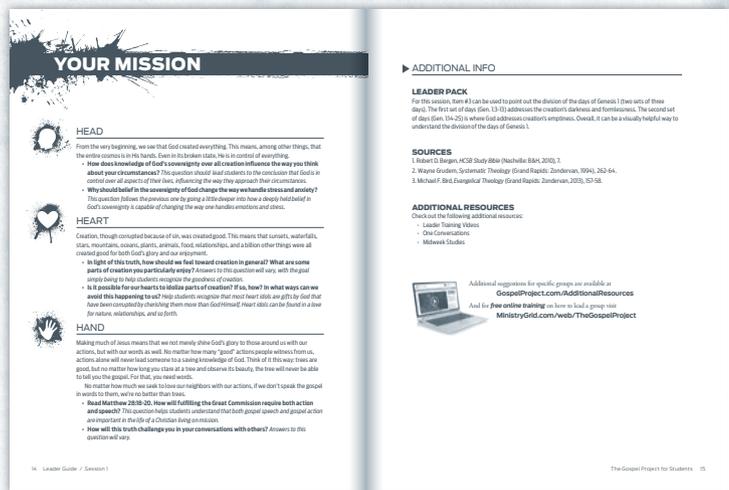
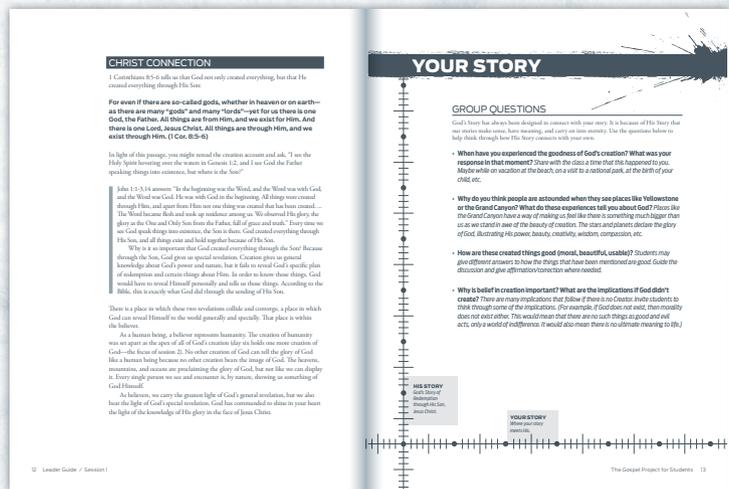
The Your Story section is designed to connect what God has done in the past to students' lives today by introducing group discussion questions that highlight how God's Story connects with their story. There are lead-ins with each question in the Leader Guide to help the leader walk students through each question.

## ▶ YOUR MISSION

The Your Mission section is designed to show how God's Story is capable of creating lasting transformation into how we think, feel, and live from day to day. By doing so, we emphasize to students that every session goes beyond mere Bible study to a calling to be on mission with God.

## ▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

The final page of each session points leaders to additional resources that can be used in conjunction with each study. The resources listed, such as teaching tips videos and One Conversations, are designed to help leaders prepare for each session. There is also information about the leader pack posters that can be used with each session.



# 01

## SESSION ONE

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# In the Beginning, God...

### SESSION SUMMARY

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Our journey into God's story revealed in Scripture starts with the opening pages of the Book of Genesis. In those pages, we not only see that everything finds its source of origin in the God of the Bible, but also that our own story begins here as well. The creation account invites us to look back to historical events and recognize that these truths tell us who we are and how we are to live in the present age. We not only learn about God, but we learn something about ourselves as well.

### SCRIPTURE

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Genesis 1:1-25; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6

# THE POINT

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**In the beginning, God created everything, and He created everything good.**

## INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

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### Option 1

For this option, discuss with students how every great story has a great beginning. A good beginning sets the tone, gives the context, draws you in, and makes you want to know more. Take these beginnings from some of the most enduring works of literature:

- “There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it.”  
–C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*
- “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” –Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

What if a book exists that hasn’t just endured the test of a hundred years but of thousands? There are countless books written by men and women, but what if we had a book authored by God Himself? The beginning line would state...

“In the beginning, God...” The Bible opens simply yet dramatically as we’re introduced to the greatest reality ever to exist—God. In Genesis 1:1, we meet a God who is simply there.

### Option 2

For this option, show the Gospel Project Chronological promotional video located at our website: [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources). Click on Fall 2015; the video is located under Session 1.

After showing the video, discuss the following questions with students before turning to the next section of the lesson.

- **What did you think was interesting about the video? Why do you think we are always drawn to a good story? Why is it important to see our story as part of the Bible’s bigger story?**

# HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

## THE POINT

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**In the beginning, God created everything, and He created everything good.**

## CHARACTERS

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- **The Triune God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

## PLOT

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The grand story of the Bible, the story that we are all a part of, begins with creation. It begins as every beginning should—it sets the stage for everything that follows. The first chapter of Genesis opens simply yet dramatically as we're introduced to the greatest reality ever to exist—God. In Genesis 1:1, we meet a God who is simply there. It doesn't open up with a long list of arguments for God's existence because the Bible is His revelation of Himself. It simply assumes His existence because He wrote it.

We find out from very early on that God is not dependent on anything or anyone else for His existence. Instead, Genesis 1 describes God as Creator of everything—all that exists owes its existence to God alone. Have you ever wondered where God came from? The answer is that He has always existed.

Let's now turn to the Genesis account to learn more about this creation and how God created everything good.

**Remember, every time you see this bar in the leader guide, it indicates the same material is also found in the personal study guide as well.**

## GOD CREATED EVERYTHING

How else could you describe the creation of everything unless you're first introduced to Someone who preceded everything? That's the whole point of Genesis 1:1. The God who simply is—who preceded everything and is not dependent on anything—created all.

**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:1-2)**

The original audience of the Book of Genesis was the ancient Israelites on their way to the promised land (a story for a later time). They would not have asked some of the questions that pique our interest, such as the age of the earth or the science behind the creation. So what, then, was the original purpose for the creation account in Genesis?

The Israelites would have wrestled with questions such as *Is our God the real God? Is He the best God? Is He the most powerful God?* Having lived so long among the gods of the Egyptians and those of foreign nations, the Israelites struggled to believe that their God was the God.

## GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

"This opening verse of the Bible, seven words in the Hebrew, establishes seven key truths upon which the rest of the Bible is based. First, God exists. The essential first step in pleasing God is recognizing His existence (Heb. 11:6). Second, God existed before there was a universe and will exist after the universe perishes (Heb. 1:10-12). Third, God is the main character in the Bible. He is the subject of the first verb in the Bible (in fact, He is the subject of more verbs than any other character) and performs a wider variety of activities than any other being in the Bible. Fourth, as Creator, God has done what no human being could ever do; in its active form the Hebrew verb *bara'*, meaning 'to create,' never has a human subject. Thus *bara'* signifies a work that is uniquely God's. Fifth, God is mysterious; though the Hebrew word for God is plural, the verb form of which 'God' is the subject is singular. This is perhaps a subtle allusion to God's Trinitarian nature: He is three divine persons in one divine essence. Sixth, God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He doesn't just modify pre-existing matter but calls matter into being out of nothing (Ps. 33:6,9; Heb. 11:3). Seventh, God is not dependent on the universe, but the universe is totally dependent on God (Heb. 1:3)."<sup>1</sup>

## TIMELINE

### CREATION

*The Bible doesn't stamp a specific date on the creation event in Genesis. It specifies that there was a beginning, and that before this beginning the material universe did not exist. Whether the Bible suggests the universe is old or young is a topic of debate among Christians.*

*What it does confirm, however, is that all things, from the cosmic to the molecular level, have been created by Him, through Him, and for Him.*

**Remember, these sections are optional and can be skipped if preferred.**

To remedy such wandering hearts, God wrote Genesis 1:1 to help His people understand that the God of their bedtime stories—the God of their fathers—was the very same God who created the world. The God of Israel, not the gods of the Canaanites or the Philistines, was the Creator of everything. “For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens” (Ps. 96:4-5).

**Don't forget to mention the 99 Essential Doctrines throughout your studies. There is an abbreviated form of each doctrine in the personal study guide.**

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

### Creation out of Nothing

The Bible requires us to believe that God created the universe—everything both visible and invisible—out of nothing (sometimes said, “creation ex nihilo”). This means that before God created anything, nothing else existed except God Himself. Nothing in creation is eternal; every created thing has a beginning. Therefore, the eternal God rules over all of His creation and He alone is worthy of worship. Denial of this doctrine has implications for God’s independence from, sovereignty over, and providence in creation. Because God created out of nothing, creation has meaning and purpose and points us to the Creator.<sup>2</sup>

We are no different than the original audience of the Book of Genesis. Though perhaps not tempted to bow down to wooden statues, our hearts are just as likely to seek satisfaction in other things besides God. We ask questions like: *Is God real? Does He love me? Is He worth it?*

When we have these questions and struggle to believe in the realness and goodness of God, we should recount Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God...” When there was nothing, there was God, and that ought to create a wonder about Him that triumphs over our questions.

This God who owes His existence to no one and is in need of nothing decided to create everything, including you. This truth ought to overwhelm you with a feeling of love to such an extent that you’re able to reject any heart idols coming after you.

**Whenever you see PSG page numbers listed, it indicates that there is a section in the personal study guide for students to interact with.**

## GOD CREATED EVERYTHING GOOD

The next critical point from the creation account is that God created everything good. Starting in verse 3 and going all the way through verse 25, God declares that each part of His creation is good. (See page 11 in the PSG.)

*Good.* What does that mean? Why does God call each step of His creation good?

- **Is it morally good?** Yes. When God created everything, there was no sin in it.
- **Is it beautiful and pleasant to the eyes?** Yes. You don’t have to stare at the Grand Canyon or a sunset for long to realize that the work of creation is beautiful.
- **Is it usable?** Yes. When God created something and called it good, He was saying it was doing well at performing its intended purpose and design.

The purpose and design of creation is to declare God’s glory and proclaim the work of His hands (Ps. 19:1) and to reveal things about God that are invisible to us, such as His eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20). Because of creation, we can clearly see and understand these things.

Think about it this way: if someone we had never met walked into the room, there would be certain things we could know about him even if he just stood silently before us. Without him actually “revealing” himself to us by speaking, we could look at him and make some accurate, general statements about him. Based on appearances, we might say he is approximately 6 feet tall, 180 pounds, strong, has brown hair and brown eyes, athletic, creative, etc. From appearances alone, our observations would be general, but still true.

But for us to really know him—to know his thoughts, character, intentions, and will—he would need to speak to us. He would need to tell us his likes/dislikes, his family background, his life experiences, etc. In other words, he would need to speak.

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

### The Goodness of Creation

In Genesis 1, God repeatedly affirmed that all of His creation was good, even “very good” (1:31). It is good, in God’s judgment, because He created it for a purpose that it fulfilled—to reflect and display the good character of the Creator. Therefore, sin, evil, and rebellion should not be seen as intrinsic to the creation but rather an intrusion into the created realm. While the corruption of sin has marred and distorted the creation, it is still good in the hands of God and serves His purpose of proclaiming His glory in the world. God’s people should affirm and seek to preserve the goodness of God’s creation (2:15).<sup>3</sup>

It is quite stunning that we get to see the God of this universe begin the good work of revealing Himself. He reveals Himself in His creation, allowing humanity to know things about the Creator just by looking at creation—much like an artist leaves fingerprints on a work of art. He could have left us with this general knowledge. He didn’t have to speak or make Himself known, but He did, and He still does. In fact, one of God’s greatest acts of mercy toward the world and mankind is that He spoke.

## GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Ever since these first six days, creation has been fulfilling its purpose such that everyone knows God. In fact, Romans 1 says that there is not a single person who doesn’t know God (v. 21). That’s good news, but there is also bad news.

Romans 1:18 says that even though everyone knows the truth about God, fallen humankind suppresses that truth in unrighteousness. No matter how good the mountains and the heavens are, no matter how plainly they display the truth about God’s glory, humanity will always suppress this knowledge and choose not to glorify God.

## TIMELINE

### BEARING GOD’S IMAGE

*God creates man in His image, to reflect His likeness.*

### FALL

*Sin enters the story and distorts God’s good creation.*

### CAIN AND ABEL

*The depth of humanity’s fall is revealed in the heinous murder between two brothers.*

### NOAH

*Judgment and graciousness are found in the flood.*

### TOWER OF BABEL

*Humanity’s pride is relentless in seeking praise for itself; but God’s glory will never be dethroned.*

## CHRIST CONNECTION

1 Corinthians 8:5-6 tells us that God not only created everything, but that He created everything through His Son:

**For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Cor. 8:5-6)**

In light of this passage, you might reread the creation account and ask, “I see the Holy Spirit hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:2, and I see God the Father speaking things into existence, but where is the Son?”

John 1:1-3,14 answers: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Every time we see God speak things into existence, the Son is there. God created everything through His Son, and all things exist and hold together because of His Son.

Why is it so important that God created everything through the Son? Because through the Son, God gives us special revelation. Creation gives us general knowledge about God’s power and nature, but it fails to reveal God’s specific plan of redemption and certain things about Him. In order to know those things, God would have to reveal Himself personally. According to the Bible, this is exactly what God did through the sending of His Son.

There is a place in which these two revelations collide and converge, a place in which God can reveal Himself to the world generally and specially. That place is within the believer.

As a human being, a believer represents humanity. The creation of humanity was set apart as the apex of all of God’s creation (day six holds one more creation of God—the focus of session 2). No other creation of God can tell the glory of God like a human being because no other creation bears the image of God. The heavens, mountains, and oceans are proclaiming the glory of God, but not like we can display it. Every single person we see and encounter is, by nature, showing us something of God Himself.

As believers, we carry the greatest light of God’s general revelation, but we also bear the light of God’s special revelation. God has commanded to shine in your heart the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

# YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

## GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **When have you experienced the goodness of God's creation? What was your response in that moment?** *Share with the class a time that this happened to you. Maybe while on vacation at the beach, on a visit to a national park, at the birth of your child, etc.*
- **Why do you think people are astounded when they see places like Yellowstone or the Grand Canyon? What do these experiences tell you about God?** *Places like the Grand Canyon have a way of making us feel like there is something much bigger than us as we stand in awe of the beauty of creation. The stars and planets declare the glory of God, illustrating His power, beauty, creativity, wisdom, compassion, etc.*
- **How are these created things good (moral, beautiful, usable)?** *Students may give different answers to how the things that have been mentioned are good. Guide the discussion and give affirmation/correction where needed.*
- **Why is belief in creation important? What are the implications if God didn't create?** *There are many implications that follow if there is no Creator. Invite students to think through some of the implications. (For example, if God does not exist, then morality does not exist either. This would mean that there are no such things as good and evil acts, only a world of indifference. It would also mean there is no ultimate meaning to life.)*

**HIS STORY**  
*God's Story of  
Redemption  
through His Son,  
Jesus Christ.*

**YOUR STORY**  
*Where your story  
meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



## HEAD

---

From the very beginning, we see that God created everything. This means, among other things, that the entire cosmos is in His hands. Even in its broken state, He is in control of everything.

- **How does knowledge of God's sovereignty over all creation influence the way you think about your circumstances?** *This question should lead students to the conclusion that God is in control over all aspects of their lives, influencing the way they approach their circumstances.*
- **Why should belief in the sovereignty of God change the way we handle stress and anxiety?** *This question follows the previous one by going a little further into how a deeply held belief in God's sovereignty is capable of changing the way one handles emotions and stress.*



## HEART

---

Creation, though corrupted because of sin, was created good. This means that sunsets, waterfalls, stars, mountains, oceans, plants, animals, food, relationships, and a billion other things were all created good for both God's glory and our enjoyment.

- **In light of this truth, how should we feel toward creation in general? What are some parts of creation you particularly enjoy?** *Answers to this question will vary, with the goal simply being to help students recognize the goodness of creation.*
- **Is it possible for our hearts to idolize parts of creation? If so, how? In what ways can we avoid this happening to us?** *Help students recognize that most heart idols are gifts from God that we have corrupted by cherishing them more than God Himself. Heart idols can be found in a love for nature, relationships, and so forth.*



## HANDS

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Making much of Jesus means that we not merely shine God's glory to those around us with our actions, but with our words as well. No matter how many "good" actions people witness from us, actions alone will never lead someone to a saving knowledge of God. Think of it this way: trees are good, but no matter how long you stare at a tree and observe its beauty, the tree will never be able to tell you the gospel. For that, you need words.

No matter how much we seek to love our neighbors with our actions, if we don't speak the gospel in words to them, we're no better than trees.

- **Read Matthew 28:18-20. How will fulfilling the Great Commission require both action and speech?** *This question helps students understand that both gospel speech and gospel action are important in the life of a Christian living on mission.*
- **How will this truth challenge you in your conversations with others?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

## ▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

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### LEADER PACK

For this session, point out item #2 to the students. Item #2 portrays several key Old Testament figures that students will come into contact with as they move through the Book of Genesis.

### SOURCES

1. Robert D. Bergen, *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 7.
2. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 262-64.
3. Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 157-58.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- Leader Training Videos
- One Conversations
- Midweek Studies
- Circular Timeline Poster
- App (for both leader and student)



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at  
**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](https://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit  
**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](https://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**

***Don't forget to check out these additional resources to help equip you for each session.***