



St Andrew's Anglican Church, Somerville
9 Studies in Genesis 1-12:9
Term 3, 2022

FAITH FOUNDATIONS

Date	Passage	Title
July 16	Genesis 1	Humanity in God's Image
July 23	Genesis 2	Humanity in God's Garden
July 30	Genesis 3	Humanity Fallen
Aug 6	Genesis 4	Humanity Cursed
Aug 13	Genesis 5:1-6:8	... Then Noah
Aug 20	Genesis 6:9-8:22	Humanity Destroyed/ Delivered
Aug 27	Genesis 9	... Then Covenant
Sept 3	Genesis 10:1-11:9	Humanity Scattered
Sept 10	Genesis 11:10-12:9	... Then Abraham

HOW TO USE THIS MATERIAL

To really get into this opening section of Genesis, we've provided daily Bible Reading sessions to encourage you during the week. Plus some suggestions for questions for your weekly Bible Study. Again, this material is provided as a resource for your group and for your study leader. You can use the questions as they are, or cut/ adapt them so they'll best help discussion in your group. You can also include questions you found helpful in your daily Bible reading sessions.

GENESIS INTRO

“The message: The Creator God is faithful to His Covenant promises and redeems humanity through the promised line, despite their sin and rebellion.

“As the first section of the Pentateuch, Genesis gives a brief history of God's relationship with his people, from the creation of the world to the events leading up to the exodus. These first eleven to twelve chapters explain humanity's predicament and their need for redemption by recounting Israel's dark and somewhat negative prehistory. The story begins in the idyllic, sanctuary like garden, with God as the suzerain and Adam as his vice-regent, but Adam and Eve rebel against God, thereby breaking the Covenant, and are consequently cursed and banished from God's presence. Their descendants only continue the downward spiral of sin and rebellion. Even after divine judgment in the form of the deluge, humanity defies God by building a tower towards the heavens, resulting in their dispersal across the face of the earth.”¹

But if this section in general shows the world's sad and sorry state before God, we do get glimpses of God's grace and mercy towards humankind. Even amongst the pain of the fall, God still cares for Adam and Eve by providing clothing for them. We also see His provision of a third son, Seth, following the death of Abel. We see Noah's steadfast faith, and the beginning of the story of Abraham that begins God's redemptive history in this world.

¹ NIV PROCLAMATION BIBLE, Genesis introduction p5.

SERIES INTRO

So far, in term 1, we looked at who Jesus is. John gave us different pictures of his character, his work, his identity. Then in term 2, we studied 1 Peter to think about who we are as God's people. We are a royal priesthood, sufferers, infants, exiles, lovers.

Now, we turn to the first 12 chapters of Genesis to think about what humanity in general looks like. How did we start off, and how did things go so wrong? And within all the calamity and destruction of the early chapters of Genesis, where do we see God's signs of grace to people? And how do we still see those signs today? That's where we'll turn our attention this term!

Week 1 – Genesis 1 – Humanity in God’s Image

Starter

Have you been involved in a project and got to the point where you're not quite sure how to finish it, or what 'finished' looks like? What can make it so hard?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 1

Think – Follow the overall progression from the 'beginning' to the seventh day. The earth God creates is *formless* and *empty* - how is it transformed over the course of the chapter to something that is 'very good'? (Note the relationship between days 1 & 4, days 2 & 5, and days 3 & 6). What 2 words would you use to describe the earth as it is first created (v2) and when it is finished; ie it goes from to?

Pray – praise God, who has created all that there is, and who brings order from disorder and chaos.

Day 2 - Read 1:3-5

Think - There are a number of words, phrases and ideas which appear here are then repeated throughout the chapter. Note them down. Why do you think they are repeated like this? What does each one reveal about God and his creation? What does it mean to say it is 'good'/'very good'?

Pray – for God’s good creation, and responsible human care of it.

Day 3 - Read 1:3-2:3

Think - Notice the various things God *says*. What does God do by his word? What is the connection between God, his word and creation? How would you describe what God does through his word today?

Pray – for confidence in God’s powerful word to continue to produce new life, through Christ.

Day 4 – Read 1:26-31 Image – function, identity, representative
How does the creation of humankind, and God's relationship with them, differ from the rest of creation? What does it mean, in terms of both identity and function, to be made in God’s image? How do you see your task as God’s image-bearer?

Pray - that you will faithfully bear God’s image in the world, to his glory; give thanks for Christ - God’s perfect image.

Day 5- Read 1:31-2:3

Think - What do you think is the meaning of 'rest' here (presumably God is not tired)? How does what God does on the seventh day emphasize its significance? What does God’s rest mean for us (Hebrews 3:16-4:11)? What finished work has made eternal rest possible for believers (John 19:28-30)?

Pray – with thanks to God that “the promise of entering his rest still stands”; pray for those who do not know the truth of this promise.

WEEK 1. Some suggestions for group discussion

What questions does Genesis 1 leave unanswered in your mind? Are these matters significant issues of faith? What response does Genesis 1 invoke in you? How does it enrich your praise for God and embolden your petitions?

What do these passages from the New Testament add to our understanding of creation - Col.1:15-17; John 1:1-4; Heb.1:2-3?

As the wealth of knowledge about the universe grows, so does our sense of 'smallness' in it; how does Genesis 1 give meaning to our place in the universe, and offer an alternative to the idea that humanity and the earth are insignificant?

How important is Genesis 1 to your Christian witness? What truths from it would you be wanting to tell others? How would you describe to someone the difference between human beings and other creatures?

To what extent are a) who you say you are, and b) what you do, shaped by knowing you are made in God's image? How does knowing that others are made in God's image affect how you view them, and relate to them? How does Jesus' example help us understand what it means to bear God's image (eg, Phil.2:5-8)?

Week 2 – Genesis 2 – Humanity in God’s Garden

Starter

How would you describe human freedom in an ideal world? Does true freedom mean having no restraints, being able to do whatever you want?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 2

Think - What part of chapter 1 does chapter 2 now focus on and develop? Trace how the relationship between God and man unfolds over this chapter (note all that God does, provides, says and expects)? How is man to live - in relation to God, his creation, and other humans?

Pray – that in your Christian walk, you respond faithfully to both God’s grace and his expectations.

Day 2 - Read v4-9

What does the *way* man is created (v7) tell you about human life, and especially in relation to God? Man has a God-given task - what do you think is the significance of God taking him from outside and putting him in the Garden as the place in which to do his work? How conscious are you of living in God's presence?

Pray – that living in God’s presence will be the context for all that you do in your life.

Day 3 - Read v8-17

Think - Having put man in the garden, what 3 things does God 'give' to man (v15, 16, 17)? What does the giving of the command say about the nature of human freedom, and man's power to exercise the rule granted in chapter 1? How do you see task, freedom and command working out together in Christian life? What is lost if one is missing?

Pray – that you will know the freedom of life in Christ, and the satisfaction of living within the boundaries set by God.

Day 4 - Read v8-17

Two trees are given special attention - one that man is free to eat from (and so have ongoing life), and one that he is not (or he will die). God does not give any reason for the prohibition (only the consequence) - so what will man's willingness to obey be based on? If God has a clear command but you don't fully understand the reason behind it, will you obey/what will cause you to obey?

Pray – that your trust in God's goodness will enable you to obey him in all things.

Day 5 - Read v18-25

Think -In v18, what striking contrast with chapter 1 reveals the seriousness with which God views man's aloneness? How does God respond? What aspects of God's character do you see in these verses? What do Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18-25 affirm about man and woman, and human nature in general?

Pray – praise God that he responds with loving grace to the deepest needs of humankind

WEEK 2. Some suggestions for group discussion

How does knowing that you are a created being affect your view of human freedom? How do you think your view might differ from a worldly view of freedom?

Various themes from chapter 1 are pursued in chapter 2. In chapter 1, naming is an activity undertaken by God. Why is man allowed to assume this task in chapter 2? In chapter 1, God blessed humankind. What does blessing look like from chapter 2?

How do you view work - as an end in itself, as service to God, as what you have to do in order to do what you want to do, as a burden/obligation to be fulfilled? What does Genesis 2 contribute to a Christian view of work?

What do you see as the God-given task now of those who recognize that they are made in God's image? Has it changed?

Does the command in v 17 confirm from the outset the often-held view that Christianity is little more than a series of 'don'ts'? Stripping away all the imagery of chapter 2 how would you describe to someone in broad terms what it means to be fully 'human'?

Week 3 – Genesis 3 – Humanity Fallen

Starter

Who do you listen to? Who do you trust to steer you in the right direction? Do you tend to mix with people who will advise you well or those who will tell you what you want to hear?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 3:1-6

Think - How are God's words, character and purposes for humankind distorted by both the serpent and the woman? What has been overstated, and what understated? What view of God is being portrayed? When are we most likely to distort God's words or his purposes? Or to make his commands that are good for us into something negative and restrictive?

Pray - for a deepening trust in the goodness of God's word and his purposes that ushers in a desire to obey and follow him.

Day 2 - Read 3:1-6

Think – When God sees his creation in chapter 1, he is pleased and satisfied – it is good. What does the woman see, and what response does it produce in her? How would you sum up the temptations at work in the woman (see too 1 John 2:16)? What do you think is the root cause of her dissatisfaction? What causes us to be dissatisfied with God's goodness? See also (1 John 2:16)

Pray – for a deepening satisfaction in God that ushers in a desire to obey and follow him.

Day 3 - Read 3:7-13

Think – What emotion underlies their first action in v7? What do you think is the relationship between sin and shame and fear, (v10)? What impacts does the sin have on both the human relationship, and their relationship with God. Does sin always have such consequences?

Pray - that when you sin you will turn to God in confession and repentance and seek his forgiveness.

Day 4 - Read 3:14-20

Think – As a result of God’s punishment, how are God’s blessings and purposes for humans and creation (ch 1&2) affected? What has changed, and what remains the same? In the midst of curse and judgment, what offer of hope is there in the offspring/seed of Eve?

Pray - with thanks that God offers hope in Christ for those who are otherwise under his judgment.

Day 5 - Read 3:21-24

Think – Why does God banish them from the garden, and what will this mean for them? In what sense have they “become like” God? How are both grace and judgment shown by God? Given human’s now fallen condition, could the barring of access to the tree of life also be an act of grace?

Pray - that the knowledge of God's judgment and its consequences will increase your commitment to prayer for those who have not received the hope he offers in Christ.

WEEK 3. Some suggestions for group discussion

Both chapters 1 and 2 present a picture of God's perfect ordering of his creation. In what ways are the roles and relationships established in chapters 1&2 inverted/turned upside down by the events in chapter 3? God made humans in his 'likeness' - why is he now concerned that they have become 'like him'? What is the difference?

Would you say there is one common root or cause of every act of disobedience? Follow the steps that lead to the eating of the fruit. Do you think they form a pattern that is recognizable in most, if not all, human temptation and disobedience? Does identifying them help us to avoid temptation and sin?

What do you understand by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and what was 'gained' by eating from it? Independence and the freedom to decide what is right and wrong for ourselves is highly prized - why? How is such a prize incompatible with a trustful relationship with God? Is it really freedom?

Having read 3:15-24, what do you see as the ongoing consequences for people today of the 'taking' and 'eating'? How does Jesus undo the ultimate consequence (Matt. 26:26-29)? As a result of the fall, we all live in the shadow of death - God has made it impossible for humans to regain access to the tree of life. What hope can you offer to those who approach or fear death (Rev.2:7; 22:2-3, 14-15)?

Week 4 – Genesis 4 – Humanity Cursed

Starter

Think of a time when you, perhaps as a child, felt your punishment was unfair? Was it harsh? Were you 'not guilty'? Or were you indignant at having been caught? What is your first impulse when confronted with having done the wrong thing?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 4:1-8

Think - There are some hints as to why God did not look favorably on Cain or his offering (v3-4, 7). Do they help us to understand his response in v5 (see also Heb.11:4; 1 John 3:12)? What other responses were open to him? Why is he now so vulnerable to sin? What makes us most vulnerable to sin?

Pray – that your worship of God will be genuine, and your first desire be to please him.

Day 2 - Read 4:6-8

Think - What are both the hope and the warning that God is giving Cain, following the rejection of his sacrifice? Although God describes sin as an active force that desires Cain, where does responsibility for sin lie, and what is required of Cain to keep it at bay? Where does Cain's desire lie?

Pray – that you will respond to God's gracious warnings with repentance and a desire to master sin.

Day 3 - Read 4:9-14

Think - Consider Cain's attitude to God, to the sin he has committed, and to the punishment/judgment threatened; where does his primary concern lie? How does his attitude compare to that of Adam and Eve in chapter 3 - what has he lost, and gained instead? How do you respond to God's judgment/discipline? How does self-interest impact your response?

Pray – that you will seek to receive God's judgment and discipline with humility.

Day 4 - Read 4:13-16

Think - Cain's punishment is "more than [he] can bear". In what ways? How do they reflect a further and deepening outworking of the curse in chapter 3? What key relationships from Genesis will now be impacted even further? Describe God's response to Cain's fears? Does it surprise you?

Pray – thanking God that his judgment is tempered by his mercy.

Day 5 - Read 4:17-25

Think - These verses depict two contrasting realities of human existence side by side - human 'progress' and sin. Does this fit your picture of humankind still? Do you think your view is one shared by most people? In what way do these verses show that the grip and depth of sin is deepening?

Pray – that the people you know will come to recognize their own sinfulness, and so turn to God in repentance and faith.

WEEK 4. Some suggestions for group discussion

Cain's act of 'worship' is so quickly followed by a poor attitude, and a terrible sin. How do you explain this? How reliable a guide to spiritual health are the external indicators of faith? What are the true indicators?

Do you know anyone who, having once been active in their Christian walk, is now unresponsive to God? How does this happen? What does such a person need to hear?

In chapter 3, God said humankind had become like him. What evidence of this do you see in this chapter? Adam and Eve were depicted with a freedom to choose - to obey or not to obey – do you think Cain still has the same freedom, or is his sin inevitable now?

Consider the cycle of life and death in chapter 4, and how the hope that comes with life is compromised by sin and death. The hope for the future in chapter 3 rests in the offspring/seed of the woman - how tenuous does that hope seem in chapter 4? How is the promise both threatened and 'kept alive' in this chapter? On whom will it depend?

Week 5 – Genesis 5:1 -6:8 – ... Then Noah

Starter

Think of a course of action you have taken that you have regretted to the point of wishing you'd never done it. Did you try to find some way of salvaging the situation, or did you give up on it? How did you decide?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 5:1-32)

Think – In what sense does chapter 5 begin almost as a new history of mankind? Why do you think Cain is no longer part of that history? Following the human sinfulness of chapters 3 & 4, are humans still God's image-bearers? And what does it mean that Seth is in the image and likeness of Adam?

Pray - that reading the history of God's people, you will grow in your understanding of God's big plan for the saving of his people.

Day 2 - Read 5:6-32

Think - Despite the longevity of the individuals in the genealogy, and the story it tells of ongoing life, what reminders are there of the inevitable outworkings of God's judgment and curse in chapter 3? What glimmers of hope are offered in Enoch and Noah? What was worthy of comment about Enoch? What single comment would you want to sum up your life?

Pray - for assurance that even in the midst of death and hardship, by God's grace there is life and hope.

Day 3 - Read Genesis 6:1-4

Think - Despite the lack of clarity about the 'who' in these verses, what is suggested about the progress of evil, and humankind's ability to control it? Who *is* really in control of human destiny? As creatures, on whom do we depend for life itself?

Pray - that, regardless of the boundaries evil crosses, you will remain confident in the sovereign control and power of God, and remember our dependence upon him for life itself.

Day 4 - Read 6:5-8

Think - By comparison with what God 'saw' in chapter 1, what does God see in v5? What is his response to the breadth and depth of human sin? What evidence is there that he is interested in the heart of the individual? How does man's heart impact God's heart?

Pray – that as God knows the condition even of your heart, you will respond to him in repentance, and thanks for his mercy.

Day 5 - Read 6:5-8

Think - What do you think it means to find *favor* with God? Given what God has already seen and declared in the preceding verses, consider the little word 'but' - if one man alone finds favor in all the earth, how would you expect God to respond – to him/to the human race? From these few verses, how is Noah a 'type' of the one to come, Jesus?

Pray – with thanks that God sees and knows the individual, and responds with perfect grace and justice.

WEEK 5. Some suggestions for group discussion

Read about Enoch in Hebrews 11:5-6; why and how does he avoid the experience of death? How did people in the Old Testament "please God"?

Through Noah, Lamech hopes for the reversal of certain of the consequences of sin that affect him. What consequences have been reversed already by Christ, and what consequences of human sinfulness are you still aware of in daily life that you look forward to being finally reversed when Christ returns?

In Genesis 1 God brings order from chaos by a process of separation (1:4,6,7). What do 6:1-4 emphasise/ show about the state of creation after the fall? What is wrong with the actions of the "sons of God"? And what does God's intervention here assert about God?

In v 5 & 6, God 'regrets' having made human beings (likewise in 1 Samuel 15:11, he regrets having made Saul king of Israel) – what does this mean? How can God regret his own actions? When God regrets, are his promises at risk (eg, Gen. 3:15)? Are you surprised that God's response to human sin is described as regret and being 'deeply troubled' (grieved), rather than anger?

Having reached this low point in human history at the beginning of chapter 6, why do you think all of humankind *and* all of creation has to be destroyed? How would you describe God's justice at this point of the narrative?

Week 6 – Genesis 6:9-8:22 – Humanity Destroyed/ Delivered

Starter

Think of a time when you ‘started’ over’ (job, house, location,) – what were your hopes, how did it work for you? What changed, and what didn’t?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 6:9-22

Think - At the end of the previous section we are given a glimmer of hope for Noah. But who/what else will actually benefit from Noah’s righteousness and God’s favour? What does God reveal to Noah about his intentions beyond his act of judgment? Where do you think the emphasis lies in this passage?

Pray – that you will grow in your appreciation of God's mercy while never downplaying his righteous judgment.

Day 2 - Read 7:1-24

Think - What reasons are given for saving Noah and his family (see also 6:8-9)? What evidence do you see of Noah’s ‘righteousness’ (see also 6:22)? What would you look for in a righteous person? Is there anyone you would describe as ‘righteous’ – why/why not?

Pray – that, knowing the true Source of your righteousness, you will respond to God’s commands with neither hesitation nor holding back.

Day 3 - Read 7:6-24

Think – Describe the situation here of those under judgment, and of those being saved? Who is responsible for both? How are both God’s tenderness and his uncompromising response to sin held together here? Are you ever tempted to understate (to yourself or others) the severity of God’s response to sin?

Pray – that you will be assured of God’s tenderness to those who are being saved, and concerned for those now facing his judgment.

Day 4 - Read 8:1-19

Think – “But” – how helpless are they until God ‘remembers’? When God remembers, what does he do for those in the ark? What does it mean to you that in the midst of chaos and death God ‘remembers’ his people?

Pray – that you will be able to offer assurance to others of God’s remembering.

Day 5 - Read 8:15-22

Think – Notice Noah’s first response on leaving the ark. How does God respond in his heart, (compare 6:6), and why? What has changed, and what has not? On what will sinful people’s continued existence depend? How is what God has done through Noah a foretaste of his final dealing with sin and death (1 Pet. 3:18-22)?

Pray – with thanksgiving that through the perfect sacrifice and resurrection of Christ God brings life from death.

WEEK 6. Some suggestions for group discussion

Noah's obedience stands against the tide of the rest of humankind. How hard is it to do all that the Lord commands, when the flow of humanity is against you at all points? What holds you in place? What makes faithfulness possible?

What indications in these chapters are there that God's commitment to humankind is costly to him?

The narrative has a dim view of the human condition, yet God responds in a diametrically opposed manner at the beginning and at the end – grace and some assurance for the future replace judgment/destruction. How do you account for this? Can we know with some certainty how God will respond to human sinfulness now?

Chapters 8 and 9 take us through a process of 'decreation' and re-creation. In both, there are quite a number of 'echoes' of the creation account in Genesis 1-2:3. What are they, and how do they help us understand what God has done?

The phrase, "God remembered", on which the course of the narrative turns, raises the issue of God's *apparent* inactivity up until that point. There are often times when God does not appear to be acting in his world/in one's life. How are these times to be managed? What is our responsibility during such times?

Week 7 – Genesis 9 – ... Then Covenant

Starter

Think of a great sign you have seen. What was its purpose? Did it achieve it? What makes a good sign?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 9:1-3

Think - In what sense are Noah and his sons seen starting over - facing a new 'beginning'? How do God's words assure them that this new beginning has his blessing? What has changed and what remains the same in terms of the human task and purpose, and their relationship to the earth and its creatures?

Pray - for a growing reliance on God from whose will and blessing all of life results.

Day 2 - Read 9:4-7

Think - How does God regard life generally, and human life in particular? As God's representative on earth, in his image, what does the violation of a human mean to God himself? What responsibility does God delegate to humans, and why? Does this add to your understanding of what it means to be made in God's image?

Pray – that you will value life as God does.

Day 3 - Read 9:7-17

Think -The covenant (promised in 6:18) follows the promise made at the end of chapter 8. Who is it with, and who has obligations under this covenant? Why might God's promise be followed up by a covenant? What reassurance does it give to future generations of sinful people (8:21)?

Pray – with thanks to God who binds himself to humankind and the rest of his creation.

Day 4 - Read 9:8-17

Think - What reason does God give for the sign of the covenant? What benefit is there to humans in the visible sign God has chosen? What do you think is the purpose of such a covenant-sign? Does the New Covenant in Christ also have a 'sign' given by God?

Pray – that you will live a life worthy of the God who has sealed with a sign the covenant that binds himself to mankind and his creation.

Day 5 - Read 9:18-28

Think – This is the only story recorded of Noah and his sons after the flood. What do you think is important about it? What pattern recurs again? Is it surprising that so soon after the flood we are confronted again by human sin and relationship breakdown? Can the security offered by God's grace (in this case in the form of his covenant promise) cause us to be complacent about sin?

Pray – that you will rest in the security of God's grace, without taking it for granted and without presuming on his kindness.

WEEK 7. Some suggestions for group discussion

God makes a number of covenants (with Abraham, Israel at Sinai; David; Jesus at the last supper with his disciples). What is the significance of this – what does it tell you about our God? About his relationship with his people? What does it mean to you to worship and be in relationship with a covenant-making God?

Think about other ‘signs’ in Scripture (eg, the signs/miracles in John) – what is their purpose? How useful would they be to people without God’s words to accompany them? What is the danger of signs without words? Is it possible to get too attached to or caught up with the sign, and fail to move on to what it points to or represents?

God could well have decided on the substance of the covenant in his own mind without either telling Noah or entering into a covenant. What is to be gained for humanity by having the covenant both stated and sealed with the sign? What response ought it then to elicit from humankind? What is your response to it?

How does the flood foreshadow the Christian ‘sign’ of baptism (1 Peter 3:18-22)?

Week 8 - Genesis 10:1-11:9 – Humanity Scattered

Starter

Have you had experience of being among people who don't speak your language? What were the frustrations, and how did you try to resolve them? Could you achieve anything beyond very basic understanding on anything?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 10:1-32

Think – How does the genealogy reflect the abundance and spread of life that occurred in the new beginning "after the flood" (v1&32)? Who is responsible for it (see Acts 17: 24-28), and how does it reflect God's original design for humanity in Genesis 1:28 and 9:1,7?

Pray – for the nations of the world, that they might recognise their Maker, seek him and find him.

Day 2 - Read 11:1-9

Think – this passage seems to take us back to an explanation of the spreading and scattering that occurs in 10:1-32. What are the people hoping to achieve through their city and their tower (v4)? What attitudes/desires lie beneath their intentions? What do their actions betray about their view of God and their relationship with him?

Pray - that your security and boasting will be in God alone, and in his purposes, not in the things of your own making.

Day 3 - Read 11:1-9

Think – In v6-7, what is God’s concern? What is wrong with everything being possible for humankind? What might be the signs of a church (or an individual) that is acting in its own strength either to protect itself or build a name for itself?

Pray – that as a church, we will recognize the feebleness of our own efforts and will depend on God who makes all things possible.

Day 4 - Read 11:1-9

Think – What is the difference between the “Come, let us” (v3&4) of humankind, and the “Come, let us” (v7) of God? Compare 11:1 and 11:9 - how is God’s action a fitting judgment? What is apparently missing at the conclusion of this narrative of sin and God's judgment that is present in all the others at the point of judgement?

Pray – that the God who changes the course of human history will continue to show his grace and mercy to rebellious people.

Day 5 - Read Acts 2:1-21

Think – Ultimately, the judgment of Babel is not God’s last word. How is it ‘undone’? How does God create order again from the confusion of many languages? Whose name will save them?

Pray – praise God that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

WEEK 8. Some suggestions for group discussion

What is the connection between pride and insecurity (or fear) as played out here, and in general? What outcomes do they both produce - in how we live now, and how we see and plan for the future? How are both inconsistent with faith and trust in God? Do you have a problem with either? How do you guard against them?

Do you find yourself trying to 'shore up your defences' in life? To what extent is this justifiable? Where is the line to be drawn between common sense and failure to trust your future to God? How do you discern when you are stepping over that line?

How strongly do you derive your sense of identity from your faith/your relationship to God? Or have you 'made a name for yourself'?

The New Testament sees unity as a good thing to be aspired to. When does unity become self-serving, and how can this be prevented? What is the role of 'language' in this?

In the context of Genesis 3-6, which saw the escalation of individual sin, how does this sin compare? How like the first sin of Adam and Eve is it? What is different and more extensive about it?

Week 9 - Genesis 11:10-12:9 – ... Then Abraham

Starter

Have you ever been offered a far-fetched promise? How much would you/did you risk on the basis of such a promise? Would you put a few 'safety nets' in place in case the promised outcome was not delivered?

Day 1 - Read Genesis 11:10-32

Think – Genealogies usually suggest a new beginning in the story, but as this genealogy narrows down to focus on Sarai and Abram, what foreseeable future could there be? Is this another 'threat' to the promise of Gen. 3:15? On whom will the potential for a future actually depend? How is it symbolic of what God will do for his world?

Pray – that you will grow in your trust in God to secure your future regardless of circumstances.

Day 2 - Read Genesis 12:1-9

Think - What accompanies God's command to "go from....."? What is Abram required to relinquish *now* for the sake of the *future*? How important for your own obedience now is the knowledge and reciting of God's promises for the future? What would God's commands be without his promises?

Pray – that as you learn God's promises, you will grow in your willingness to 'go' wherever he commands you.

Day 3 – Read 12:1-9

Think - Consider what God says *he* will do for and through Abram; how would you sum it up? How do the promises in 1-3 radiate out, and promise to address the pattern of sin and judgment in Genesis 1-11 (note the emphasis on the word 'blessing')? What is their final goal?

Pray – that through the preaching and sharing of the gospel God's purpose to bless all the peoples on earth will be fulfilled.

Day 4 - Read 12:4-9

Think - "So Abram went". What guarantee does Abram have that these far-fetched promises for the future will be fulfilled? What might cause him to doubt God at this point? So what underlies his obedience, and what does it signify to the world around him? Can you think of a time when you have had to trust God's promises when circumstance suggested a 'wiser' way?

Pray – that you will grow in your willingness to walk by faith and not by sight.

Day 5 - Read Galatians 3:10-18

Think - Who, ultimately, is the promised offspring? How have the blessings promised to Abram been fulfilled in Christ? Think about God's purposes through Noah and through Abram - how are they similar, and how different?

Pray - give thanks to God that his promises are entirely trustworthy and his purposes always fulfilled.

WEEK 9. Some suggestions for group discussion

What is the relationship between God's promises and his purposes? On the whole, would you describe his promises as individual and personal for you, or designed to accomplish his good purposes for humankind? Can the two be separated?

What does this beginning of the narrative about Abram teach you about what faith looks like? What is its basis, and what does it expect from you? Describe the relationship between promise, command, faith and obedience.

In what sense is there still a future element to the final promise to Abram? What is our part in this? Consider the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:18-20 - what does Jesus promise which encourages obedience to this command? What does 'going' look like for believers now?

In chapter 11, God judges humankind for their desire to make a name for themselves, and be established as a single powerful people. Here, God promises those very things to Abram. What's the difference? How careful are you in ensuring that you understand not just what God's principles are, but what underlies them? How important is this in our engagement with the world?

It is not uncommon to have people say that they do not like the God of the Old Testament, or that they can't reconcile him with the God they know in the New Testament. Having worked through Genesis 1-12:9, how would you respond to such a statement?

