



**Gospel-Centered Families**

*Gospel-Centered Humanity*

Genesis 1:26-31, 3:1-7 &

Colossians 1:13-20

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/male-and-female-he-created-them-in-the-image-of-god>

<https://knowingscripture.com/articles/the-image-of-god-fallen-and-restored>

<https://www.ligonier.org/posts/only-christ-can-image-god-be-restored>

Sermon Outline:

Genesis 1:26-31, 3:1-7 & Colossians 1:13-20

1. God Created Humanity to Reflect His Glory. Genesis 1:26-31
2. Sin Distorts Humanity's Reflection of God's Glory. Genesis 3:1-7
3. The Gospel Restores Humanity's Reflection of God's Glory. Colossians 1:13-20

**Genesis 1:26-31, 3:1-7 &  
Colossians 1:13-20**

**The Creation**

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky

and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so.

31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**The Fall of Man**

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

### **The Incomparable Christ**

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

# Discussion Questions

**Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:26-31, 3:1-7 & Colossians 1:13-20.**

## INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

**1. What stood out to you from the sermon or from the text this week? What has God shown you about the centrality of the gospel in your life this week?**

## UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

### **I. God Created Humanity to Reflect His Glory. Genesis 1:26-31**

**2. What does it mean to be made in God's image? More specifically, what does it mean for humanity to reflect God's glory? What does this mean for how we should live our lives?**

*(There is no singular characteristic of human beings that makes us image bearers of God. Rather it is the whole of a human being, "heart, soul, mind, strength," etc. that makes each one of us image bearers. It is not just one thing about us, but all of the things about us that reflect God's glory. And that is what it means to bear His image. We reflect Him, so to speak. This means that our character, actions, words, thoughts, and interactions with others are to be like Him. We find joy and fulfillment when we live according to His nature, because that is what we are made to do.)*

**3. Why did God give us the responsibility and privilege as image bearers to multiply over the earth and exercise dominion over creation? How do filling the earth with human beings and stewarding the earth bring more glory to God?**

*(God desires humanity to reflect His glory far and wide over the whole earth, and He wants humanity to take part in His creation by maintaining and taking care of it. He brings us into His project and wants more of us to exist and partake in His glory. We find this extremely fulfilling, because it is what we were made for. But when we do these things for something other than God's glory, then we eventually find these things to be empty on their own.)*

**4. How does the abundance and goodness of creation described in Genesis 1:26-31 inform our understanding of God's character and His original intention for humanity?**

*(God is good, and all that He created was originally very good, including humanity. So this means that His intent for us to reflect His glory is good in general and good for us specifically. It also necessarily means that it is contrary to our design, and therefore bad in general and bad for us specifically, when we do not reflect His glory.)*

**II. Sin Distorts Humanity's Reflection of God's Glory. Genesis 3:1-7**

**5. How did sin enter the world, and what were its immediate consequences for humanity's relationship with God and each other? Why does sin distort our reflection of God's glory, and how do we see that distortion in humanity today, both individually and collectively?**

*(Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. Eve believed the lie that she could become wise and like God on her own by eating the forbidden fruit, and Adam agreed by passively eating it with her. In that seemingly small act of disobedience they egregiously usurped God's authority as the arbiter of good and evil and rejected Him as God. Since then, every human being has sought to bring him or herself glory in their hearts instead of God.)*

**6. How does the fall of humanity into sin inform our understanding of human nature and our capacity for good? In what way does sinful humanity still bear God's image, and how does that inform how we should interact with sinful human beings?**

*(Scripture makes it clear that humanity still bears God's image in some way, but that that image is distorted by sin. We see this clearly in Genesis 9:6 and Romans 3:23. So while we still reflect God's glory in our essence, we also reflect it in a distorted and broken way. Even when we do "good" things, we do them for our own intentions and our own glory because of our sin. This means that fallen humanity inaccurately represents God because of our sin. For God's glory to be properly represented in us, something has to be done about our sin.)*

**7. Before reading Colossians, what hope (if any) do you think Genesis 3 offers after the fall?**

**III. The Gospel Restores Humanity's Reflection of God's Glory. Colossians 1:13-20**

**8. Colossians 1:13-14 speaks of being "rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son." How does this language relate to the distortion caused by sin?**

*(Our sin has placed us in the "domain of darkness." Instead of reigning as God's image bearers, we try to reign over our lives in sin and darkness. But when we are rescued from this, we begin to reflect God's glory accurately through Christ.)*

**9. How does understanding Christ's identity help us understand His ability to restore humanity's reflection of God's glory? What does reconciliation mean in Colossians 1:20, and how does it specifically address the problem introduced in Genesis 3?**

*(Jesus isn't just a good representation of God's glory in humanity. He is the exact image of God, because He is God in the flesh. He is even more than just a reflection, He is the essence of God in human form. He doesn't merely reflect God's glory, He is the emanation of God's glory. Because He is both God and man, He lives out the responsibility of humanity to reflect God's glory perfectly. Through His death and resurrection, He paid for our sins and gives us His righteousness, so that by faith we can be reconciled to a right relationship with God. It is by faith in Christ that God credits us with righteousness - perfect reflection of His glory - too. As we grow in our faith in this life, we functionally reflect more and more of God's glory in our practical lives. And when Christ returns to make all things new, believers will perfectly reflect God's glory for eternity.)*

**10. Describe in your own words how the gospel restores our ability to reflect God's glory? What does this restoration look like practically in the life of a believer?**

**Gen. 1:24–31** This is by far the longest section given over to a particular day, indicating that day 6 is the peak of interest for this passage. The final region to be filled is the dry land, or Earth (as it has been designated in v. 10). Here a significant distinction is drawn between all the living creatures that are created to live on the dry land, and human beings. Whereas vv. 24–25 deal with the “living creatures” that the earth is to bring forth, vv. 26–30 concentrate on the special status assigned to humans.

**Gen. 1:26** Let us make man in our image. The text does not specify the identity of the “us” mentioned here. Some have suggested that God may be addressing the members of his court, whom the OT elsewhere calls “sons of God” (e.g., Job 1:6) and the NT calls “angels,” but a significant objection is that man is not made in the image of angels, nor is there any indication that angels participated in the creation of human beings. Many Christians and some Jews have taken “us” to be God speaking to himself, since God alone does the making in Gen. 1:27 (cf. 5:1); this would be the first hint of the Trinity in the Bible (cf. 1:2).

**Gen. 1:27** There has been debate about the expression image of God. Many scholars point out the idea, commonly used in the ancient Near East, of the king who was the visible representative of the deity; thus the king ruled on behalf of the god. Since v. 26 links the image of God with the exercise of dominion over all the other creatures of the seas, heavens, and earth, one can see that humanity is endowed here with authority to rule the earth as God’s representatives or vice-regents (see note on v. 28). Other scholars, seeing the pattern of male and female, have concluded that humanity expresses God’s image in relationship, particularly in well-functioning human community, both in marriage and in wider society. Traditionally, the image has been seen as the capacities that set man apart from the other animals ways in which humans resemble God, such as in the characteristics of reason, morality, language, a capacity for relationships governed by love and commitment, and creativity in all forms of art. All these insights can be put together by observing that the resemblances (man is like God in a series of ways) allow mankind to represent God in ruling, and to establish worthy relationships with God, with one another, and with the rest of the creation. This “image” and this dignity apply to both “male and female” human beings. (This view is unique in the context of the ancient Near East. In Mesopotamia, e.g., the gods created humans merely to carry out work for them.) The Hebrew term ‘adam, translated as man, is often a generic term that denotes both male and female, while sometimes it refers to man in distinction from woman (2:22, 23, 25; 3:8, 9, 12, 20): it becomes the proper name “Adam” (2:20; 3:17, 21; 4:1; 5:1). At this stage, humanity as a species is set apart from all other creatures and crowned with glory and honor as ruler of the earth (cf. Ps. 8:5–8). The events recorded in Genesis 3, however, will have an important bearing on the creation status of humanity.



## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

**Gen. 1:28** As God had blessed the sea and sky creatures (v. 22), so too he blesses humanity. Be fruitful and multiply. This motif recurs throughout Genesis in association with divine blessing (see 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4) and serves as the basis of the biblical view that raising faithful children is a part of God's creation plan for mankind. God's creation plan is that the whole earth should be populated by those who know him and who serve wisely as his vice-regents or representatives. subdue it, and have dominion. The term "subdue" (Hb. kabash) elsewhere means to bring a people or a land into subjection so that it will yield service to the one subduing it (Num. 32:22, 29). Here the idea is that the man and woman are to make the earth's resources beneficial for themselves, which implies that they would investigate and develop the earth's resources to make them useful for human beings generally. This command provides a foundation for wise scientific and technological development; the evil uses to which people have put their dominion come as a result of Genesis 3. over every living thing. As God's representatives, human beings are to rule over every living thing on the earth. These commands are not, however, a mandate to exploit the earth and its creatures to satisfy human greed, for the fact that Adam and Eve were "in the image of God" (1:27) implies God's expectation that human beings will use the earth wisely and govern it with the same sense of responsibility and care that God has toward the whole of his creation.

**Gen. 1:31** Having previously affirmed on six occasions that particular aspects of creation are "good" (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), God now states, after the creation of the man and the woman, that everything he has made is very good; the additional behold invites the reader to imagine seeing creation from God's vantage point. While many things do not appear to be good about the present-day world, this was not so at the beginning. Genesis goes on to explain why things have changed, indicating that no blame should be attributed to God. Everything he created was very good: it answers to God's purposes and expresses his own overflowing goodness. Despite the invasion of sin (ch. 3), the material creation retains its goodness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:4).

**Gen. 3:1–24** The Couple Rebels against God. The sudden and unexplained arrival of a cunning serpent presents a challenge of immense importance to the human couple. Their choice is to disregard God's instructions, an act of willful rebellion that has terrible consequences for the whole of creation. As a result, God's creation is thrown into disorder, with chaotic effects that result from the disruption of all the harmonious relationships that God had previously established.

**Gen. 3:1** The speaking serpent is suddenly introduced into the story with minimum detail. Nothing is mentioned about its origin, other than that it is one of the beasts of the field. Although the serpent is eventually portrayed





## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

the initial introduction is full of ambiguity regarding its true nature. While the brief comment that it is the craftiest of the beasts possibly indicates potential danger, the Hebrew term *'arum* does not carry the negative moral connotations of the English words "crafty" and "cunning." Similarly, the serpent's initial question may have sounded quite innocent, although it deliberately misquotes God as saying that the couple must not eat of any tree in the garden. Did the serpent merely misunderstand what God had said? In these ways the subtlety of the serpent's approach to the woman is captured by the narrator. It is noteworthy that the serpent also deliberately avoids using God's personal name "Yahweh" ("LORD") when he addresses the woman. Here is another hint that his presence in the garden presents a threat. Although his initial words appear deceptively innocent, his subsequent contradiction of God leaves no doubt about the serpent's motive and purpose. The text does not indicate when or how the serpent became evil. As the narrative proceeds, it becomes clear that more than a simple snake is at work here; an evil power is using the snake (see note on v. 15). As indicated by God's declaration that "everything he had made . . . was very good" (1:31), clearly evil entered the created world at some unknown point after God's work of creation was completed. Likewise, nothing in the Bible suggests the eternal existence of evil (see notes on Isa. 14:12–15; Ezek. 28:11–19).

**Gen. 3:2–3** The woman's response largely echoes the divine instruction given in 2:16–17 regarding the tree of knowledge (for more on the meaning of the covenant, see note on 2:17), although she fails to identify the tree clearly as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and adds the comment neither shall you touch it. These minor variations are possibly meant to convey, even at this stage, that the woman views God's instructions as open to human modification.

**Gen. 3:4–5** The serpent not only directly contradicts what God has said but goes on to present the fruit of the tree as something worth obtaining: by eating it, the couple will be like God, knowing good and evil. The irony of the serpent's remarks should not be overlooked. The couple, unlike the serpent, has been made in the image of God (1:26–27). In this way they are already like God. Moreover, being in the image of God, they are expected to exercise authority over all the beasts of the field, which includes the serpent. By obeying the serpent, however, they betray the trust placed in them by God. This is not merely an act of disobedience; it is an act of treachery. Those who were meant to govern the earth on God's behalf instead rebel against their divine King and obey one of his creatures. You will not surely die. It is sometimes claimed that the serpent is correct when he says these things to the couple, for they do not "die"; Adam lives to be 930 years old (5:5). Further, their eyes are opened (3:7) and God acknowledges in v. 22 that "the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil." Yet the



## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

serpent speaks half-truths, promising much but delivering little. Their eyes are indeed opened, and they come to know something, but it is only that they are naked. They know good and evil by experience, but their sense of guilt makes them afraid to meet God; they have become slaves to evil. And while they do not cease to exist physically, they are expelled from the garden-sanctuary and God's presence. Cut off from the source of life and the tree of life, they are in the realm of the dead. What they experience outside of Eden is not life as God intended, but spiritual death.

**Gen. 3:6** when the woman saw. Like all the other trees in the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was "pleasant to the sight and good for food" (2:9). The irony is that somehow the serpent has made the woman discontent with the permitted trees, focusing her desire on this one. Its deadly appeal to her, apparently, is its ability to make one wise (see note on 2:17)—wise, however, not according to the "fear of the LORD" (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). she also gave some to her husband who was with her. The fact that Adam was "with her" and that he knowingly ate what God had forbidden indicates that Adam's sin was both an act of conscious rebellion against God and a failure to carry out his divinely ordained responsibility to guard or "keep" (Gen. 2:15) both the garden and the woman that God had created as "a helper fit for him" (2:18, 20). The disastrous consequences of Adam's sin cannot be overemphasized, resulting in the fall of mankind, the beginning of every kind of sin, suffering, and pain, as well as physical and spiritual death for the human race.

**Gen. 3:7–13** Eating the fruit transforms the couple, but not for the better. Now ashamed of their nakedness (cf. 2:25), they attempt to clothe themselves. Conscious of the Lord God's presence, they hide. When confronted by God regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the man blames the woman, who in turn blames the serpent.

**Col. 1:13** He has delivered us. Just as God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt under the old covenant (Ex. 6:6; 14:30), he has delivered them now from the domain of darkness, that is, from the realm of Satan and the powers of evil (see Acts 26:18). the kingdom of his beloved Son. This kingdom is the same as the "kingdom of God" (or "kingdom of heaven") that Jesus spoke of (e.g., Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15; etc.), which was central to Jesus' teaching throughout the four Gospels. Jesus is the agent of God who will presently reign (1 Cor. 15:24) until he hands his kingdom over to the Father, when the kingdom of God comes into its full manifestation at the end of the present age. The emphasis here is on the present lordship of Christ.

**Col. 1:14** Redemption means deliverance or liberation, emphasizing here that believers have been delivered and have received forgiveness of their sins.



## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

**Col. 1:15–20** Praise to Christ. In a strongly moving and poetic way, which some scholars think is a quotation from an early Christian hymn, Paul praises the lordship of Christ in relation to both creation and redemption.

**Col. 1:15–17** Christ Is Lord of Creation. Jesus is the Lord, the maker and upholder of all things in the universe.

**Col. 1:15** the image of the invisible God. Paul depicts Christ in terms similar to the presentation of “wisdom” in Proverbs 8 (“When he established the heavens, I [wisdom] was there . . . I was beside him, like a master workman” [Prov. 8:27, 30]). In later Jewish wisdom literature, personified divine wisdom is described as the image of God, firstborn of all creation. It would be wrong to think in physical terms here, as if Paul were asserting that the Son had a physical origin or was somehow created (the classic Arian heresy) rather than existing eternally as the Son, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the Godhead. (See the article on The Trinity.) What Paul had in mind was the rights and privileges of a firstborn son, especially the son of a monarch who would inherit ruling sovereignty. This is how the expression is used of David: “I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Ps. 89:27).

**Col. 1:16** by him all things were created. Jesus did not come into existence when he was born of the virgin Mary. He was the agent of creation through whom God made heaven and earth (John 1:3 and note; 1 Cor. 8:6). Jesus cannot be the first thing created (as the ancient Arian heresy claimed) since “all things” without exception were created by him, thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. Paul is using the current Jewish terms for various rankings of angels (although he doesn’t explain their relative ranks). His emphasis here may be on the evil angels, since they play a significant part in this letter (Col. 2:8, 10, 15, 20). This would not mean, however, that Jesus created evil angels; all spiritual powers were created by Jesus, but some later chose to rebel against God and so to become evil. Jesus is not only the agent of creation but is also the goal of creation, for everything was created by him and for him, that is, for his honor and praise. Since Jesus is in this sense the goal of creation, he must be fully God (see notes on John 1:1; 8:58).

**Col. 1:17** in him all things hold together. Christ continually sustains his creation, preventing it from falling into chaos or disintegrating (cf. Heb. 1:3).

**Col. 1:18–20** Christ Is Lord of Redemption. Christ is Head of the church and has accomplished reconciliation at the cross.

## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

**Col. 1:18** he is the head of the body. Paul spoke elsewhere of the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), but he takes the image a step further here and envisions Christ as the head of the body (see also Eph. 1:22–23; 5:25). This metaphor conveys Christ's leadership over the body and may also suggest his role in providing sustenance for it (see notes on 1 Cor. 11:3; Col. 2:10; 2:19).

**Col. 1:19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. The "fullness" language here and throughout the letter is reminiscent of its use in the OT, where it was said that God "filled" the temple with his presence. For instance, the prophet Ezekiel exclaims, "I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple" (Ezek. 44:4). Jesus not only bears God's glory, but all that God is also dwells in him. He possesses the wisdom, power, Spirit, and glory of God. To say that all this divine fullness dwells in Jesus is to say that he is fully God (see also Col. 2:9).

**Col. 1:20** to reconcile to himself all things. As the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6), Jesus will ultimately quell all rebellion against God and his purposes. For believers, this means present reconciliation to God as his friends. As for nonbelievers and the demonic powers, Christ's universal reign of peace will be enforced on them, for their rebellion will be decisively defeated by Christ as conquering king (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24–28; Rev. 19:11–21; 20:7–10) so that they can no longer do any harm in the universe. The basis for Christ's reign of peace is the blood of his cross. The cross truly is the pivotal point in human and cosmic history. On crucifixion, see note on Matt. 27:35. See also note on Phil. 2:8.

