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# In the Beginning, God

*Scripture: Genesis 1:1-25*

**Theme: God is the Creator of all things**

*Jr High (Ages 12-14)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

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Genesis 1 is the foundation of everything we believe about God, ourselves, and the world. This lesson explores the theological depth of creation: God's sovereignty, the power of His word, the uniqueness of humans made in His image, and the goodness of creation. Students will wrestle with how Genesis 1 connects to the Gospel and why it matters for their faith today.

## Bible Story

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The Bible's opening statement is both simple and staggering: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' In one sentence, the Bible establishes that God exists, that He is eternal (He was there 'in the beginning'), and that everything that exists came from Him. This verse is the foundation of the entire biblical narrative.

The Hebrew word for 'created' in Genesis 1:1 is *bara*. This word is only used with God as its subject in the Old Testament. It describes creation that only God can do, bringing something into existence from nothing (creation *ex nihilo*). Humans can shape, build, and form things from existing materials, but only God can create something from nothing.

The structure of Genesis 1 reveals God's intentional design. The first three days form environments (light/darkness, sky/waters, land/vegetation), and the second three days fill those environments (sun/moon/stars fill sky and time, birds/fish fill sky/water, animals/humans fill land). This parallel structure shows that God is a God of order, not chaos.

The phrase 'And God said' appears ten times in Genesis 1. God's word is the creative force of the universe. Psalm 33:6 says, 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.' Hebrews 11:3 adds, 'By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command.' The power of God's word is a major theme that runs through the entire Bible, culminating in Jesus, who is called 'the Word' (John 1:1).

The pinnacle of creation is humanity. Genesis 1:26-27 records God's deliberation: 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.' The plural 'us' has been understood by many scholars as a reference to the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit working together in creation. Humans are made in God's image (tselem), meaning we reflect God's character in ways the rest of creation does not: rationality, morality, creativity, relationality, and spirituality.

Being made in God's image has profound implications. It means every human being has inherent dignity and worth, regardless of age, ability, race, or status. It also means we have a purpose: to represent God on earth, to steward His creation, and to live in relationship with Him. When sin entered the world, it distorted but did not destroy the image of God in humans.

God's evaluation of His creation, 'It was very good', stands in stark contrast to the broken world we know today. Genesis 1 describes a world without death, suffering, or sin. This is the world God intended. The rest of the Bible tells the story of how God is working to restore His creation to what it was meant to be, and even better.

God's rest on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3) establishes a pattern of work and rest that God built into creation itself. Rest is not laziness, it is trust. It is saying, 'God, I don't have to make the world work. You've got this.' The Sabbath principle points forward to the rest we have in Christ (Hebrews 4:9-10).

## Key Verse

### Genesis 1:1

Genesis 1:1 is arguably the most important verse in the Old Testament. It establishes the biblical worldview: God is eternal, God is Creator, and everything that exists depends on Him. This verse stands against every other origin story in the ancient world, which featured multiple gods fighting over chaos. Genesis says: one God, speaking with power, creating with purpose, and declaring it good. This is the God who later sent His Son to redeem what He created.

## Activities

### Activity 1: Creation Worldview Comparison

Students compare the Genesis creation account with other ancient creation stories and modern secular origin theories, identifying what makes the biblical account unique.

#### Supplies needed:

- *Printed excerpts from Enuma Elish (Babylonian creation myth) and/or other ancient creation stories*
- *Bibles*
- *Comparison worksheet*
- *Pens/pencils*

1. Divide students into small groups and give each group a different creation account to read.
2. Have them fill out a comparison chart: Who created? How? Why? What is humanity's purpose? What is the view of God/gods?
3. Groups share their findings. Discuss: What makes Genesis 1 different?
4. Key differences: One God (not many), creation by word (not violence), humans made in God's image (not as slaves to gods), creation declared 'very good' (not an accident).
5. Discuss: Why does our view of creation matter? How does it affect how we see ourselves and the world?

### Activity 2: Image of God Debate

A structured discussion on what it means to be made in God's image and why it matters for how we treat others.

#### Supplies needed:

- *Scenario cards (situations involving human dignity)*
- *Bibles*
- *Whiteboard or large paper*

1. Write on the board: 'Every human is made in God's image.'
2. Present scenarios: a person with severe disabilities, a person in prison, a person of a different religion, an unborn baby, an elderly person with dementia.
3. Ask: Does being made in God's image apply to ALL of these people? Why or why not?
4. Read Genesis 1:26-27 and James 3:9 (about not cursing those made in God's image).
5. Discuss: How should believing every person is made in God's image change how we act? How we vote? How we treat people we disagree with?
6. Connect to the cross: Jesus died for all people , because all are made in God's image.

## Discussion Questions

- Why do you think the Bible starts with 'In the beginning God' rather than trying to prove God exists?
- What does it mean that God created 'out of nothing'? Why is that important?
- How does the Genesis creation account differ from what you hear in science class? Can they both be true?
- What does it mean to be made in 'God's image'? What practical difference should that make in your daily life?
- If God said creation was 'very good,' why is the world so broken now? What went wrong?
- How does Genesis 1 point forward to the need for Jesus? What does creation tell us about the Creator?

## Prayer Focus

*Thank God for revealing Himself as the Creator. Ask Him to deepen your understanding of what it means to be made in His image. Pray for people who believe they have no worth or purpose, that they would discover they are made in God's image. Pray for unreached people groups who have never heard the creation story.*

### >> Missions Spotlight

The Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa have an ancient oral tradition about a Creator God. For thousands of years, they have passed down stories about the one who made the world. Now missionaries are sharing the full story of Genesis with these tribes, and many Bushmen are coming to faith in the God their ancestors once knew, the God who sent Jesus!

### -> To the Cross

Genesis 1 shows us a good God who made a good world. But we don't live in that world anymore. Something went terribly wrong. The Creator who spoke the universe into existence knew that His creation would rebel against Him. And He had a plan, before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). The God who created us in His image would one day take on human image Himself. Jesus, the Word through whom all things were made (John 1:3), would enter His own creation to save it. The cross is where the Creator died for His creatures. The resurrection is where He began making all things new.