

TEACHING GUIDE

**IN THE
BEGINNING
Series**

OUTREACH

SERIES OUTLINE

Title: In The Beginning

Write Up: "In The Beginning" is a sermon series focused on the opening chapters of Genesis, uncovering the foundational truths about creation, humanity's fall, and the eternal promise of redemption. In the beginning, there existed God's Shalom, or divine peace. Sin wreaked havoc on everything and everyone and shattered Shalom. God's intention has always been to restore all things back to how they were in the beginning.

Week 1: It Is Good

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-31 // Ephesians 2:10

Write Up: When we look at the world today, it is easy to forget that all that God has made was good before it ever was corrupted by sin. Seeing ourselves and others through this lens restores hope that by the grace and mercy of God, we can be restored.

Think: God's intention for the world is for things to be good.

Feel: God created me with his own two hands to be good.

Do: Allow the vision of God for your life to be your vision for yourself.

Week 2: Little Lies

Scripture: Genesis 3:1-7 // 2 Corinthians 10:5

Write Up: The evil one is crafty and deceitful. We must be careful to identify his little lies that cause us to lose trust in our creator God. There are two main ways that Satan tries to deceive us, by twisting God's words while overpromising and under delivering. He has used the same tricks since the beginning because they still work today.

Think: I must question my doubts when they are presented to me.

Feel: God loves me and would never lie to me.

Do: Test every thought against the truth of God's Word.

Week 3: Shattered Shalom

Scripture: Genesis 3:7-13 // John 16:33

Write Up: God's creation was marked by a peace known as Shalom. It was a peace between God and man, man and self, man and others, and even man and creation. After the Fall, there was enmity that shattered what once was. It was cause for pain, and struggle. We feel that shattered Shalom, even to today. We need the presence of Jesus to bring us peace once again.

Think: The conflict and struggle I feel is bigger than the issues at hand.

Feel: I can experience peace when I place my trust in Jesus.

Do: Seek to live in peace with God and one another.

Week 4: Promised Hope

Scripture: Genesis 3:14-24 // 1 Peter 1:3-6

Write Up: God's grace is shown in the end of the creation narrative as he promised to provide, in the future, one who would crush the head of the serpent and defeat the devil once and for all. As God expels Adam and Eve from the garden, it is with the intention of restoring all that had been broken. There would be a time of hurt and pain, but one day Jesus would come to heal.

Think: One day, all that has been affected by sin will be reversed.

Feel: Jesus gives me hope because of my new life in him.

Do: Make the decision to place my faith and hope in Jesus' sacrificial work on the cross for me.

Sample

SERMONWEEK 1

In The Beginning

Week 1: It Was Good

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-31 // Genesis 2:7 // Ephesians 2:10

Write Up: When we look at the world today, it is easy to forget that all that God has made was good before it was ever corrupted by sin. Seeing ourselves and others through this lens restores hope that by the grace and mercy of God, we can be restored.

Think: God's intention for the world is for things to be good.

Feel: God created me with his own two hands to be good.

Do: Allow the vision of God for your life to be your vision for yourself.

Sermon:

Hello, everyone! I want to welcome you to church today as we start a new sermon series called 'In The Beginning'. I believe this series is foundational for us because what we will look at over the next four weeks really shapes the way that we see God, ourselves, others, and the world. During our time, we will be studying the first three chapters of Genesis, because in that first book of the Bible, a tone is set for the rest of the scriptures. Today, we turn our attention to the first chapter of Genesis, to remind ourselves that God's intention for creation from the very beginning was for it to be good. Before sin ever entered the picture, there was something called Shalom – the peace of God.

STORY:

Not long ago, I found myself deeply discouraged. I was overwhelmed by the disheartening information that comes with a 24/7 news cycle. I felt defeated by things I was facing at the church. I was full of grief from the loss we had

experienced in our family as one of our loved ones had passed away. It all felt so heavy, and I could not shake the general feeling of gloom. Not knowing what to do, I began to pray and ask God to remind me of his goodness in my life. One Saturday I made a quick trip to the mountains that are not far from our home. I wanted to just escape for a bit and get some fresh air. I began to hike and found myself at an overlook that took my breath away. It was beautiful. I stood there silently, and I could sense God's presence in a way I had not felt in a while. For a moment, everything felt right again. In that moment I rediscovered a simple truth: all the brokenness that I was experiencing around me was never God's intention. In the beginning, everything was good. *(Share a story when you have experienced the goodness of God's creation in the midst of the brokenness of the world)*

When we look at the world around us today, it is easy to forget that the Bible does not begin in Genesis chapter 3 with the fall of mankind and the introduction of sin into the world. Before all of that, Genesis chapter 1 paints a beautiful picture of a creation that reflected the goodness, kindness, love, and creativity of God. In the beginning God speaks the world into being. Chapter 1 is a Hebrew poem that is less concerned about HOW God created all things and more focused on the fact that God DID create all things.

READ Genesis 1:1-25

The way the world begins is told to us with a poetic cadence that is marked by a number of days. There is a lot of debate over how long this time period is between creative actions. Some interpret it to be a 24-hour period while others see it as an undefined time period. If we are not careful, getting caught up in this detail can cause us to miss the bigger picture.

POINT #1 – A GOOD GOD CREATES GOOD THINGS

God speaks into being the light, land, sun, moon, stars, vegetation, creatures of the sky, and creatures in the sea. Each time that something is made, God takes a step back to marvel at his creation and his response is that "it was good". The Hebrew word used here for this phrase is the word *Towb*, which means pleasant or agreeable. As God looks over what he has made, he does not call it good because his creation has accomplished anything or proved itself to him. It is good simply because a good God created it. It is good because it is his. It is good like someone stepping back and looking at their painting and calling it good.

There is one more part of God's work that is recorded in the following verses. This time, however, what God makes is not spoken into being, it is formed by his hands.

READ Genesis 1:26-27, 31 and Genesis 2:7

Between Genesis 1 and 2, we are given two different perspectives on the creation of humankind. The Bible says that God makes man from the dust of the ground. He uses his hands to carefully shape and mold the pinnacle of his creation. It is more intimate than the speaking that takes place in the previous verses and God breathes life into humankind. The most striking thing is that after God creates humans in his own image, he says it is VERY good. God sees incredible value and worth in all that he has made but demonstrates particular favor toward humankind that he loves and longs to share relationship with.

STORY: Pastor and author Eugene Peterson notes that it's easy for us to look at the grandeur and beauty of the mountains or to bask in the warmth of the spring sun and recognize the beauty of creation. Yet sometimes we ignore the people right in front of us. Peterson writes: "Several years ago one of my students who lived a distance away and rode a crowded bus to the college each day said to his wife as he went out the door one morning, "I'm just going to go out and immerse myself in God's creation today." The next day his parting words were the same. On the third day, she called him back, "Don't you think you ought to go to class today? A couple of days walking in the woods or on the beach is okay, but don't you think enough is enough?" He said, "Oh, I've been going to class every day." "Then what," she said, "is all this business about immersing yourself in creation?" "Well, I spend forty minutes on the bus each morning and afternoon. Can you think of a setting more thick with creation than that—all these people created, created in the image of God, created male and female?" "I never thought of that," she said. Peterson concludes, "[We need to embrace] the people around us with the same delight as we do the hawks soaring above us and the violets blooming at our feet. Men and women, children and the elderly, the beautiful and the plain, the blind and the deaf, amputees and paralytics, the mentally impaired and the emotionally distraught—each a significant and sacred detail of nature, of God's creation." (*This illustration is meant to demonstrate the value God has for each human being as a part of his good creation*)

You are a beautiful part of God's creation. God made you very good. Some of us may need to just hear that truth this morning before anything else. The God of the universe created you. He formed you in your mother's womb. He breathed

life into you, and he thinks that you are very good. This is not a statement excusing any of our faults, mistakes, shortcomings, or sins. This is a foundational truth that God does not make junk, and he does not make mistakes. He makes good things because he is a good God.

In the beginning everything was perfect. Humankind was in perfect relationship with God, each other, and creation. In the first two chapters of Genesis there existed perfect peace.

POINT #2 – IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS SHALOM

In the Old Testament, the word for peace is Shalom. This word does not just mean the absence of conflict, rather, it denotes the presence of wholeness. It is used to express a state of universal flourishing and completeness. As God looks at all he has made in Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25, his statement that it is all good is an expression of shalom, completeness, and wholeness. Shalom is all things as they should be.

STORY: This is what Shalom looks like. You can think of it in terms of a puzzle. When all the pieces are in place then it is complete. There is nothing worse than getting to the end of a 1,000-piece puzzle and finding that somewhere along the way a piece went missing. At the same time, nothing feels better than being able to place that last portion of a puzzle in place and know it is complete. (*Consider having a puzzle on stage or pictures on the screen showing a puzzle missing pieces*)

While the word "shalom" may not be explicitly used in the creation account, the themes of peace, harmony, and completeness inherent in the concept of shalom are woven throughout the description of God's original creation in Genesis.

You were not created for conflict. You were not created for dysfunction. You were created for Shalom. Too often we find ourselves at odds with God when we choose to live our life in disobedience. We also find ourselves at odds with others when we experience the turmoil of selfishness and ego. Some have simply resigned themselves to this being a fact of life, while as Christians we believe that God's intention has always been for us to experience shalom. Trusting God with your life is about not settling for the strife, but to strive for the peace of God.

This is why living with Shalom in mind is so important. God did not just create you good, he created you to do good.