

Genesis Tool Kit

The book of Genesis is one of the most fascinating pieces of literature ever written. Countless pages have been composed in all manner of comment regarding it. This simple tool kit endeavors to make a significant scratch in the surface of this mountain of thought and material, but can do nothing more. This kit will briefly cover some of the background of the book including author, date, purpose and structure, then provide resources and reading plans for adults/students and children, and finally provide group discussion pages to accompany the six sermons in the series.

Background

The common name of the book is derived from the Greek word *genesis*, meaning *birth, origin or offspring*. This word is the Greek translation of the very important Hebrew word *toledot*, which in the context of this book means *generations, ages or eras*. The word *toledot* is the primary marker of the major sections of the book as we will soon see. The first use of this word in **Genesis 2:4**, also the first use of the Greek *genesis*, is likely the source of the book's title.

Genesis, along with the rest of the Torah, or first five books of the Old Testament, is anonymous. No author is mentioned. No authorship is claimed within. The debate of authorship of Genesis is an old and diverse one. However, among conservative scholarship in both Jewish and Christian circles, many understand Moses to be the author. This conclusion is also amply supported by both Old and New Testament citations claiming the same. (See **Joshua 1:7-8; 2 Chronicles 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1**; etc.) From earliest of times the Old Testament was considered to be of two principal parts: *the Law* and *the Prophets*. The Law, or Torah, consisted of the first five books of *Moses*. (See **Daniel 9:6-13; Zechariah 7:12; Nehemiah 9:29-30; Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:27; Acts 13:15; 26:22**; etc.) The rest was lumped as *Prophets*. Some people spoke of the OT in three parts by subdividing this second section into *the Writings* (where history, poetry, wisdom, and early non-office prophets were placed) and *the Prophets*. The common denominator in almost every division of the Old Testament is the first five books of Moses, the Law, Torah.

Besides the division, many citations in the rest of the Old Testament understand Moses as the author of Genesis. See **Deuteronomy 1:8; 2 Kings 13:23; 1 Chronicles 1:1ff**; etc. Moreover, Jesus himself speaks of Moses as the author of the whole Torah (**Matthew 19:8; Luke 16:29; 24:27; John 1:17; 5:46; 7:23**), although there is inspired material that was almost certainly added after his death (cf. **Deuteronomy 34**).

Mention of this last text brings us to the question of date. **Deuteronomy 34:7** reveals that Moses lived 120 years. Further revelation reveals that his life was roughly divided into three sections of 40 years, the first in the house of Pharaoh in Egypt (**Acts 7:22-23**), the second as a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian (**Exodus 2:15**), and the final leading the children of Israel through their condemned wilderness wanderings (**Deuteronomy 8:2**). Although not without difficulty, within this division there are several good reasons to understand Moses composing Genesis during his first 40 years. He would have had ample access to any records of Israel kept in Egypt, of which there were undoubtedly many. In the second period of his life this access was denied him. It was during the first 40 years that Moses seems to have come to faith in Yahweh and developed the desire to defend and deliver his people. During the third period of his life, it seems Moses is consumed with leadership, administration and the writing of the four final books of the Torah.

The purpose of Genesis also speaks to its date. After even a casual read, the usefulness of such content for a nation of Hebrew slaves in Egypt is fairly evident. What hope do a chained people have if not in their Creator's promise of freedom, blessing, land and a future passed down from their ancestors? This promise is repeated in **Genesis 15:13-16** and **46:3-4**. This hope begins to be realized in the exodus. The second book of the Torah would be indiscernible and ungrounded without the first. Allen Ross agrees that "the major concern [of Genesis] is to describe the destiny of the covenant people. It supplies the historical basis for God's covenant with Israel." If it was composed by Moses before the Exodus, this purpose makes the most sense.

The structure of the book is clearly seen in the repeated formula "this is the account of..." (NAS). This formula includes the Hebrew word *toledot* mentioned earlier in a featured position in its structure (*toledot* means *generations* or *histories*). After the opening poetic section, the book sprawls out into ten sections of unequal length, each with this formulaic heading.

1. Creation (1:1-2:3)
2. *Toledot* of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26)
3. *Toledot* of Adam (5:1-6:8)
4. *Toledot* of Noah (6:9-9:29)
5. *Toledot* of Shem, Ham and Japheth (10:1-11:9)
6. *Toledot* of Shem (11:10-26)
7. *Toledot* of Terah and Abraham (11:27-25:11)
8. *Toledot* of Ishmael (25:12-18)
9. *Toledot* of Isaac (25:19-35:29)
10. *Toledot* of Esau (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)
11. *Toledot* of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

This arrangement is espoused by many but was recruited primarily from Allen P. Ross in *Creation and Blessing*.

Resources and Reading Plans

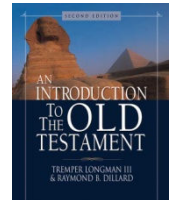
For further study in Genesis on various levels of depth I would recommend several resources with the constant caveat of critical reading.

A free online service from a Free Grace perspective is available from Tom Constable's fantastic website www.soniclight.com. You'll find PDF files of his updated study notes on every book of the Bible. They are an unbelievable resource at the best possible price.

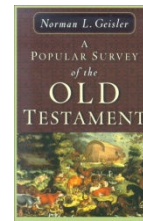


A quick surf of www.bible.org will also afford you many worthwhile articles and study helps on every Biblical book and a wide list of topics.

An entry level introduction to the Old Testament, including a short chapter on every book, see *An Introduction to the Old Testament* by Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard.

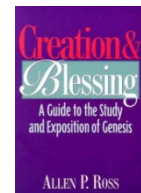


Although not specifically written for Genesis, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* by Norman Geisler is a stimulating read on a more intermediate to advanced level.

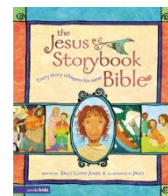


Another recommended reference work on the Old Testament from a theological perspective is *Everlasting Dominion* by Eugene H. Merrill. Although a more advanced work, its division and structure makes it an accessible reference work for students of almost any level.

Allen Ross' *Creation and Blessing* is an advanced and complete work committed solely to Genesis. It is extremely good in many respects and has been a helpful resource to me in many ways for many years.



By far the best kid's bible I've yet to run across is *The Jesus Storybook Bible* written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and illustrated by Jago. Not only is it stunning to look at but the writing is superb. Every story in the Old Testament ends with a nod to the coming Prince. Every story in the New Testament reveals how Jesus fulfilled all that was promised. It is simply gorgeous.



All of these resources can be purchased online for the best possible prices.

As you have probably already noticed, we are choosing to spend only six individual sermons in the whole of a 50 chapter book. That is either flying pretty high or moving pretty fast. Without compromising depth or breadth, we have chosen to major our emphasis on the individuals and experiences that the book itself seems most enamored with. This tact will also encourage us

toward personal reading and study to supplement and complete the texts covered on Sunday mornings. This is all intentional.

Part of the supplemental encouragement is a reading plan that will take you through the entire book during the course of our sermon series. It is designed to begin on October 25, which is the Monday after the first Sunday sermon. It will end the days following the final sermon (allowing for two special Sundays in the middle of the series – Missions Sunday and Orphan Care/Adoption Sunday). It includes only FIVE days of reading per week to allow some wiggle room which is a total of 40 days. Each reading should take less than 30 minutes.

Find a partner and commit to the plan. You won't regret it. It is a fantastic book. 40 days in Genesis.

Adult and Student Reading Plan

<i>Day 1</i>	1:1-2:3	2	2:4-3:21	3	3:22-4:26	4	5:1-6:8	5	6:9-9:28
6	10:1-11:32	7	12:1-13:18	8	14:1-24	9	15:1-21	10	16:1-17:8
11	17:9-18:15	12	18:16-19:29	13	19:30-21:8	14	21:9-34	15	22:1-24
16	23:1-20	17	24:1-67	18	25:1-18	19	25:19-26:17	20	26:18-34
21	27:1-46	22	28:1-22	23	29:1-35	24	30:1-43	25	31:1-55
26	32:1-32	27	33:1-18	28	34:1-35:8	29	35:9-29	30	36:1-37:1
31	37:2-36	32	38:1-39:23	33	40:1-41:49	34	41:50-42:38	35	43:1-44:13
36	44:14-45:28	37	46:1-47:31	38	48:1-22	39	49:1-33	40	50:1-26

Kids Reading Plan

The reading plan for kids is intended to follow the adult plan but only focuses on two stories per week. Inform the stories from what you have learned in the full reading. Revisit them more often throughout the week if possible. Talk about the stories in the car or over dinner. The Kids Bible mentioned above as a resource would be a great place to start.

Week 1	Creation – 1:1-2:9	Adam and Eve's Disobedience – 3:1-21
Week 2	Cain and Abel – 4:1-16	Noah and construction – 6:13-7:12
Week 3	Noah and Rainbow – 8-9	Tower of Babel – 11:1-9
Week 4	Abram and a Promise – 12:1-5; 15:1-6	Abraham and 3 Visitors – 18:1-15
Week 5	Isaac is born – 21:1-8	A strange request – 22:1-19
Week 6	Isaac and Rebekah – 24	Jacob's dream – 28:10-22
Week 7	Joseph's dream – 37	Joseph's success – 39-41
Week 8	Joseph saves the family – 42-45	Israel blesses his 12 sons - 49

Group Discussion

The following group discussion pages are designed to facilitate thought and discussion around both the text of Genesis and the art which accompanies the text. They follow the general trajectory of the sermons but are not dependent on them. They can also be informed by the fuller reading plan but do not have to be. They can easily be adapted from the intended small group discussion experience to individual quiet time study or family discussion.

The Art

If you were to travel to ancient monasteries or churches around the Mediterranean you would not have to search long before you found a scene that is noticeably biblical but not like any story you've ever heard. You may see Jesus with Adam and Eve or even David with Solomon, Daniel and John the Baptist. The incongruity of these paintings exists with us but not with those for whom the paintings were intended. Much like the icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church, these kinds of paintings are not intended as snapshots of a biblical scene or narrative. They are rather a window into connections and meanings that have no regard for time and space. They are a painted theology. This makes sense when we remember that the common people attending these ancient churches were almost entirely illiterate. They could not read the Bible to understand it for themselves. They had to see it.

Our approach to these pieces of art was birthed out of a similar hope, but notably without the obstacle of illiteracy. These art pieces are a product of almost a dozen people from our own church family here at Faith. We gave birth to them as a labor of love and creativity. They are not intended as the scene of a specific narrative, but rather incorporate many of the experiences and meanings of a character or characters from Genesis. The pieces are meant to be a little difficult to "read." They are a puzzle. Everything is meaningful. Everything is intentional. They should spark a lot of discussion and exploration in the text of Genesis.