

God of Our Fathers: Genesis

Overview

Course Description

God of Our Fathers: Genesis is an applied Bible course that offers an overview of the book of Genesis. Course content provides for in-depth analysis of biblical contexts and critical reflection on how biblical principles could be applied to the present day. Each lesson features focus scriptures and related reading assignments. Assessments include thought-provoking questions intended to address a full range of cognitive skill levels. Bible lessons contained in this course are nonsectarian and are suitable for use by all Christians. The course is suited for both beginners as well as seasoned learners who wish to deepen their biblical knowledge.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, learners should be able to:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of Bible structure.
- Utilize outside resources (i.e., dictionaries, commentaries, concordances, etc.) for gaining new insights.
- Identify key people, places, and things in the Bible.
- Analyze biblical contexts.
- Reflect critically on contemporary life in light of biblical principles.
- Implement strategies for change in contemporary life using biblical principles as a conceptual framework.

Group Norms

Some ground rules for study sessions.

- We will prayerfully listen for the Word of God.
- We will respect this space as safe and confidential.
- We will respect the opinions of others, even if we do not agree with them.
- We will be aware of everyone's need to be heard.
- We will respect the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Other

Summary of Genesis

God spoke, and it was created. So it is conveyed in the book of Genesis, a story of how it all began. Genesis chronicles how God created a world out of chaos and populated it with living things that are commanded to be fruitful and multiply. The works that God created were pronounced to be "very good" -- in spite of the fact that humankind succumbed to temptation and became separated from God in the Garden of Eden. Having sinned and fallen from unity with the

One who is perfect and eternal, humans became vulnerable to sin and death and found themselves in a constant quest to reconcile with God.

Genesis also records the progression of our relationships with God and with each other. It reveals the first human birth, the first murder, and the first covenant God made with humankind. It traces that covenant through the lineage of Abraham, God's chosen servant.

The book is rich with stories of hope and despair. Though the stories are ancient, the book of Genesis describes plots and circumstances that appear with frequency even in the present day. Furthermore, the stories in Genesis are well known. They lay the foundation for our faith. Through them, we learn about the nature of God, the nature of humans, and God's abiding love and grace.

Questions for Opening Reflection

1. What are your favorite stories from the book of Genesis?
2. How do the messages of the Bible stories relate to our lives in the present day?
3. In what specific ways have you attempted to convey these stories to generations that follow you?
4. What can we tell our children about the God of our Fathers?

Suggested General Lesson Plan Template

Time	Activity
5 min.	Opening/Prayer
5 min.	Reviewing Background for Scripture
5-10 min.	Reading and Reacting to the Scripture
15-25 min.	Answer "Examining the Scripture" Questions
25-40 min.	Applied Scripture Activity
5 min.	Prayer requests/Closing prayer/Benediction
60-90 min.	TOTAL TIME

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Appendix: Suggested Icebreaker Activities

Activity 1: Characteristics I Value in Bible Study

For congregations just beginning to develop plans for offering Bible study in a collaborative setting, the following icebreaker activity may be helpful. The activity facilitates trust building and utilizes consensus building as a way to facilitate understanding and communication.

Reaching consensus may be used when discussing a topic about which people may have varying opinions. For example, one topic applicable to certain groups may be an identification of the characteristics they value in a Bible study group. Answers will vary.

Begin this activity with brainstorming – by having individual participants generate as long a list as possible of what they consider to be desirable characteristics. Next, divide the participants into groups of 3 to 5 people. Have them read through the brainstormed list individually and select the three most desirable and the three least desirable characteristics. They will then discuss their choices. Each group member should take about two minutes to explain his/her choices and the reasons for them. The group will then attempt to arrive at group consensus on the three most important and three least important points.

Narrowing the list to just three characteristics in each category should generate a great deal of discussion. Make sure you let the groups know that although it may be difficult for them to select the three most and least desirable characteristics, they should force themselves to make the necessary judgment. The value lies in the discussion. This activity fulfills the learners' need for affiliation and self-esteem. It also invokes critical thinking.

Most Important or Desirable

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Least Important or Desirable

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activity 2: My Experiences with the Bible

Lead a discussion during which participants share their previous experiences with the church and Bible study. Provide the following instructions:

Introduce yourself to the group and tell the group what ministries you're involved in, and tell us a little bit about your religious background.

1. What were some of your early experiences in learning about God?
2. Where did you get your knowledge of the Bible?
3. Why do adults study the Bible?
4. In what ways have you actively tried to apply the principles of the Bible to your daily living?
5. Why is it important to read a different translation of the Bible?
6. Why do people have different opinions about what the Bible says?
7. What does the Bible mean for you?
8. What do you hope to get out of this class?
9. What strengths or insights can you bring to this class?