

North Summit Church
Genesis 1:1–2:3
September 4, 2026

In the Beginning

Introduction

- Over the last ten years, we have walked through the New Testament verse by verse, book by book, with select seasons back in the Old Testament along the way. Most recently that meant the entire book of Hebrews — the great high priest, the better covenant, the great cloud of witnesses — all the way to the resurrection benediction that closed it out this spring. That work was good, and it isn't the last time we'll be in Paul's letters, or Peter, or James, or John. We'll be back.
- Starting today, we're doing something we've never done as a church, at least as far back as I can remember. Over the next ten years, Lord willing, as a church we are going to walk through the whole Bible — Old and New Testament, side by side, alternating back and forth so we're never more than a few months from either half of the story. Not just the highlights. The historical books in their major movements. The wisdom literature taught by theme. Unpacking all the prophets. The Synoptic Gospels walked as one composite witness to the coming of the King. Then Acts. Then the letters, one after another. Ten years, God willing, to spend time as a church family in the whole council of God's Word.

Why? Paul told the Ephesian elders:

Acts 20:27

“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”

- As teachers that is our charge as well. And Jesus himself, walking the road to Emmaus with two confused disciples:

Luke 24:27

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

- Genesis and Revelation aren't two books that happen to share a cover. They're one story, one Author, working through dozens of human writers across fifteen centuries — and every page of it points toward one Person.
- **Ten years is a long time.** Long enough that some of the kids in the room this morning will be driving by the time we finish. That's not a bug. We're not planning a sermon series. We're building the theological foundation this church is going to live inside for generations to come.
- So where do you start a story like that? Exactly where the story itself starts.

New Sermon Series: In the Beginning — Genesis 1–11

- Genesis is built around a phrase you'll hear us come back to for the next twelve weeks: "these are the generations of . . ." It shows up in 2:4, in 5:1, in 6:9, in 10:1, in 11:10
- Moses uses it to divide his book into sections. If you learn to spot those divisions you end up with a road map, not just for these eleven chapters, but for reading the whole book of Genesis.
- Watch, too, for a rhythm that repeats across every major unit here — the fall, Cain and Abel, the flood, Babel: humanity sins, God judges, and grace breaks through the judgment instead of getting canceled by it. That's not a Genesis-only pattern. It's the pattern the rest of the Bible runs on, all the way to the cross.
- And watch for two lines of people, starting as early as Cain and Seth — one building a name and a city for itself, one calling on the name of the Lord. That thread runs the whole length of Scripture and doesn't resolve until the Great Babylon falls and the New Jerusalem comes down in Revelation's final chapter. Sheep and Goats. Wheat and weeds.
- These first eleven chapters, give us the foundation for the theological categories the rest of the Bible will use — God, humanity, sin, covenant, judgment, promise, nations, worship — gets its first definition right here. If you know these eleven chapters, you have what is needed to recognize their fingerprints everywhere else you look in Scripture: in the Ten Commandments, in John's prologue, all the way to the last chapters of Revelation.
- Genesis 1–11 is what some theologians have called "the deep grammar of reality" — who God is, who we are, why we exist, what's gone wrong, and how God is already moving, before Abraham, before Sinai, before David, to put things right. To heal the brokenness caused by human sinfulness and rebellion. Everything from chapter 12 on is God's answer to the problem these eleven chapters lay out.

This week I encourage you to read Genesis 1:1–2:3 slowly several times.

- Each week we will exegete several key passages to lay the foundation for your personal study, followed by several application points. Encouraging you to think through the "so that" of each section of Scripture.

1. A Word Without Rival (vv. 1–2)

Genesis 1:1–2

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

- Every nation around Israel told an origin story, and almost all of them started the same way — with a fight. In the Babylonian creation epic, the world is formed out of the corpse

of a defeated goddess. In the Canaanite stories of Baal, order is won through combat with a chaotic sea god. Creation, in the world Israel actually lived in, meant violence resolved.

- Genesis 1 tells a completely different story.

No Rival, No Struggle

- The verb translated “created” — *bara* — is used in the Old Testament exclusively of God’s activity. Never once does it take a human subject. Whatever this word describes, it’s a category of action that belongs to God alone.
- “Without form and void” in the Hebrew describes raw, unformed material, not some evil chaos God has to defeat. There’s no war here. Just a God about to order what isn’t yet ordered.

A God Who Is Near

- “The Spirit of God was hovering” uses a verb that shows up in only one other place in the whole Old Testament: Deuteronomy 32:11, an eagle hovering protectively over her young. Not menacing. Tender. Purposeful.
 - This is the God of the universe revealing to humanity who He is, what he is like, and why He created mankind.
- Before God speaks a single word, the Spirit is already there. A few verses later, God says “let us make man” (1:26). Genesis 1 isn’t teaching a developed doctrine of the Trinity — that’s more than the text is doing. But it’s already showing us more than one Person at work in a single divine act. We see even in the first page of Scripture the nature of God as Trinity. One God in Three Person, each active in creating all that is.
- **Here’s what this means for us.** Our culture’s origin story is either random chance with no author, or — when it bothers with a story at all — some version of conflict and survival, the strong outlasting the weak, or a God who defeats a tyrannical God. Genesis says something that turns all of that thinking on its head: in the beginning, a Word, spoken by a God who needed nothing and created anyway.
- This is far more significant that we often recognize. It means that everything that is, is an act of grace. It is an act of unmerited favor. It is because God is love. This reminds us to see the graciousness of God in everything that is. It is all undeserved, unmerited. Creation, Life, is all a gift from a loving God, who longs for relationship with His creation.

2. Very Good: A World Ordered and Blessed (vv. 3–31)

Genesis 1:26–28

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created

him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Genesis 1:31

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

An Architecture, Not Chaos

- Let’s step back and look at the six days as a whole. Days one through three form realms — light and dark, sky and sea, land and vegetation. Days four through six fill those exact realms — sun, moon, and stars for the light and dark; birds and fish for the sky and sea; land animals for the land, and finally humanity to steward it all. That’s a matched, purposeful building pattern, showing us the purposeful, intentional ordering in God’s creation for our good and His glory.
- Six times in this chapter, God calls his work good. After humanity, the verdict gets upgraded: very good. The material world’s goodness isn’t an afterthought. It’s the original declaration from the creator that what He created is as it should be. Everything intricately placed, one complementing the other, each with a purpose, and value and mission.

Crowned to Rule

- “Let us make man in our image” borrows language that we see throughout the ancient world, where kings set up images of themselves in conquered territory as stand-ins for their own rule. Read that background into Genesis 1 and “image of God” stops being mainly about which internal faculties we have and becomes about representation and rule — we’re placed on earth as God’s own representatives. It is an invitation to join God in his creative work.
- That calling goes to “them” — male and female, together, no qualifier, no exceptions for age or ability or status. Every human being you will ever meet carries this calling.
- Here’s the pressure point for us. Our culture is deeply confused about whether the physical world — bodies, food, sex, work, ordinary matter — is something to transcend (escape), exploit, or ignore. Genesis 1 won’t let us do any of that. God called physical, material creation good before humanity ever showed up to have an opinion about it.

3. The Sabbath: Rest as the Goal, Not an Afterthought (2:1–3)

Genesis 2:1–3

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”

The Climax Is Enjoyment, Not More Making

- After six days of ordering and filling, the seventh day doesn't add a seventh act of creation. It stops. God's rest — not more output — is the climax and the goal of the whole creation week.
- *Shabbat*, at its root, means "to cease, to stop." This has nothing to do with God being tired. It has everything to do with completion — the work is finished, and finished work gets enjoyed, not endlessly added to.
- This isn't an abdication of responsibility, it defines the point of the responsibility we have been given. Right relationship, communion, with our Creator. This is why we center our worship services around communion with God through the Lord's Table on the Lord's Day. The point of Christ's finished work on the Cross is so that we can enjoy that which we were created for.

The First Holy Thing Is a Day

- Notice what gets called holy first. Not a mountain. Not a temple. Not a person. A day. Before Sinai, before the tabernacle, before a single sacrifice anywhere in Scripture, God blesses and sets apart time itself.
- Every one of us organizes our life around some picture of what it's all for. Genesis 2 says the goal was never more productivity. It was communion — rest with God, in what he had already finished.
- Some of you were here a few months ago when we walked through Hebrews 4 and its picture of a Sabbath rest still waiting for the people of God. Genesis 2 plants the flag Hebrews 4 comes back to remind us of. And Revelation ends the whole story back in a garden-city where God's people finally, fully rest.
- Where they experience God's pleasure (Eden), in right relationship with their creator.

Application: Living Under a Speaking, Good, Resting God

Here is what I believe this passage is calling us to:

1. Trust the Word Over the Noise

- Our culture tells competing origin stories every day — chance, chaos, or the darker version, that life is fundamentally a fight for survival. Genesis 1 asks you to trust a God who simply speaks and it is so, over every rival story that gets louder just because it's repeated more often.
- This week, notice which origin story you're actually operating out of — when you're anxious, when you're comparing yourself to someone, when you're making a hard call.

2. Receive the Ordinary World as Good

- Stop treating your body, your work, your food, your marriage bed, as neutral at best and suspect at worst. God called the material world good before sin ever entered it, and Genesis never takes that verdict back.
- Pick one thing you've been treating as merely functional this week — a meal, a walk, your own body — and receive it as something God actually called good.
- When we talk about our mission as a church to make disciples of Jesus who live all of life for the Glory of God, this is what we are talking about. As Christian there is not the false dichotomy of sacred and secular. Everything that is, is a gift of God's grace. Every act is sacred and can be done for the glory of God.

3. Rule as a Representative, Not a Tyrant or a Deserter

- Image-bearing was never a license to exploit creation, and it was never a call to abandon your responsibilities either. It's a vocation of careful, representative rule — over the earth, yes, but also over your work, your home, whatever's been placed in your hands.
- Taking dominion does not mean domination, it means making things flourish. Taking the goodness that God created and stewarding it towards God's intended purposes.
- Ask yourself, honestly: where right now are you either exploiting something entrusted to you, or neglecting it out of passivity? Name it specifically, write it down.

4. Practice Sabbath as Worship, Not Laziness

- If God himself stopped, built rest into the architecture of the created week, and called that day holy, then our nonstop, always-on culture isn't actually the mature, responsible way to live. It's a rejection of the pattern we were made for.
- Build one actual rhythm of rest into your week this month that says, out loud, "I trust God's provision more than the next acquisition, project, news cycle, product, etc."
- The idea of Sabbath is more important to our spiritual formation than the weight most Christians give it.
 - We live in a culture where our primary economic driver is marketing. Which tells us that what we have isn't enough, and that if we just get this or that then we will find fulfillment. Social Media has just become a marketing tool that drives us into consumption. But we weren't created for consumption as the goal. The goal was stewardship, dominion as a means to enjoyment.
 - Sabbath is a reminder that the ultimate goal is the enjoyment of our relationship with God and others, that is where our satisfaction is found, not in what we achieve or consume.

5. Commit to This Journey, Together

- We're starting something today that will take a decade to finish. That only works if we do it together — showing up, reading ahead, bringing your kids into it, wrestling with the hard chapters in your small group, in community.
- The aim of the next ten years is not just more information. It's knowing the God who speaks — the same God who spoke the world into being at the start of this chapter, and who's been speaking to his people ever since.

Benediction Prayer

Father, you spoke, and it was. You looked at what you made and called it good, and you rested in the finished work of your own hands.

We confess how often we live as though the world began in accident or violence instead of your word — how often we treat what you called good as merely useful, or worse, as a threat.

Forgive us. Re-order us the way you re-ordered the deep.

As we begin this long walk through your whole story, give us patience for the slow chapters and the strange ones, and hunger for the ones we'd rather skip. And give us, even now, the rest you built into the fabric of the world you made — rest we know fully only in your Son, in whom all the promises found in your Word, find their yes.

Go now in the peace of the God who has already finished the work, and who is still, even today, making all things new. Amen.

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Small Group Discussion Questions

1. A Word Without Rival

Every ancient culture around Israel told an origin story built on conflict — a fight, a defeated god, a struggle. Genesis 1 begins instead with a God who simply speaks.

What “origin story” — chance, conflict, meaninglessness — do you find yourself unconsciously operating out of, and what would change if you actually believed Genesis 1:1 instead?

2. Declared Good Before We Ever Showed Up

God pronounces creation good six times before humanity ever appears to weigh in, and “very good” once we do.

Where in your life have you been treating something ordinary — your body, your work, a relationship — as merely neutral or even suspect, rather than something

God has actually called good?

3. Rest as the Goal

The seventh day doesn't add more making — it stops. The first thing in the Bible called holy is a day, not a place or a person.

What would it actually look like for you to build one rhythm of real rest into your week this month — and what's the honest reason you haven't done it yet?

4. Beginning Together

We're starting a ten-year journey through the whole Bible as a church family, not just as individuals.

What would it look like for you, specifically, to commit to this whole journey — not just this series — alongside your small group and this congregation?