

Confirmation 2020-21
Session 4 – Genesis
October 4, 2020

Background Information

Many Christians feel like they have to check their brains at the door of the church to be a “true Christian.” This idea is brought on by evangelical fundamentalist Christians who often will say about the Bible, “God said it. I believe it. That’s the end of it.” Its not that Christians of the ELCA don’t believe the Bible, we simply think that to take it at face value is to limit it to the printed word, when the Bible is the living Word of God, being made new to every reader, every day. Digging deeper into every story, and every passage of every story, and even every word of every passage will illuminate the scripture and give us a greater understanding of God and our relationship with God.

As has already been mentioned in Session 2, “The Bible is an amazing collection of writings of many types of literature, written by many people and brought together over thousands of years, all to tell one grand story about who God is and who we are in relationship to God.” This session will open your eyes to this.

Today we will begin at the beginning, with the book of Genesis. You will not need to check your brains at the door. On the contrary, you will need to expand your understanding of

Science and Genesis have a complicated history. Both tell stories of the world we live in, but they answer very different questions. Genesis is not a textbook about how the world was created, but a beautifully written gripping narrative that tells us that God wants us in on what God is up to in the world. It is a story not only of how we got here, but of who brought us into being and why.

Genesis is full of beginnings: beginning with our first parents in the garden, beginning anew with Noah, the beginning of language, beginning

to form the chosen people with Abram and Sarai. Out of chaos and mess, God has always been making something new-and now we, with all our mistakes and hopes and dreams, are invited into that work. Genesis shows us that our whole lives are an opportunity to be a part of God's ongoing creation-and not just if we're super artistic. Since creation is not finished, everything from how we relate to our families to how we care for the earth is a chance to be part of co-creating with God.

What you need to know

Genesis is not a textbook. The Bible and science are concerned with different things, so it not helpful to pit them against each other. Both are useful and both can make the world a better place, but they are not in competition with one another.

Genesis is a book full of stories about where we come from. It's not only about creation but also about making mistakes, starting over, and the origins of God's "chosen people." All of these stories point to God's work (with us) to create something out of nothing, to transform chaos into light and order.

We are made to be co-creators with God. God makes man and woman in the image of God and then gives them a divine charge: "Be fruitful and multiply." Just as God has been bringing order and life out of chaos and darkness, humanity is now invited into caring for creation and making it our home. It is not ours. We don't own it. We are stewards, meaning that it is God's and we are giving the responsibility for tending it.

About the Lutheran Study Bible (LSB)

The introduction to Genesis is found beginning on page 47 in the LSB. Please read the article entitled "Background File," "What's the Story?" and "What's the Message." These articles can be found at the beginning of every book of the Bible and are very helpful in getting a basic understanding of the book's content.

Into the Story

Included in this one book is the story of creation, humanity's choice to become involved in sin, and the consequence of that choice. Though God didn't need to give humanity a second chance God always does, and so Genesis is full of stories of second chances too. Included in early part of Genesis are some great stories including God's reboot with the flood and Noah and his family and the story of the tower of Babel. Then God decided to work on a smaller scale starting with one righteous man by the name of Abram and his wife Sarai. Out of Abram and Sarai, God made a "great nation" and from them a line of people came that resulted in you and me. It's a complicated story but one that you will love to read. Genesis is full of weird, wild stories that won't make much sense if they are examined through the lens of science. But taken as metaphor, it is a beautiful story of God who is best described by one word, "love" and how creation is God's love demonstrated. Humanity screws up again and again in this story and yet God doesn't throw up God's hands and put an end to it all. God is a god of second chances (and more). This never changes even into our day.

Essay Questions

In your own words, answer three of the following essay questions in 100-150 words each and return them to Pastor Jesse by email at pastor@zionohio.org no later than next Sunday, October 11.

1. Read Genesis 1:1-2:25. The heading after 2:4 is a clue that there are really two creation accounts in the Bible. A) Why do you think that is? B) In your understanding from what you have learned in school already, how does the story of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 fit with how modern scientific evidence that attempts to describe how the world was created?
2. Read Genesis 3:1-24. This story is often called "The Fall" and is a the story of the serpent tempting Adam and Eve to disobey God that got them kicked out of the Garden of Eden. As a story, not a

historical account, how would you describe “sin”? Not the particular sin of Adam and Eve, but “sin” in general?

3. Read Genesis 6:9 – 7:24. It is obvious that from the beginning, human beings have been in an adversarial relationship with God. The Flood story was God’s second reboot attempt. Does this mean that God made a mistake in creating people? If God is all knowing, why didn’t God foresee the problem of sin?
4. Read Genesis 11:1-9, the story of the Tower of Babel. What does the name “Babel” mean and what was the real sin of the people here.
5. Read Genesis 12:1-20, the story of the call of Abram and Sarai. This is one wacky story. Why would God call someone who appears to be so spineless to build a nation out of, and what does that say about you?
6. Read Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-40. In this story of Isaac and his sons Jacob and Esau, there is lying and deceit and cheating. Why would a story such as this be in the Bible, and why would God use people like this to build a nation? What does this say about us?
7. Read Genesis 37-50, the story of Joseph. This is also a terrible story of a father who plays favorites, the jealousy of brothers, the selling of a member of the family into slavery and yet mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Can you explain why a story like this made it into the Bible, and what we are to learn from it?