

This Changes Everything

Session 1: How It Was: The World And Our Hearts Before the Change

What We Want Students to Learn: That as human beings, we are desperately in need of a Savior.

Main Scripture: Genesis 1-3

Supplemental Scripture: Romans 3:23, Psalm 14:1-7

Session Snapshot: When we understand where we come from, we have the proper lens through which to see exactly how and why we need to be transformed. Today, we'll turn to our origin story: how humanity was created by a loving God, how He provided for us in every way, and the betrayal in the Garden that separated us. We'll also seek to understand sinfulness vs. God's holiness on a macro level, and talk about how it relates us personally, in a micro sense.

Bible Background

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

Teacher Prep Video

Each Small Group Leader's Guide comes with a *Teacher Prep Video*. These are simply short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

Your teacher prep videos are located in your download, under Small Group Lesson Plans. There is a sub-folder titled "Teacher Prep Videos" that will have a document for you. On the document, you should be able to click the link designated for the lesson you are currently on.

The Details

Who wrote this book?

While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).

When was it written?

It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make the date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC

What was the purpose for its writing?

Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eves' fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people, but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

The Main Point

The main point for this session is for students to understand that God is holy, and that our sin separates from Him. The transgressions that Adam and Eve committed aren't just old stories that have no impact on people's lives today. Humanity lives in the continued cycle of personal sin and hollow sacrifice today.

The Takeaway

The takeaway here is the practical knowledge of how we are a sinful people, and a focus on the grace of God displayed in the sending of His son to be the sacrifice for our sin.

Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: an introductory activity called *Getting Started*; the Bible study section called *Digging In*; and an application-focused segment called *Wrapping Up*.

Getting Started

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This lesson will utilize pages 8-13 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
 - This activity will use page 9.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll need scratch paper or notecards. Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, welcome students to their first Small Group Session. If everyone in the group doesn't already know each other, take a moment to have everyone introduce themselves. Explain to them that you're going to spend a lot of time together this week. Explain that a great way to get to know someone is by learning about the weirdest thing they did as a kid.

THEN, pass out notecards or some other kind of scratch paper, along with something to write with. Instruct students to write down a quirky habit or bizarre experience they had when they were younger. (Anything from "I used to be obsessed with marine life and wore a scuba mask everywhere," to "I forced everyone in my family to refer to me as Buttons McGee.") Once you've collected everyone's submission, mix them up and pass them out again. Go around the circle and have each student read their new card aloud. As each one is revealed, ask students to try and guess who belongs to which one. Revel in the weirdness of your students.

THEN, instruct students to turn to page 9 in their Student Books. Direct their attention to the activity entitled "Origin Stories." Say something like:

- **We're going to talk about origin stories. Ask if anyone in your group is familiar with origin stories. If not, tell them that an origin story is essentially the backstory of how a character got to be who they are, most frequently seen in comics for superheroes.**

NEXT, instruct your small group to divide into two groups, then to match the origin story with the character. When they've finished, lead students in a short discussion. Ask questions similar to the following:

- **Why are these origin stories important?**
 - Answers will vary, but if no one answers, point out that origin stories give us context as to where these superheroes are coming from.
- **Why is it important to understand where someone is coming from?**
 - Answers will vary.

- **Did these origin stories give you a better idea of why these superheroes behave a certain way?**
 - Answers will vary. An example here is Iron Man, whose origin story of being forced to create weaponry for his evil kidnappers lead him to use his money and talent for good.

FINALLY, begin to transition to the Bible study portion of the lesson by saying something like the following:

- **We're going to talk about OUR origin story. Sure, we each have our own backstory of how we became who we are today. They serve the purpose of discovering and understanding someone's context. But humanity as a whole shares an origin story. Uncovering this story will help us understand the foundations of who we are, why we do the things we do, and why the Gospel has been set up in this way.**

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to *Digging In*.

Digging In

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 10-11 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, have a student read the Session 1 introduction on page 8. Then, have several students turn to the following scriptures:

- Genesis 1:1-23
- Genesis 1:24-31
- Genesis 2:5-9
- Genesis 2:15-25
- Genesis 3:1-13
- Genesis 3:14-24

While they are looking and getting situated, tell everyone that the Greek translation of the word Genesis literally means "origin." Say something like:

- **What we're about to read informs our own origin story: who we are, who God is, and how we live in the world today.**

Then have your designated readers go through their readings. When they have finished, tell students that the Scripture you have just read together is going to act as a lens through which to view their entire experience here, and their lives.

NEXT, ask students questions about the text similar to the following:

- **What is something that jumps out at you when we read these first few verses of creation?**
 - Answers will vary, but point out the repetition of "And the Lord saw that it was good."
- **What do you see that is different from this pattern in chapter 1, verse 31?**
 - *Answer:* After man and woman were created, the Lord called it very good, instead of just good.
- **Let's move down to chapter 2, verse 16. What does God say to Adam?**
 - Answers will stick pretty close to "do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," but be sure to point out that God also tells Adam he may eat from ANY of the other trees in the garden.
- **Skip to verse 25. What sticks out to you in this verse?**

- Answers will vary (and there will probably be some giggling), but mention that Adam and Eve were naked, but not ashamed. This will come into play later in our origin story.

THEN, instruct students to skip to chapter 3. Explain that they are about to encounter some major conflict in the origin story. First we have God creating a beautiful and functional garden. Then we have Him creating man and woman, making them the caretakers of the garden and everything in it. Ask:

- **What is the first thing the serpent says to Eve? Why is it important?**
 - *Answer:* He asks her “Did God actually say . . .” The serpent plants the idea that God is holding out on her, that what He’s asked her to do (not eat from the tree) is not in her best interest. In this way, he plants doubt in her mind that God is for her. The serpent also deliberately mis-quotes God’s instructions.
- **What does the serpent say in verses 4-5?**
 - *Answer:* The serpent tells her that she won’t actually die and in fact, she’ll be like God. He made her discontent with all the other trees (literally every other tree in the whole garden) she had access to.
- **Why is this significant?**
 - *Answer:* 1) God placed the man and the woman in authority over the beasts (including the serpent). By listening and heeding the words of the serpent, they are already disobeying God. 2) The man and the woman are already made in the image of God. They are already like God in this way.
- **What happens when the man and the woman eat the fruit?**
 - *Answer:* Their eyes are opened and they become aware of their nakedness, only now it makes them ashamed.
- **Was the serpent right when he said you will not surely die?**
 - *Answer:* While Adam and Eve didn’t immediately die when they ate the fruit, their disobedience to and betrayal of their relationship with God lead to their death.
- **In verse 8, God shows up, and Adam and Eve hide from Him. They know they’ve messed up big time. In verse 14, who does God speak to first? What does He say?**
 - *Answer:* He curses the serpent first, telling him that he is now the “most cursed” among all the animals.
- **In verse 15, something very important happens. Do you know what it is?**
 - *Answer:* God says that there will be enmity, or bad blood, between the offspring of the serpent, and the offspring of the woman. One could say that this is just a picture of how much humans and snakes do not get along (and this is true, snakes are gross). But actually, there’s a deeper meaning here. It’s a prophecy by God. The serpent, or the deceiver, will be defeated by a future offspring of the woman. This is the first mention in scripture of the Gospel, of Jesus’s defeat of Satan. God technically hasn’t even cursed Adam and Eve to death yet, and He’s already building them a plan of salvation. “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” is another way of saying: the snake might find a way to hurt mankind, but in the end, the snake will be crushed.

Say something like:

- **In verses 16-19, God curses Adam and Eve. This was the fall of humankind. A holy God demands holiness, demands obedience, demands loyalty. Not because He is demanding, but because in His perfection, He cannot have anything less. With their disobedience, with their betrayal, they allowed sin into the world, and subsequently, they ushered in pain, death, suffering, war, hunger, poverty, and so on. It is all a direct consequence of that afternoon in the Garden.**

Ask students to discuss this: how does it make them feel?

NEXT, instruct another student to read verse 21. Then ask:

- **What does this sentence mean to you?**
 - *Answer:* That while Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God, He still made clothes for them. He still cared for them. Interestingly enough, God had to kill something in His creation to make clothes. Something had to die. This is yet another hint at how we will be saved: Jesus must die for us to have communion with God again.

Direct students' attention to look at verses 22-24. Then explain that it's really hard to see any hope in these last verses. We went from perfect communion with God to separation from God. But remind them that God, while pronouncing the curse over Adam and Eve and all their descendants, was actively proclaiming over them a way back to Him.

THEN, ask students to turn to page 10. Explain that you have talked a lot about humanity's origin story, but now you're going to think about your own origin stories. In the same way that sin and its consequences defined humanity's story, sin and its consequences also defines their story. Instruct students to spread out and grab a pen or pencil. Take some time to walk through the questions on page 16. These questions will help them map out their own origin story, helping them better understand where they came from. Allow students 5-10 minutes to work through this exercise. Once they've finished, have them return to the group. Ask:

- **Did working through your origin story reveal anything to you about your context?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Did you discover the effects of sin (either your own or someone else's) in your origin story?**
 - Answers will vary.

NEXT, have students turn to page 11. Set the stage for the passage you're about to read by referencing the following bullet points:

- **The Apostle Paul was speaking here to Jews (God's chosen people) and Gentiles (folks who were former pagans or didn't have any kind of religious upbringing. Just basically anyone who wasn't a Jew). Two very different people groups who were now united under the church of Jesus.**
- **Paul talks a lot about the "The Law." He's referencing the Jewish law (basically the Ten Commandments and all the extra rules [over 600 of them] that God and the rabbis gave the Jews in order to ensure they would be redeemed).**
- **He's trying to explain to his audience that it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, everyone has sinned.**

THEN, read or have a student read Romans 3:21-23. When you've finished, direct students' attention to the questions written on page 11 under the header, "Who Is Righteous?" Work through the questions as a group. The questions/answers are given for you below:

- **What is Romans 3:21-23 saying?**
 - *Answer:* That no one, no matter if you are Jew or Gentile, can keep the law so well that it earns them salvation. Everyone who has ever lived has fallen short of God's glory. Everyone has sinned.
- **Do you agree with this passage in Scripture?**
 - Answers will vary. Ask students WHY they do or don't.

- **If all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, what does that mean in our relationship with Him?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, say something like the following:

- **No matter who we are, no matter where we come from, no matter how much money we have or don't have, every single person on earth has failed to meet the standards set by God. Our origin story is one of being sinful and unable to save ourselves. Adam and Eve got it started, but you and I are still following in their footsteps.**

Transition to the *Wrapping Up* portion of your lesson.

Wrapping Up

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 12 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, ask one student to turn to Psalm 14:1-7. Say something like the following:

- **It's not very comforting that everyone, no matter what, has sinned. Because a perfect God demands holiness. We must understand the depth and reality of our sin if we are to accept the gift of salvation. It's painful to realize how sinful we are and how we, in our humanity, can only be sinful. The passage we're about to read was probably written as a hymn. When the Israelites gathered together, this song was to lament the state of the world, how sin devoured humanity. It's not a happy topic, but there is deeper joy coming.**

THEN, read or have a student read the passage aloud. When you've finished, ask students to turn to page 12 in their student books. Explain that we have to understand our role in sin, and we have to mourn it. So explain that they're going to write their own psalm of lament about their own sin and the sin that's affected their lives.

Allow students some time to write their psalms using the prompts on page 12. After a few minutes, let them share if they want. Let the discussion revolve around how they are processing their role in the narrative you've worked through today.

FINALLY, wrap up your discussion by saying something like the following:

- **This is a hard conversation to have with ourselves. It's also hard to leave the story on this note. Because there is so much more coming. But an understanding of our sinful nature, of the fall of man, of our role in sin is crucial to getting our heads around WHY we need a Savior.**

Ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the devotions located on pages 38-45 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them. (The first devotion is on page 38.)

If there are no more questions, close in prayer for your group.