



# Very good! (Genesis 1:1-31)

## Small Group Study, week commencing 19th February 2024

### *For starters*

Recall a time when you made something you were really pleased with – a meal, a drawing, a pass on the football pitch, an Excel spreadsheet! Share with the group what it was, and why you were so pleased with it.

### *Introduction*

This is the first in a set of studies that will run in parallel to our Lent series on Sundays in which we will take a step back to admire the landscape of the Old Testament story. It can be hard to grasp the big picture of the Old Testament, but by stopping by at some of the milestone points in Old Testament history, we will better understand what it's all about, and that in turns will help us better understand and appreciate the New Testament.

Unsurprisingly then, we begin at the beginning. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, takes its title from its opening words, "In the beginning."

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (verse 1). The phrase "the heavens and the earth" can be taken to mean "everything" in our universe, including black holes, "a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing... has enough energy to escape it" (Wikipedia), and there are some black holes we can disappear down in our study of Genesis if we are not careful. Genesis was not written as a scientific description of how things began. Let's remember this as we kick off this new series.

### *Study*

1. Read [Genesis 1:1-2](#). "It is no accident that God is the subject of the first sentence of the Bible...the Book is about him first of all; to read it with any other primary interest ... is to misread it" (Derek Kidner). **Why do you read the Bible? How can we read it with God as our primary interest?**



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2. Read [Genesis 1:3-25](#). There is a rhythm to much of this chapter. God said, it was done, it was good, and it was named. If there was ever an understatement, surely it was “It was good”! **What do you love most about creation? Before you continue with your study, take some time to pause and worship.**

3. “God said” is repeated 10 times in Genesis 1. “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:3). The power of God’s Word continues as a theme across the pages of Scripture (e.g. [John 1:1](#)). Jesus speaks and people are healed, storms are calmed, evil spirits are driven out. Paul and the other New Testament writers often refer to God’s Word, as in the examples below.

- [Romans 10:17](#)
- [Philippians 2:16](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)
- [2 Timothy 2:9](#)
- [Hebrews 4:12](#)

**What do we learn about God’s Word and its power in our lives from these verses?**

4. Read [Genesis 1:26-31](#). It is only once humankind has been made in his image that, surveying his masterpiece, God announces “Very good!” Saint Augustine said, “Men go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering.” **Do you think of yourself with the same sense of awe as you do other glories of creation?**

**5. How does the author of Genesis underline the pre-eminence of humankind over the other aspects of God’s creation?**

*There are a number of pointers to the pre-eminence of humankind in these verses. We are made in God’s image, given authority to rule over creation, and blessed (verses 22,28).*



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6. Humankind's rule over every other creature is connected to their creation in God's image. As we know from what follows in Genesis 3, that image is spoilt (the restoration of God's image in us ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#)) is part of the salvation story). **How has humankind's broken image affected their rule over creation? When you look at creation now, do you still think "Very good"?**

7. No nature programme on the television nowadays fails to mention our troubled planet and the impacts of global warming, loss of species, pollution, plastics and more. **How should Genesis 1 shape the Christian's attitude towards the environment?**

### *Pray*

Take some of the themes from Genesis 1 and make them a source of prayer, for instance

- Reading God's Word with God as our primary interest
- Celebrating our value in God's eyes and praying for the ongoing restoration of his image
- Hearing again our privilege and responsibility towards creation and being better stewards of it