

WEEK 1
LESSON GUIDE

MORE TO THE STORY

BIG IDEA

God is writing
a good story.

BIBLE

Genesis 1; Psalm 104:24–31;
Psalm 27:13

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Have you ever read a story where a small detail at the beginning helped you understand what happened at the end? This week, we'll explore the first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1, where God created the earth and called it good. From this simple phrase at the very beginning of the story, we'll see how **God is writing a good story.**

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | And Then ...

- Welcome to our new series, *More to the Story!* We will look at the most important story ever told for the next few weeks, worth telling and retelling. A captivating story can keep us on the edge of our seats. Let's see if we can work together to write something worth remembering.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Each player needs paper and a writing tool for this game. Choose a starting sentence to set the story tone, like: "Sarah and Elizabeth set off on a year-long global sailing adventure" or "Eddie felt his heartbeat racing as mission control began the countdown—three-two-one, liftoff!" Divide everyone into groups of four to five. Each player adds three sentences to the story, folds the paper to reveal only the last line, and passes it on. Everyone writes twice. Make sure the last person writing concludes the story. Unfold and enjoy the collective tale!*
- Some of these stories made no sense, and others were epic. Sometimes, we hear the stories around us and feel the same. Maybe you listen to people talk about God's story and how good it is. But then you see all the evil going on in the world and wonder how all this evil can be happening if God's story is as good as people say it is.

VIDEO | Perfectly Placed Planet

- Have you ever read a story where some minor detail at the beginning leads to a big a-ha moment at the end? A writer's attention to detail can greatly impact the story's end. Keep all of that in mind as we watch this...
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video like [this](#) (0:19–2:11) explaining how the Earth is perfectly positioned in the solar system to sustain life. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, read this!*
 - **NOTE:** *After the suggested clip later in the video, the video talks about a God in ways that would detract from this talk in a way that we don't think is helpful or true, but the other points made are useful enough to use here. So, be sure to stay inside the suggested times. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context!*
- Discovering how Earth is perfectly placed in the solar system to sustain life is mind-blowing. Even small

moves in either direction would make flowing water and living creatures non-existent on Earth. Every detail is exactly as it should be to sustain life.

- God’s attention to detail regarding how the world is made is impressive, but what about our life stories? Sometimes, I wonder if all of the details of my past and present circumstances will work out in the long run.
- I have hopes and dreams for my future, but I wonder if all the details I am wading through now will fit together to make a good story. God had a plan and an ordered story for the world’s creation. What about my life?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - **What was your favorite movie or book as a kid?**
 - **What do you think makes a good story?**
 - ★ **Can a story be good but not turn out how you want it to? Why or why not?**

POLL | What Do You Think About The Bible?

- When we think about stories, we usually think of the bedtime stories we heard when we were kids, the stories we watched in movie theaters or the series we watched on Netflix or Hulu. Good stories draw us in, keep us wondering what will happen next, and inspire us to want more of the story.
- In this series, we will look at the best story. A story that’s worth knowing and retelling, God’s story. But before we continue, I’m curious...
- **How familiar are you with the story of the Bible?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Poll your group’s responses to the questions above by raising their hands and giving thumbs up, down, or sideways. Thumbs up for very familiar, thumbs sideways for moderately familiar, and thumbs down for not familiar at all. After teenagers identify themselves, ask a few of them the questions below:*
 - **For the group who doesn’t feel familiar: Why do you think people still read it—especially since it was written thousands of years ago?**
 - **For the group that feels moderately familiar: What fascinates you about the stories inside the Bible?**
 - **For the group that feels familiar: What do you find confusing about the Bible?**
- The Bible is full of incredible stories. Throughout all the stories in the Bible, we see God’s working to make all things new. God’s creative work isn’t done.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 1:1–5

- The Book of Genesis is the first book of the Old Testament, and it sets a foundation for understanding the Bible and God’s heart for the world. As we read the first chapter, we see how intentional and loving God is.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the Genesis 1:1–5.*
- What existed before God created the Earth? It was a shapeless void, filled with chaos and emptiness. Yet, God recognized its potential and possibilities even in that vast emptiness.
- Have you ever found yourself amidst chaos or felt a sense of emptiness? These are heavy thoughts—but thinking about them can lead you to realize there’s a deeper story waiting to unfold in your life.
- The very first thing God created was light. When the light pierced through the darkness. God stopped and celebrated and called the light good. God naming of creation good continues throughout the creation story and continues in your story, even now. There is light, even in the difficult parts of your story.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 1:6–25

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or paraphrase Genesis 1:6–25.*
- But the story keeps on going, with God celebrating the good in creation day by day. God intentionally formed every tree, plant, water molecule, bird, and deep sea creature and called it good. God created the world and everything in it with intentionality, care, and goodness.
- Over and over again, God created and called creation good. Goodness is woven throughout the world God created, starting on page one of the Bible.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 1:26–31

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the Genesis 1:26–31.*
- But the story doesn't just end with animals, sea creatures, oceans, mountains, and trees. There's one more thing God created. On the sixth day, humans were made in the image of God.
- They were crafted to mirror qualities from God, such as love, hope, and peace. Both women and men were tasked as caretakers of creation, collaborating in the ongoing story of God's good creation.
- When God made people, a declaration was made—that human beings are “very good.” While the remainder of creation was deemed good, people stood out as “very good” because we are molded in the creative likeness of God. This means all humans thirst to continue this good story in the world.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - **What does the Bible opening with Genesis the way it does tell you about God and what God's character is like?**
 - **Why do you think the word “good” is used repeatedly in the story of creation instead of “perfect”? How would you say “good” is different from or even better than “perfect”?**

OBJECT LESSON | A Better World

- Who remembers the Hot Cheeto Challenge on TikTok? The challenge was to eat an entire bag of Hot Cheetos in sixty seconds or less.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this object lesson, ask three adult volunteers to participate. You need three bags of hot Cheetos, three bottles of water (or milk), and a countdown clock on the screen. Have the volunteers eat the Cheetos as fast as possible. Give anyone who completes the challenge a prize.*
- I have some water for you because I figured you'd be thirsty afterward. And I bet you are really thirsty! They are all showing us that our thirst points to something that can quench it. And this is similar to another longing we have.
- Have you ever seen the hurt and pain in our world and wanted a better world? Just like our thirst points to the desire for water, our deep longing for a better world points out that a better world can exist. Like our friends doing the hot Cheetos challenge, they remembered a world where their mouths weren't on fire. Their thirst was an indicator that the thing they were experiencing was not the way their body was made to be.
- Reading the story of Genesis, we see the world God desires us to live in, one filled with goodness, connection, beauty, and, most importantly, a life-sustaining relationship with the God who made all of it. Our longing for a better world indicates that there is more to the story.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 104:24–31

- There's something about nature that reminds us of how good God is, and seeing God's goodness in Genesis reminds us of the goodness God created before everything turned upside down. People have been writing

poems about God's goodness for centuries.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 104:24–31.
- Have you ever stood outside and just thought, "Wow!" This is similar to what this poem is getting at. The Psalms capture what it feels like to live in awe of the created world. The Bible celebrates God's purpose and wisdom in making the world. There were no mistakes. God was purposeful with all the details—creation reminds us of that.
- This psalmist talks about how nature reflects God's love and kindness. God didn't just create the world and everything in it and then turn away. God is actively involved with creation—providing, restoring, and renewing.
- The Earth was formed ages ago, but God's not done creating. God's still at work in the world today to create, provide, restore, and bring renewal through us because **God is writing a good story.**

***NOW WHAT?** What does God want us to do about it?*

IMAGE | Planet Earth

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, show an image of planet Earth like [this one](#) from Unsplash. These images are free for you to use under the [Unsplash license](#). As you teach, say...
 - **God is writing a good story.** It all started with God's loving presence and intentionality. Each day, God created something good, and the grand finale was when God created humans—and they were very good. With so many discouraging and disappointing things happening around us, it can be challenging to see God's goodness. So here are a few things you can do this week to connect to the good story God is writing in the world.
 - **REMEMBER WHAT'S GOOD.** Can you remember a time you've experienced God's presence? Maybe you were in the mountains, by the ocean, or visited the Grand Canyon and were overcome with the beauty of it all. Have you heard God has done something amazing in your family or friends' lives? This week, remember a time when you saw God was clearly at work, write it down, and thank God for it.
 - **FOCUS ON WHAT'S GOOD.** There are a lot of negative things happening in the world. It's easy to become overwhelmed by all the brokenness. We see in Genesis and the Psalms that God has woven and is continuing to weave goodness into the fabric of our world. When we look for it, we'll find it. Where do you see goodness right now? Are there non-profits or businesses in your community where God is doing amazing things? Maybe there's a community garden helping to provide food for those who are hungry? Perhaps you have friends asking questions about who Jesus is and wanting to meet up and talk about it.
 - **TRUST GOD IS MAKING EVERYTHING GOOD AGAIN.** What are your hopes for the world? What do you want to see changed, healed, or renewed? When you see a story in the news or hear about a situation that makes you angry, frustrated, or sad, remember those feelings are indicators a good world can exist! When these moments of frustration arise, open a note on your phone or a page in a journal and write down a prayer that asks God to help you bring good to the story.
- When we remember God's goodness in the past, it helps us recognize the goodness to come. This week, go somewhere and be with people that help you focus on what's good.

DISCUSSION

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- Like Psalm 104 did with creation, what things can you look at or be reminded of that point to God's goodness?
- 🔄 What is happening in your life that makes it challenging to think of God's goodness being bigger and stronger than the difficulties you face? How can we help you address that this week?

REFLECTIONS | God's Good World

- Just as thirst signals the presence of water and hunger indicates food exists, our yearning for a better world suggests that a better world is possible. Let's take some time to reflect on the good changes you hope to see.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this reflection, students need the handout [included in this week's series materials](#) and something to write with. Invite teenagers to write a few words and phrases of what they hope their life, friendships, and community could be like. Encourage them to dream as big or as little as they want, but try to make the dreams concrete and specific. For example, instead of saying, "Everyone feels loved," say something like, "My friends are accepted at church." Consider playing some reflective music as your group responds.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - **Read Psalm 27:13. How does this verse encourage you about the goodness of God even among difficult things?**
 - **Today, what's one way you'll trust that God is writing a good story?**

RESPONSE | Your Role In The Story

- Look at your fingerprints for a second. No one else has the same fingerprints. That's pretty amazing! Throughout your life, your fingerprints stay the same. They don't change as you grow.
- So, no matter what happens in your story—good or bad—your fingerprints stick with you. Just like our fingerprints never change, nothing can change the reality that we are created in God's image, and before everything gets turned upside down, we are called good. And just like your fingerprints, you have a unique part to play in the story God is writing in the world.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this response, your group needs the handout they filled out from the "God's Good World" reflection, something to write with, and several stamping ink pads [like these](#). Have students review the words and phrases they wrote down from the previous module. Encourage teenagers to talk to God about what it would look like for them to help make that hope a reality. Ask them to think of tangible ways to use their unique gifts to partner with Jesus to do those things this week. Whenever they think of an idea, have them put a thumbprint on the handout, connect it to their hope, and write down one action to help make that hope a reality.
- When we read the story of creation, there's always more to the story. As we end our time together, let's focus on the goodness that God provides. When you or your friends become overwhelmed by heavy or difficult circumstances, remember that the story of Genesis started with goodness, and the goodness of God is still found in our stories today because **God is writing a good story.**