

Beginnings: A Walk Through Genesis

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Additional Course Material Available at <http://gd25.us/zDRQ5d>

Tremper Longman III opens his book, *How to Read Genesis*¹, with these words:

Beginnings. We can learn a great deal about people if we know their origins. People often want to know their roots in order to come to a better understanding of themselves. Such interests motivates the study of national history as well as our own personal genealogy.

But there is something even more important, more fundamental, than our family past or our national or ethnic origins. What about the beginning of the human race? Who are we? Were we made with a purpose? Does our existence have meaning beyond our mere lifetimes? These are some of the fundamental questions that nag us as we reflect on life.

But there are even more questions. What is our relationship with the rest of creation? Is it there for our use, or are we simply one of a large variety of animals that prowl the earth, none more privileged than another? Was the world created for us, or are we simply an accident of chemical and biological processes?

Even more basic, is there anything that is beyond the physical? Is what we see all there is, or is there something spiritual that cannot be detected directly by the senses? And most important: what about God? Is there a God, and if so, what is he like and how do we relate to him?

These questions about origins are foundational questions, and the book of Genesis, though not answering all our foundational questions, addresses many of them.

¹ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 13.

The book of Genesis answers such questions as to origins, our relationship to the world, our relationship to other creatures, other humans, and with God himself. To recognize the significance of the rest of redemptive history (Jesus Christ) I submit that one needs an understanding of Genesis.

To overstate the importance of this foundational book is likely not possible. Though the book is filled with interpretive controversies, showing us that it is not always easy to understand, it is nevertheless epically important to our understanding of the rest of the Bible. It is my hope that as we pursue our study of Genesis this importance will shine through the pages.

So aside from these questions Longman has posed, what do we want to get out of our pursuit of looking at Genesis? A) Have any of you ever done a “more than surface” reading of Genesis? B) What is it you would hope to get out of this series?

Not a Typical Sunday School Class

Let me tell you how this class will be different from other Sunday School classes you have been in and that I have taught. Before we do that though, let’s just talk about what the idea of Sunday School is in general. I think we all probably have differing ideas so let’s try to get on the same page.

Give me some of your ideas of what Sunday is or should be.

Here are some ideas I have and would love to see you participate in.

1. Spend some time each week reading in Genesis, in particular, surrounding the areas that we are going through. I’ll be sure to highlight this each week.
2. Get some of the recommended books I mention and read it along side of this class. You’ll be shocked at how much more you’ll learn and retain.

3. As you read in Genesis and in other books, jot down questions that you can bring to class. This will not only help you and your understanding of Genesis, you'll be serving the entire class as well.

Afterall, this is *Sunday School* right? It is not Sunday Seminar! I don't want you to think of these things as homework, per se, but as life-study assignments. These are things that will help you understand your Bible better and the gospel clearer. There will be no gold stars on the wall, nor will I call anyone out individually. However, I promise that if you don't work with me on this you'll simply be wasting your time with this class.

So, here is your first "life-study assignment."

1. Consider purchasing the book, [*How to Read Genesis*](#). This is going to be an immensely helpful book for you to read as we work through this class. Many things I talk about will come from this book. I will be glad to purchase these for everyone. So consider it, and next week I'll have a sign-up for the book. The cost of the book is only \$10 and I'll cover the shipping on it.
2. Choose for yourself a translation of the Bible that is really readable, such as the NIV or the NLT. Start reading Genesis this next week. This does not need to replace your devotions, however, it would be helpful for you to read at least the first two chapters a couple of times through and making some observations as you go.

I hope you'll put some effort into this class. You'll only get out of it what you put into it. I can be a talking head all morning long, but at the end of the day if you are not working through the material with me you are simply wasting your time.