

COME AND SEE

Catholic Bible Study

Genesis

by

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Come and See ~ Catholic Bible Study
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Catholic Bible Study ~ Genesis

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INTRODUCTION

***“Thy word is a lamp to my feet,
and a light to my path.”***

PSALM 119:105

***May God set His Word in your heart
and fill you with everlasting joy.***

***May you walk in His ways,
always knowing what is right and good,
until you enter your heavenly inheritance. Amen.***

Wisdom literature is the final bridge on a long road that leads to the message of Jesus Christ and to the New Testament. Only there do we find the conclusive and normative scriptural creation account, which reads: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made’ (John 1:1-3). John quite consciously took up here once again the first words of the Bible and read the creation account anew, with Christ, in order to tell us definitively what the Word is which appears throughout the Bible and with which God desires to shake our hearts. Thus ... we Christians do not read the Old Testament for its own sake but always with Christ and through Christ...

We read it with him in whom all things have been fulfilled and in whom all of its validity and truth are revealed. Therefore we read the law, like the creation account with him; and from him we know what God wished over the course of centuries to have gradually penetrate the human heart and soul. Christ frees us from the slavery of the letter, and precisely thus does he give back to us, renewed, the truth of the images.

The ancient church and the church of the Middle Ages also knew this. They knew that the Bible is a whole and that we only understand its truth when we understand it with Christ in mind -- with the freedom that he bestowed on us and with the profundity whereby he reveals what is enduring through images.

Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) 15-16

God bless you as you embark upon this Come and See: *Catholic Bible Study ~ Genesis*. Whether you have studied Sacred Scripture for many years or are opening the Word of God for the first time, trust that your efforts will be pleasing to God and prove to be rewarding for you as well.



God's Word enables you to study again and again and receive new insights and fresh understanding. If you are a beginner to Bible study, the Holy Spirit can give you insights that will astound you and also bless the veterans in your group. If you are a seasoned student of God's Word, you know that God always has more. Share what God gives you and expect to be surprised with even more blessings from Him through others in your group. Studying Scripture with others multiplies the possibilities of receiving fresh insights and blessings as well as storing God's Word deep in your heart.

What you need!

To do this Bible Study, you need a Catholic Bible, and a *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*. When choosing a Bible, recall that the Catholic Bible contains 73 books, compared with others having only 66 books. The additional seven books from the Hebrew Scriptures, called Old Testament books and extra chapters of Daniel provide inspiring passages that you will need to consult. If you find Sirach and Tobit in your Bible table of contents, you have a complete Catholic bible. *The Council of Hippo approved these 73 books in 393 AD*, and this has remained the official canon of Sacred Scripture since the 4th century. The Council of Trent authoritatively reaffirmed these books of the Bible in 1545 AD. The Douay-Rheims (DR) Bible was completed in 1609 AD.

For Bible study purposes, choose a word-for-word, literal translation rather than a paraphrase. Some excellent translations for Bible study are the Revised Standard Version (RSV) 1957, 1971, the Jerusalem Bible (JB) 1966, and the New American Bible (NAB) 1970. The Good News Bible, or Today's English Version (TEV), 1976 represents a paraphrase of the Bible, which will be difficult to use in this type of formal Bible study where specific verses will be referenced.

Browse in a Catholic book store to determine which translation reads best for you. Compare Psalm 1 in several translations before making your selection. Do you sense that Psalm 1 is preparing you to recognize Jesus, the righteous, blessed man who will save the world? Does the translation of Psalm 1 inspire you to want to emulate that Righteous One and walk in His ways? The whole Old Testament points to Jesus, the Father's provision for the atonement of sin. The New Testament reveals God the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Choose a translation that makes the mystery of God come alive for you. Often an old Bible proves to be a treasure.

Seek a quiet place for prayer and study. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament may enable you to do some Bible Study in the presence of Our Lord. Set aside time to pray and study God's Word. 1) *Pray*, 2) *Read the Bible chapter and commentary* and 3) *Write answers to the questions using the Bible and Catechism. Please, share aloud with your small group members "only" on those questions for which you have written answers!*

Getting Started

✿ *Pray to the Holy Spirit.* Ask God for wisdom on when to have Bible study, whom to study with and when and where to meet.



- ✿ *Invite neighbors and friends to a “Get Acquainted Coffee” and find out who will make a commitment to meet for 60 - 90 minutes once a week for group Bible study.*
- ✿ *Determine a day of the week and time of day to meet. For mothers and children, one morning from 9:30–11:00 might be best, or an afternoon from 1:00–2:30 pm. Working people may be well served in the evening from 7:30–9:00 pm. It may be impossible to find a perfect time for everyone, so go with what seems to work best.*
- ✿ *Find an appropriate location. Start in someone’s home and then, as your group becomes larger, ask the pastor of your parish if you could meet in church or school facilities. Pray beforehand and offer this book to him for his review and approval.*
- ✿ *Explore the possibility of hiring a baby-sitter for young mothers and share the cost among everyone, or investigate whether some students might do childcare for the Bible study as a project for their Confirmation service requirement.*
- ✿ *Consider a Cooperative Arrangement in which women take turns caring for and teaching the young children. All women, even grandmothers and women without children should take turns to serve the little children as an offering to God.*
- ✿ *Gather a small prayer group to pray regularly for your Bible study and for your specific needs and challenges. Pray to discern God’s will, brainstorm and make plans.*

Pray that God will anoint specific people to lead your study. Faithful, practicing Catholics are needed to fill the following positions:

- ✿ **Teachers** ~ take overall responsibility to read commentaries and prepare a 20-30 minute wrap-up lecture after the small group discussions each week.
- ✿ **Song Leaders** ~ plan and lead a short hymn that everyone can sing to start Bible Study each week.
- ✿ **Prayer Leaders** ~ begin with a prayer and ask someone to prepare a short five minute opening devotional each week. This could be an answer to prayer or personal testimony.
- ✿ **Children’s Leaders** ~ hire babysitters, prepare lessons and teach pre-school children who attend Bible study with their mothers.
- ✿ **Coordinators** ~ communicate with parish personnel about needs for space and use of facilities. Put invitations in church bulletins. Make sure rooms are left in good condition.

Small group facilitators will be needed for each small group. Try to enlist two mature Catholics who are good listeners to serve together as small group leaders for each group. Small group facilitators must be practicing Catholics and share the following responsibilities for their small discussion group:

- ✿ Pray for each member of your small group each day.
- ✿ Make a name tag for each member of the group.
- ✿ Meet before the study to pray with other leaders.
- ✿ Discuss all the questions in the lesson each week.
- ✿ Begin and end on time
- ✿ Make sure that each person in the group shares each week. Ask each person to read a question and have the first chance to answer it.



- ✿ You might just go around in a circle, so that each person can look forward to his or her turn. After reading the question others can offer answers as well.
- ✿ Ensure that no one person dominates the discussion, including you!
- ✿ Keep the discussion positive and focused on this week's lesson.
- ✿ Speak kindly and charitably. Steer conversation away from any negative or uncharitable speech, gossip or griping. Don't badmouth anyone.

- ✿ Listen well! Give your full attention to the one speaking.
- ✿ Look at people while they are speaking. Be comfortable with silence. Be patient. Encourage quieter people to share first. Ask questions.
- ✿ If questions, misunderstandings or disagreements arise, refer them to the question box for a teacher or the parish priest to research and discuss later.
- ✿ Arrange for a social activity each month.

Invite and Welcome Priests

Invite your pastor, associate, visiting priests and religious to participate in Bible study. Ask for their blessings. Invite them to come and pray with the Bible study members. See if they would like to come and answer some written questions from the question box periodically. Accept whatever they can offer to the Bible study. However, don't *expect* anything from them. Appreciate that the priests may be very busy and don't add additional burdens. If a priest offers to give a devotional or closing lecture, accept with gratitude.

- † Jesus chose a group of twelve apostles. So, perhaps small groups should be about twelve or thirteen people. When you get too big, break up into two groups.
- † Women share best with women and men with men. If you plan a mixed Bible study, organize separate men's groups, led by men and women's groups, led by women. In a mixed group, some people may be uncomfortable sharing and sit silently.
- † Offer a married couples group if two married couples are willing to act as small group facilitators and come together to every single class meeting. Each person should have his or her own book and share on his or her own home study answers.
- † You may also want to consider a nursing mothers' group so mothers can bring their infants with them and hold the babies while they share their home study work.
- † A group of teenagers or young adult group could be facilitated by the parish priest or by a young adult leader.
- † Family groups can work together on the home study questions on a given night of the week, with older children or parents helping younger children to find the passages in the Bible and the Catechism.



- † Share the overall goal that *each person* in each group shares aloud each time the group meets. Everyone should contribute every time Bible study meets!
- † Sit next to the most talkative person in the group and across from the quietest. Use eye contact to encourage quiet members to speak up. Serve everyone and hear from everyone. Listening in Bible study is just as important as talking! Evaluate each week, “Am I a good listener? Did I really hear what others shared? Was I attentive or distracted? Did I affirm others? Did I talk too much?”

Social Activities

God has created us as social creatures, needing to relate communally. Large churches present challenges for parishioners to get to know one another. Some people belong to a parish for years without getting to know others. Newcomers may never get noticed and welcomed. Bible study offers an opportunity for spiritual nourishment as well as inclusion and hospitality.

Occasional social activities are offered in this book. These socials are simple, fun and non-threatening. In planning your social activities, be a good sport, try to attend and share with your small group. Keep in mind the following when planning.

- * Agree on a time when most of the group can meet. This could be right before or after Bible study or on a different day of the week, perhaps even Saturday morning.
- * Invite people to come to your home for the social time. Jesus was comfortable visiting in the homes of the rich and the poor. So whether you live in a small apartment or a big mansion, as a Christian you can offer hospitality to those God sends along your way.

*“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2).*

- * Keep it simple! Just a beverage and cookies works well. Simplicity blesses others. People can squeeze together on a sofa or stand around the kitchen. The important thing is to offer hospitality and love one another as Jesus directed. Don’t fuss.
- * Help out the group leader. If Bible study meets in someone else’s home, invite the group to come to your place for the social time. Don’t make the group leader do it all. Jump right in and offer. Be a blessing to others.
- * If your Bible study meets in church, do not fall into the convenience of staying at the church for socials. You might have to drive a distance to someone’s home, but it may be the first time anyone from the parish has taken the trouble to come out to their home to visit. Trust God. It’s worth it. God will bless your efforts at offering hospitality to your Bible study group and accepting the hospitality of others.



Consider the following times for your socials.

9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Saturday coffee	11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Luncheon
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Afternoon Tea	8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Dessert

Modify times to meet your specific needs. If the parish has Saturday morning Mass 8:00, adjust the time of your social to accommodate those members of your group who would like to attend Mass and need some travel time to get to the social. If lunch after Bible study makes too long of a day for mothers with children, plan the social for another day. A mothers' group might meet after school when high school students can baby-sit.

Practical Schedule

Take responsibility for being a good steward of time. God gives each of us twenty-four hours a day. If Bible study becomes loose, busy people may drop out. Late starts encourage tardiness and punish the prompt. Be a good steward of time. Begin and end each Bible study with prayer at the agreed upon time.

If people consistently arrive late, investigate whether you have chosen the best time and pray for God's wisdom to determine the best time for most members. If people leave early, check if you have a conflict with the kindergarten or bus schedule. Perhaps beginning a few minutes earlier or later could serve those who need to pick up children.

Suggested Bible Study Class Schedules

Morning Class

- ‡ 9:30 a.m. Welcome, Song, Prayer
- ‡ 9:50 a.m. Small Group Discussion
- ‡ 10:30 a.m. Wrap-up Lecture
- ‡ 11:00 a.m. Closing Prayer

Evening Class

- ‡ 7:30 p.m. Welcome, Song, Prayer
- ‡ 7:50 p.m. Small Group Discussion
- ‡ 8:30 p.m. Wrap-up Lecture
- ‡ 9:00 p.m. Closing Prayer

Afternoon Class

- ‡ 1:00 p.m. Welcome, Song, Prayer
- ‡ 1:20 p.m. Small Group Discussion
- ‡ 2:00 p.m. Wrap-up Lecture
- ‡ 2:30 p.m. Closing Prayer

Always begin and end with prayer!



Wrap-Up Lecture

- 1) A closing, wrap-up lecture may be presented for your group.
- 2) Or simply share on the home study questions and close with prayer.

When using a closing lecture, the teacher spends extra time in prayer and study over the passages of Scripture studied and consults several Bible study commentaries. Several members of the Bible study leaders' group could serve in taking turns to prepare the wrap-up lectures. Invite priests, deacons and religious sisters to give an occasional lecture.

The Lecturer's Responsibilities include the following:

- ✂ Be a faithful, practicing Catholic. Seek out spiritual direction. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently.
- ✂ Obtain the approval and blessing of your parish priest to teach.
- ✂ Use several different lecturers, whenever possible.
- ✂ Pray for all the leaders and members of the study daily.
- ✂ Pray over the lesson to be studied.

- ✂ Outline the Bible chapters to be discussed.
- ✂ Identify the main idea of the Bible study lesson.
- ✂ Find a personal application from the passages studied. The personal application suggests what one can do to respond to God's Word.
- ✂ Plan a wrap-up lecture with a beginning, a middle and an end.
- ✂ Use index card or notes to keep you focused. Don't read your lecture! Talk to people. Most folks can read.

- ✂ Proclaim, teach and reiterate the teachings of the Catholic Church. Learn what the Catholic Church teaches and proclaim the fullness of truth.
- ✂ Illustrate the main idea presented in the passage by using true stories from the lives of contemporary Christians or from lives of the saints.
- ✂ Use visuals ~ a flip chart or overhead transparencies if possible.
- ✂ Plan a skit, act out a Bible story and interact with the group.

- ✂ Provide a question box. Find answers to difficult questions or ask a parish priest to come and discuss some questions from the question box.
- ✂ When difficult or complex personal problems arise or are shared in the group, seek out the counsel of a priest.
- ✂ Begin and end on time. When you get to the end of your talk, stop and pray.

Begin with prayer. End with prayer.

Don't do it all along. Hear from several different speakers!



Challenges

As Christians, all of us are weak and need God's mercy. Lay groups can attract people with problems and challenges. Don't try to be all things for all people. Jesus is the Savior and we are only His servants. When problems loom, direct them to a priest or counselor. Bible Study demands faithfulness in this one thing, while praying for others.

Saint Paul admonishes us to "speak the truth in love ... and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:15,32). Bible Study gives us the opportunity to search God's word for direction in our lives, to pray, encourage and sometimes gently admonish one another.

"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The purpose of the Scriptures, which come to us from God, is to lead us to fullness according to the truths contained in those sayings of the apostles ... We must study holy Scripture carefully, and teach it and listen to it in the same way.

If we are to attain the ultimate goal of eternal happiness by the path of virtue described in the Scriptures, we have to begin at the very beginning. We must come with a pure faith to the Father of Light and acknowledge him in our hearts. We must ask him to give us, through his Son and in the Holy Spirit, a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and along with that knowledge, a love of him.

Knowing and loving him in this way, confirmed in our faith and grounded in our love, we can know *the length and breadth and height and depth* of his sacred Scripture. Through that knowledge we can come at last to know perfectly and love completely the most blessed Trinity, whom the saints desire to know and love and in whom all that is good and true finds its meaning and fulfillment.

Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, (1221-1274 AD), *Breviloquium*, Prologue 5.

Begin this Study of the Book of Genesis, in expectant faith, constant hope and utter humility. Longing for sanctity, pray this prayer of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

A Prayer for Abandonment

*Teach us, Lord, to serve You as You deserve;
to give and not to count the cost;
to labor and not ask for any reward
save that of knowing that we do Your will. Amen.*



GENESIS 1

GOD MAKES TIME FOR US

“God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” *Genesis 1:31*

In our first encounter with the Bible’s and the church’s faith in creation, two realizations become particularly clear... As Christians we read Holy Scripture with Christ. He is our guide all the way through it. He indicates to us in reliable fashion what an image is and where the real, enduring content of a biblical expression may be found. At the same time he is freedom from a false slavery to literalism and a guarantee of the solid, realistic truth of the Bible... Our second realization was this: Faith in creation is reasonable.

Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) p.21.

In the Beginning God ... Ponder these profound words which introduce the eternal, almighty God. The whole reason for the Bible is to make known to people the invisible God who gives existence to the visible world. Reading the Bible lets us fulfill our principal earthly task, which is getting to know God.

The Bible uses many different divine names and titles for God. The Hebrew word *ELOHIM* is the most basic. Chapter One uses only this word to refer to God, therefore its human author is dubbed “*the Elohist.*” In Chapter Two the terminology changes, and God begins to be called by His proper name *YAHWEH*; therefore the human author of that chapter is “the Yahwist.” Genesis compiles several pre-existing inspired traditions, and the Holy Spirit inspired the final editor to put the Elohist narrative first.

Greeks called this book GENESIS, or “creation,” because of the opening story. Jews refer to this book by its opening word BERESHITH, or “In the beginning.” The Gospel of John begins with the same words, but John’s beginning goes back before time began, while Genesis refers to the beginning of time.

In the beginning, the eternal God created time for us. God is eternal and stands outside of time, but the physical world exists only in time. Therefore, before God created the three spatial dimensions of height, width, and depth, the fourth dimension of time had to be created. The framework of the first chapter of Genesis is the creation of time, and within that framework various kinds of physical creatures appear.

“If the sacred and utterly truthful Scriptures say that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, so that nothing is to be understood as having been created prior thereto, then beyond any doubt the world was not created in time but along with time.”

Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)



The First Day God creates light before any other thing, for “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5) and the Blessed Savior says “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Our Nicene Creed affirms that Christ is “God from God, Light from Light,” uncreated Light proceeding from uncreated Light. The secondary lights of this world, on the other hand, are reflected, secondary and dependent.

Some critics of Genesis maintain that creating light before the sun, moon or stars exist is contrary to science. This may conflict with popular science, but not real science. Light is energy. Energy and matter exist in a symbiotic relationship to one another. When striking a match, flipping on lights or seeing lightning, some form of energy contained in matter is released, appearing in the form of light. Therefore, light as a phenomenon of the physical universe is more fundamental than any of the sources of light as such. What we have on Day One of Genesis is not mythology, but physical science. Genesis does not stand against the work of early physical philosophers, such as Democritus or Lucretius, but stands as an important monument of early scientific understanding. Only people who want to try to disprove God’s existence have any reason to question Day One of Genesis.

How long was Day One? Some Christians make a test of true belief that the first day lasted exactly twenty-four hours. However, God has just started to create time. He is still shaping and molding it. Time does not yet exist as we know it. The markers of time have not yet been set in the sky, and the creatures that experience it do not yet exist. The only point of view that exists so far is the divine one, which is eternal and stands outside of time. Day One was a day for God, not a day for humans yet.

The Psalmist says “For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4). Saint Peter adds “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). These statements contain three yardsticks for computing the relationship of the eternal God to time.

(1) If, according to the Psalmist, 1000 of our years equal one of God’s days, then the first week of creation was 7000 years long.

(2) If 1000 of our years equal only three hours (a watch of the night) or one-eighth of God’s day, then the first week of creation lasted 56,000 years.

(3) If, according to Saint Peter, 1000 of God’s years equals one of our days, then the first week of creation took place in less than a second.

What both of these inspired authors are trying to teach us is that God cannot be made subject to time. **God is the creator of time, and not bound within it as we are.** We would do well to remember this throughout our reading of the whole Bible, when numbers often have symbolic rather than mathematical value.



Clearly, then, God's point of reference is vastly different from ours. The first day of creation clings so closely to the wellsprings of eternity that it is only the beginning of time, and not yet time as we know it. There is no reason why Day One had to go on to Day Two. God could have made Day One into an eternal day, and enjoyed the created light which was good, forever. God made the first day end so that the second could begin, and only at the end of the first day does time begin to pass.

The best Sunday of all time wasn't the first one, but the Sunday morning that our Blessed Savior rose from the dead in His human body, firstborn of the new creation. We thank and worship the God who began the creation of the world on a Sunday, and who began the re-creation of the world on a Sunday, too.

By a tradition handed down from the apostles which took its origin from the day of Christ's resurrection, the Church celebrates the paschal mystery every eighth day; with good reasons this, then, bears the name of the Lord's day or Sunday. For on this day Christ's faithful are bound to come together into one place so that, by hearing the word of God and taking part in the Eucharist, they may call to mind the passion, the resurrection and the glorification of the Lord Jesus, and may thank God who "has begotten them again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). Hence the Lord's day is the original feast day, and it should be proposed to the piety of the faithful and taught to them so that it may become in fact a day of joy and of freedom from work.

Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (1964) no.106.

The Second Day God created Monday and the sky. Ancient pagans worshipped the moon on the second day of the week, from which practice comes the term "Monday," or "moon's day." However, the moon doesn't even exist yet on the first Monday. The biblical author demotes the moon to being nothing more than the moon.

Sometimes we may feel that God could have skipped over Monday and gone on to Tuesday. Interestingly, God doesn't seem to have been that enthusiastic about Monday either. On the other days of creation, God notes how good His work was, but on Monday He makes no such comment. Perhaps this is because what God created on Day Two was only the backdrop for creation. Another word for "sky" would be "space." Here God creates the three dimensions of height, breadth and depth, the space within which the created universe would be placed. He is like a painter preparing the canvas which will serve as the background for his work of art. "Through faith we perceive that worlds were created by the word of God, and that what is visible came into being through the invisible" (Hebrews 11:3).

The Third Day God creates the first living things, the plants. People who don't like vegetables may be less than happy with some of the results of Day Three. Even people who don't eat plants, however, still depend on animals that eat plants. God lays the



foundations of the food chain by creating plant DNA. Many plant varieties have resulted from human horticulture, but that potential already existed within the wonderful genetic structure of life.

An Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel (1823-1882 AD) is the father of modern genetics. Gardening is an important part of the monastic tradition. Monks keep decorative gardens to remind them of paradise, and vegetable gardens to feed the community. It is out of 1500 years of monastic experience with tending plants that the contemporary science of genetics has arisen.

A great medieval mystic refers to created life itself as “greenness.” By this, she means the freshness and vitality of created life responding to God as plants respond to the light. She writes, “In the brightness of red shining light the green force of the great plan of old was seen.” (Saint Hildegard of Bingen [1098-1179 AD] *Scivias* II, 1, 11).

“Consider the lilies of the field. They do not work, they do not spin. Yet I assure you, not Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these. If God can clothe in such splendor the grass of the field, which blooms today and is thrown on the fire tomorrow, will He not provide much more for you, O weak in faith?” (Matthew 6:28-30).

The Fourth Day, in midweek, God creates the greater lights (the sun and the moon) and the lesser lights (the five visible planets—Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn and the stars). The Hebrews’ pagan neighbors worshipped these heavenly bodies, but Genesis reduces them to purely natural phenomena. Only now that the markers of time have been placed in the sky does it become possible to consider the day in our normal, human sense of the word. There are no humans to experience it yet, but time has now been shaped into a usable context within which humans can dwell.

Genesis describes the day as “evening and morning,” according to the ancient Jewish concept of the day. There are four different ways to calculate the 24 hour day:

1. **The ever-logical Romans began the day with sunrise.** Their first hour was earlier in summer and later in winter. On their sundial, only “the sixth hour” was always at exactly the same time, when the sun stands at its zenith in the sky. When the Bible uses the terms “the first hour” (6 a.m.), “third hour” (9 a.m.), “sixth hour” (noon) and “ninth hour” (3 p.m.), it refers to the Roman practice of considering the day as begun at sunrise. These markings become increasingly important for the Christian who meditates on the passion and suffering of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross in the heat of the mid-day sun on Calvary.

2. **On the high seas, the only sure marker of time is the sun at its zenith.** The nautical day begins precisely at noon, and goes 24 hours until the next noon. Therefore, since ancient times, sailors have kept their logs from noon to noon. The Genesis account, with its “evening and morning,” reads like it could have been written by a sea captain.



3. **The Jews and Babylonians began the new day with sundown.** Jewish tradition prescribes lighting the candles of the new feast after the last hour of light of the previous day. Saturday night Masses and the vigils of feasts follow this ancient Jewish liturgical practice of beginning all feasts on the evening before, at sundown. From this comes the terminology of Genesis: "evening came and morning followed, the first day."

4. **Our modern method of telling time runs from midnight to midnight.** No one in antiquity did this. Only the invention of mechanical clocks allows the marking of the day beginning with midnight. Now, with time zones and daylight saving time, we are increasingly cut off from the markers of time that God placed in nature for our use. Do we understand that we are living in the time and in the world that God created for us, rather than in a time and a world of our own making?

“Praise him, sun and moon, praise him all you shining stars,
praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created;
He established them forever and ever;
He gave them a duty which shall not pass away” (Psalm 148:3-6).

The Fifth Day, God populates the sea and sky. Genesis records the sea as the first place inhabited by animal life, just as science accounts it. The traditional scientific model has seen life progressing from sea to land, with the birds of the air seemingly incidental. Only lately, with the theory of modern birds relating to dinosaurs, have birds come more to the center stage of scientific theory. The Book of Genesis has always maintained however, that the second zone of animal life was the sky rather than the land.

The holiest Thursday of all time was not the first one, but the Thursday on which the Lord Jesus celebrated His Last Supper with His disciples, and instituted the Holy Eucharist.

In the seven day cycle of creation a precise graduated procedure is evident. However, man is not created according to a natural succession. The Creator seems to halt before calling him into existence, as if he were pondering within himself to make a decision.

Pope John Paul II, General Audience of September 12, 1979

The Sixth Day, the eternal God created Friday, the day for which He is often thanked, in the popular expression *TGIF*. “Thank God it’s Friday!” And now God creates land animals and “man.” The biblical term “*man*” here refers to both genders. The English language has been redefining “man” to refer only to males, but we cannot impose our definitions upon other cultures. The authors of the Bible reserve the right to define their own terms, and verse 27 makes clear the biblical usage: “God created man in His image, in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).



The Bible teaches, then, that both men and women participate in the divine image that God imprints on human nature. The Bible begins by treating men and women as inseparably joined in the one human family. Modern gender clashes, setting men and women at odds with each other distort Biblical teaching. The interaction of human society with its two genders is somehow part of what the Bible means by the “image of God.” God made men and women in His own image, and when He looked at everything He had made, including human society, He found it not just good but *very good!*

The best Friday of all time was not the first one, but the Good Friday on which the Lord Jesus offered the sacrifice of Himself to His divine Father on the Cross, while His human mother stood weeping below, sharing His sufferings.

The book of Genesis will develop this theme of the interaction of men and women as found in the whole drama of human origins. We will have the chance to meet many interesting men and women, human beings used by God for great things despite their terrible faults. The first to step onto our stage are Adam and Eve.

The following poem by Caedmon was so esteemed in medieval England that it survives in seventeen different manuscripts from the 8th to 15th centuries, showing that all that God created prior to Day Six was to prepare for the pinnacle of His creation, man.

*Now must we praise the Guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven,
The might of the Creator, and His wisdom,
The work of the Father of Glory; for He, the Eternal Lord
Appointed each wondrous thing from the beginning.
He, the Holy Creator, first made heaven as a roof for the children of men;
And afterward He, the Guardian of mankind, the Eternal Lord,
The Almighty Master, fashioned the earth for mortals.
~ Hymn by the first English poet Caedmon (about 670 AD)*

The words “God said” appear ten times in the creation account. In this way the creation narrative anticipates the Ten Commandments...[which] are an echo of creation; they are not arbitrary inventions for the purpose of erecting barriers to human freedom but signs pointing to the spirit, the language, and the meaning of creation; they are a translation of the language of the universe, a translation of God’s logic, which constructed the universe.

Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) p.26.

As you begin this study of the Book of Genesis, remember that **God saved the best for last. He created man in His own image and likeness. God created you in love!** What incredible love called you into being! God made you to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him in the next.



1. Write the first sentence of the Bible and underline your favorite words. Genesis 1:1

2. What happened in Genesis when God spoke? Genesis 1:6-9

3. Complete this chart on God's plan and order of creation from Genesis 1.

Day 1	<i>God created light.</i>	Genesis 1:3
Day 2	<i>God</i>	Genesis 1:6-8
Day 3		Genesis 1:9-13
Day 4		Genesis 1:14-19
Day 5		Genesis 1:20-23
Day 6		Genesis 1:24-29

4. How did creation come about? Psalm 33:6

5. How did God evaluate His creation? Genesis 1:31 What is your opinion of creation?



6. What does God say to someone who thinks he should understand everything? Job 38:4

7. Describe the manner in which you were created? Genesis 1:27

8. What is the first command that God gives in the Bible? Genesis 1:28

9. What did God envision from the beginning? CCC 280

10. List five questions that everyone ponders to find meaning in life. CCC 282

Where do we come from?



18. Write down your birthday. What, if anything, do you know about the day on which you were born? Recall other significant beginnings in your life.

19. Describe God's perspective on your beginning. Psalm 139:1-17

20. Some people might feel like their life is a mistake or a series of failed plans. What does God think? What kind of plans does God have for you? Jeremiah 29:11

At the beginning of this study, can you pray the following prayer?

*Lord, God, You created me in Your image and likeness with an eternal soul.
You want me to live with You forever in heaven.
Forgive me for those times when I have fallen short and sinned,
failing to reflect Your love and the dignity You fashioned in me.
Thank You for opening my heart and my spirit to study Sacred Scripture.
Give me a fresh start. Re-create me and show me Your plan.
Reveal more of Yourself and Your perfect will to me.
Change me, lead me, guide me, direct me, Lord.
Let Your light shine in me. Fill me with Your love to overflowing.
Let Your love transform me for Your honor and glory.
Bless this new beginning in my life as I study Your Word in Genesis. Amen*