



Old Testament overview 1

Creation / Fall / Flood – how it all started. Leader's version

For an hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

This series of studies is going to unpack the Old Testament. It is a brief overview, not a detailed investigation. The Old Testament is not 'old' because it is worn out, to be replaced by the New Testament! It is 'Old' because it refers to events that happened before Jesus came. The events in the OT point to Jesus' coming and it is important that we look for these signposts as we read the OT.

Since there is so much material to cover, there will be short explanations for the leader to give in some sessions, to help fill in the gaps as we race through 39 OT books in 10 sessions.

1. **SHOUT OUT** Do you know any events from the Old Testament?

CREATION

*2. Read Genesis 1 v 1-4. What do we learn from Genesis 1 v 1 about God, and about who created the world?

God was there in the beginning – He is not created. God created 'the heavens and the earth' – i.e. everything. Explain that in the following verses, up to v25, God makes day / night, sky / sea / dry land, plants, sun / moon / stars and animals. Avoid the creation / evolution debate!! The learning point is that God made it, not how He made it.

3. Read Genesis 1 v 26-28 and 1 v 31. What was the pattern God used when He made man and what did God think of His finished creation?

God himself was the pattern – we are made in God's image. This means we have some of God's characteristics – love, compassion, ability to communicate, feel / express emotion, a sense of morality, the ability to be hurt / vulnerable / angry and we also are creative. Help the group think about our worth to God, having made us in His own image – we are very special to God, we are not just another animal etc.

God saw all He had made and it was very good (interestingly, on days 1-6 of creation 'it was good', but once the people were made, 'it was very good!').

4. Read Genesis 1 v 26. What special role was mankind given?

To rule over the animals and all the earth – to steward them i.e. to look after them, to protect them, to have responsibility for the creation. No other created thing was given this role – it is peculiar to mankind.

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What does it mean for mankind to look after creation and how can you play your part?

It means caring for the planet. Try to think of ways that people in prison can do this – recycling, not wasting water etc, as well as people outside – not abusing animals, trying to protect animals, trying to protect the environment corporately as well as personally.

FALL

Questions 5-7 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

*5. **SDL** Read Genesis 2 v 16-17. God gives the man one rule to live by – what is it?

God only gives him one rule!! 'Do not eat of a specific tree, called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. And He gives him a warning – when he eats from it, he will die.

*6. **SDL** Read Genesis 3 v 1-6. By now God has also made a woman. What happens in these verses?

The serpent (the devil, see Rev 12 v 9) lies, exaggerates and puts doubt about God's word into the woman's mind. She sees that the fruit of the tree looks good and eats it, giving it to the man, who does not remind her of God's command – he eats it as well. (The man and the woman are not named until v20, after the Fall).

*7. **SDL** Read Genesis 3 v 16-19. What does God say to the man and the woman?

God says that woman's pain in childbirth will greatly increase, and that she will desire her husband, but her husband will rule over her. (Her desire for her husband and his rule over her should be blessings, but because of sin, these things have become corrupt and sinful).

To the man, God says that the ground will become cursed and hard to work (note, only the serpent and the ground are cursed, v14&17, not the people). Death will claim the people, v19.

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The devil still whispers, 'Did God really say...?' How should we respond to this attack?

Pray that in God's strength we can stand against it and know the truth, from the Bible.

8. Read Genesis 3 v 7&21. Why does God do this for the people and did they deserve it?

The people have realised they are naked, since they are now sinful and have developed guilt / shame / blame, so God makes them garments of animal skin. They have just broken the only commandment that God gave them – they do not deserve this gift from God! God gives them what they do not deserve.

9. God gave Adam and Eve what they did not deserve. How does this point forward to the coming of Jesus Christ?

This is the first instance of grace – immediately after the first sin! This event in Genesis 3 points us to the forgiveness we have in Jesus, through His death on the cross in our place and His resurrection. We do not deserve to be forgiven, but He gives us what we do not deserve when we repent and believe. Because of His resurrection from the dead, we are promised eternal life in Christ. This is a gift – we cannot earn it and we cannot pay God back for it.

10. Read Genesis 3 v 14-15. What does God say to the serpent (the devil)?

God cursed the devil / the serpent. God said there will be enmity (war) between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. This is literally between snakes and people, but, more importantly, the descendant of the woman will crush the head of the devil (defeat him) and the devil will strike (attack but not defeat) the woman's descendant.

*11. **STICKERS** Who do you think is the descendant of the woman that Genesis 3 v 15 ultimately refers to? (see Galatians 4 v 4).

Jesus.

*12. How does Hebrews 2 v 14-15 (part of a passage talking about Jesus) help us understand Genesis 3 v 15?

Gen 3 v 15 says the offspring of the woman (Jesus) will crush Satan's head and Satan will strike his heel. At the cross Jesus is struck by Satan (He dies), but crushes Satan's head in His resurrection. (Note, the war is over but the devil is still fighting skirmishes on the edges of the field at the moment).

FLOOD

13. Read Genesis 6 v 12-13. What had happened and what was God's response?

The people had become more and more evil in God's sight. (Note, Genesis 6 v 8-9, Noah was a 'righteous man'). God decided to destroy the people and the earth = judgement.

*14. Read Genesis 6 v 14, 6 v 20 and 7 v 4-5. What did God tell Noah to do and why?

Make an ark – God was going to send a flood to destroy life on the earth because the people had become so sinful. The flood was a reversal of creation – everything is washed away and land and sea are no longer separated. God told Noah to take two of every kind of animal with him, so that the species would not be wiped out (they came to Noah – he didn't have to go looking for them!).

Read Genesis 7 v 16 – 8 v 5 to the group.

*15. Many months after it stopped raining, when the water had gone down, God called Noah out of the ark. What did God say to Noah in Genesis 9 v 11 and what sign did he give as a reminder of this promise in Genesis 9 v 13?

God said that he would never flood the earth again. The rainbow is the reminder of the covenant (promise).

16. God promised Noah He would never again destroy life on earth. But He will take an account of our sin – how will this happen and who will be the judge?

Jesus is coming back as our judge. Acts 17 v 31.

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During the flood, Noah and his family were kept safe by the ark.

How can we be kept safe when Jesus comes to judge the world?

The ark was a foreshadow of Jesus – only in Jesus can we be saved from the coming judgment. A chance to gently enquire whether the group has assurance of salvation. Jesus has paid the ransom for us by dying on the cross and rising again to life; if we believe and trust in Jesus' death and resurrection in our place, then we need not fear the coming judgement, as we know we are already made right with God – this is God's promise to us.

OPTIONAL: TIME-LINE

Prepare an outline on wallpaper and ask the group to add what they have learnt today in the appropriate place. See the time-line on the TFC website for guidance of dates.

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