

WHY GENESIS?

It may seem obvious to start a Bible reading plan in Genesis—but you’ll notice that we aren’t covering every book, nor are we going strictly chronologically across Scripture. Why Genesis, then?

Genesis sets up the major themes of Scripture. We would be hard-pressed to find a major biblical theme that is not explored or at least set up in Genesis. Creation, being made in the image of God, the seriousness of sin and rebellion, relationship with and knowing God, faith, grace, promises—I could go on, but the point is clear. Understanding Genesis is absolutely key to understanding the Bible—for it introduces us to many of the main themes that will be explored throughout Scripture.

Genesis introduces us to the main plot of Scripture. 1) God 2) working for his ultimate glory 3) by reversing the curse 4) and bringing blessing 5) through the promised offspring of the woman: Jesus. Genesis is like a movie or book that gives us the ending from the beginning and then works to show how it comes about. We learn in Genesis 3:15 that the fall, sin, and Satan will not be the last word—but a promised offspring will come who will defeat Satan and bring us spiritual blessing. We then are to read the rest of the Old Testament like the Israelites would have—looking forward to this promised offspring who would bring salvation.

Genesis introduces us to the covenants between God and man—the backbone of Scripture. A biblical covenant is a special relationship between God and a group of people that gives direction to how they will interact with him going forward. We often talk about the old covenant (between God and Israel) and the new covenant (between God and all believers in Christ); but Genesis develops many of the other covenants in Scripture. There is the covenant between God and Adam (Adamic covenant) where God commands Adam to be fruitful, multiply, and exercise dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26-28). There is the covenant between God and Noah (Noahic covenant) where God invites Noah to the calling that Adam failed in—to be fruitful, multiply, and exercise dominion over creation (Genesis 8:20-9:17). There is the covenant between God and Abraham (Abrahamic covenant) where God promises to give Abraham a land, a multitude of offspring, and to bless him ultimately as a means to bless the other nations (Genesis 12:1-3; 15; 17:1-14). These covenants are more than just narrative-advancers: they show us who God is, how he enters into a relationship with his people, and foreshadow how he will ultimately enter into a relationship with us in Christ.

Genesis gives us an answer to why our world is the way that it is—and even more, what to do about it. If you’ve never read through Genesis (or even if it has been awhile); you might be amazed at just how quickly the sinfulness of mankind takes over. Even the God-fearing heroes of the book—Noah, Abraham, Joseph—are flawed. It doesn’t take long for things to go south. The world is fallen, the curse pervades, sin effects all things—what can be done? Thankfully, Genesis also gives the solution. Genesis 15:6 describes Abraham: “And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” Abraham was saved similarly to us—through belief in God and his promises. As you read Genesis—don’t be discouraged as you are reminded of how fallen our world is. Instead, let your heart be stirred to press in nearer to God, that you would find refuge in him in the midst of our fallen world.

More themes could be added, but hopefully you see the importance of reading Genesis. Maybe you’ve tried to read Genesis before and have found it long, unwieldy, or confusing. Let this time be different. Look for these themes in the book, push through when you struggle, and ask questions of others in the church when you are confused. Understanding Genesis sets us up to interpret the rest of Scripture—and ultimately see/know God—well. May the Lord do this in our lives as we read Genesis.