

Genesis
St. Jerome Adult Bible Study
Lesson 1 – Answers
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1. Through the study of *Genesis*, I hope to know more about God and his love for me.
2. Three “new beginnings” in my life were: Getting married and becoming an instant family of 4; becoming a computer programmer; conversion to Christianity.
3. The three important themes of *Genesis* are divine causality (God was the uncaused causer of the universe and everything in it), boundaries and relationships (there are “rules” that govern our relationship to God and to each other), and the Covenantal Relationship between God and man (He promises to be our protector and He blesses us and we promise to obey His commands).
4. The ancient writers were humans who were inspired by God to tell His story – to impart His message – to other humans using human words that could be understood by contemporaneous peoples. The human authors used their own experiences and frames of reference to tell stories that gave meaning to God’s message. The Bible is not a newspaper, history book, nor science text.
5. a. *Genesis* (in fact, the entire Pentateuch or Torah) is the result of a careful and complex joining of several historic traditions, or sources. These are primarily four: the so-called Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomistic strands that run through the Pentateuch. (They are conveniently abbreviated as J, E, P and D.) Each brings to the Torah its own characteristics, its own theological viewpoint—a rich variety of interpretation that the sensitive reader will take pains to appreciate. A superficial difference between two of these sources is responsible for their names: the Yahwist prefers the name Yahweh (represented in translation as Lord) by which God revealed himself to Israel; the Elohist prefers the generic name for God, Elohim. The Yahwist is concrete, imaginative, using many anthropomorphisms in its theological approach, as seen, e.g., in the narrative of creation in Genesis 2, compared with the Priestly version in Genesis 1. The Elohist is more sober, moralistic. The Priestly strand, which emphasizes genealogies, is more severely theological in tone. The Deuteronomistic approach is characterized by the intense hortatory style of Deu 5–11, and by certain principles from which it works, such as the centralization of worship in the Jerusalem temple. However, even this analysis of the Pentateuch is an over-simplification, for it is not always possible to distinguish with certainty among the various sources. The fact is that each of these individual traditions incorporates much older material. The Yahwist was himself a collector and adapter. His narrative is made up of many disparate stories that have been reoriented, and given a meaning within the context in which they now stand; e.g., the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. Within the J and P traditions one has to reckon with many individual units; these had their own history and life-setting before they were brought together into the present more or less connected narrative. This is not to deny the role of Moses in the development of the Pentateuch. It is true we do not conceive of him as the

author of the books in the modern sense. But there is no reason to doubt that, in the events described in these traditions, he had a uniquely important role, especially as lawgiver. Even the later laws which have been added in P and D are presented as a Mosaic heritage. Moses is the lawgiver par excellence, and all later legislation is conceived in his spirit, and therefore attributed to him. Hence, the reader is not held to undeviating literalness in interpreting the words, “the Lord said to Moses.” One must keep in mind that the Pentateuch is the crystallization of Israel’s age-old relationship with God. In presenting the story of the birth of the People of God, the Pentateuch looks back to the promises made to the patriarchs, and forward to the continuing fulfillment of these promises in later books of the Bible. The promises find their classic expression in Genesis 12:1ff. The “God of the Fathers” challenges Abraham to believe: the patriarch is to receive a people, a land, and through him the nations will somehow be blessed. The mysterious and tortuous way in which this people is brought into being is described: Despite Sarah’s sterility, Isaac is finally born—to be offered in sacrifice! The promises are renewed to him eventually, and also to the devious Jacob, as if to show that the divine design will be effected, with or without human cunning. The magnificent story of Joseph is highlighted by the theme of Providence; the promise of a people is taking shape. Israel is not formed in a vacuum, but amid the age-old civilization of Mesopotamia and the Nile. Oppression in Egypt provokes a striking intervention of God. Yahweh reveals himself to Moses as a savior, and the epic story of deliverance is told in Exodus. This book also tells of the Sinai covenant, which is rightfully regarded as the key to the Old Testament. Through the covenant Israel becomes Yahweh’s people, and Yahweh becomes Israel’s God. This act of grace marks the fulfillment of the first promise; that Abraham will be the father of a great nation, God’s special possession. The laws in Exodus and Leviticus (P tradition) are both early and late. They spell out the proper relationship of the federation of the twelve tribes with the Lord. He is a jealous God, demanding exclusive allegiance; he cannot be imaged; he takes vengeance upon the wicked, and shows mercy to the good. Slowly the Lord reveals himself to his people; with remarkable honesty, Israel records the unsteady response—the murmurings and rebellions and infidelities through the desert wanderings up to the plain of Moab. This sacred history was formed within the bosom of early Israel, guided by the spirit of God. It was sung beside the desert campfires; it was commemorated in the liturgical feasts, such as Passover; it was transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation—until all was brought together in writing, about the sixth century b.c., when the literary formation of the Pentateuch came to an end.

5.b. *Genesis* contains several different literary styles, each of which must be read and understood in a different way. Among the chief styles are myths (traditional stories which may or may not be independently verified), sagas (understandable legends about people, often heroes), and genealogies (explanations of the origin of a person, tribe, or group of people).

6. Although the two creation stories (Genesis 1:1- 2:3 and 2:4 – 25) differ, particularly in the sequence of creation, both assert that all of creation was the work of God and that humans are very special to Him.

7. The 6 days of creation can be divided into 2 parts: Days 1 through 3 and days 4 through 6 and they complement or parallel each other as illustrated by the following chart:

Days 1 through 3 God creates.....	Days 4 through 6 God creates.....
Light, Day, Night	Sun, Moon, Stars
Water and Sky	Fish and Birds
Land, Sea, Plants	Animals and Man

8. I am very aware of the goodness of God’s creation when I consider the miracle of how our bodies work or how well nature provides for us.

9. Since God created everything and it belongs to Him, we must care for all His creation. The Church teaches that we honor God and His creative work by doing all we can to preserve His planet and all it contains.

10. Humans were created by God in His own image (אֱלֹהִים From an unused root meaning to *shade*; a *phantom*, that is, (figuratively) *illusion, resemblance*; hence a representative *figure*, especially an *idol*:—image, vain shew). Most Christians believe that our likeness to God is shown in our ability to love God as well as our fellow human beings.

11. The Torah was not written down until the Babylonian Exile (ca. 597 – 538 BC). By then, the Jews needed reassurance that God was the prime mover and that His motivations were divine. They needed some hope that they had not been abandoned by God.

12. God “breathed” life into His first human: “the Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being” (breath = נְשָׁמָה a *puff*, that is, *wind*, angry or vital *breath*, divine *Inspiration, intellect* or (concretely) an *animal*:—blast, (that) breath (-eth), inspiration, soul, spirit.) Interestingly, the Latin root for breath is the same as for spirit, *Spiritus*.

13. God desired that humans “be fruitful and multiply” so He created Woman as a companion for Adam. God, by this action, sanctified the union between a man and a woman and the human relationship between them.

14.a. The Genesis account of Eve’s temptation by the serpent to obtain that which was forbidden (knowledge of good and evil and a beautiful fruit) illustrates how we can be selfish and greedy – to pretend that we are better or, at least equal, to God. It is our selfishness that causes us to sin.

14.b. Temptation by worldly things is a human condition: “¹⁵Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.¹⁶For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever. (1 John 2:15 – 17)

15. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, all their descendants were subjected to a changed existence. Women would experience pain in childbirth, women would be subordinate to their husbands, and men would work the soil for their food until they return to it in dust.

16. Adam called his wife “Eve” because she was the mother of all human life. (חַיָּה *lifegiver*; *Chavvah* (or Eve), the first woman:—Eve.)

17. Eventhough God banished His first children from the garden, He continued to show care for them by providing clothing of skins to hide their nakedness and their shame.

18. There were three great losses to humanity when our first parents were expelled from the Garden: Death, concupiscence, and limited intimacy with God. Through baptism, repentance, and obedience to Christ, we can be restored to a life with The Father.