



# SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 1 September 22, 2024

“Messages from the Beginning”

## OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as we gather today, open us by the Holy Spirit to a greater faith. Help us to see the patterns of your love and mercy from cover to cover of the Bible. Aid us in our understanding of the goodness you placed in your Creation, even as we struggle in sin and temptation. May the Holy Spirit give us new eyes to see and new ears to hear your voice through the Holy Scriptures. All this we pray in Jesus’ precious name, Amen.

## SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

### Genesis 1:26-31 (NIV)

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup> Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath

of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

### Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

### Isaiah 9:2, 6 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

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## INTRODUCTION

In speedreading, the technique is to read rapidly and to pick up main ideas, concepts, or events. Finer details from a slower read may be lost, yet the major themes still shine through. In this two-part sermon series, we explore the major themes that extend from cover-to-cover of the Bible: God the Creator, the goodness God instills in the Creation, God’s assistance after sin’s entrance, and God’s ultimate plan for reconciliation. As we move from skimming to a deeper dive into the Scriptures, the awe of God’s work become apparent. Observing the created world gives us reasons to praise our Lord and Creator. Seeing God’s faithfulness amid our failings and sins shows us the hope for our redemption. With faith, we move toward the future God is preparing.

## QUESTIONS

1. What part(s) of Creation are you most drawn to? How does it speak to you about the Creator?
2. How do we acknowledge the “goodness” God saw in the world? How might we encourage its expression?
3. When we are “walking in darkness” who or what do we turn to? What do we need in order to turn to God more?
4. What situation are you most thankful for that God brought you through?
5. Can we increase our faith today by looking back on God’s faithful plans in the past?

## FINAL APPLICATION

What is one step you can take this week to see the goodness in ourselves, others, and the world around us? By turning from sinful ways, we can trust God’s plan to redeem and restore us. Let us support others on this faith journey as we look with hope and expectation to the future.