

saint mary's press

LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS

REVELATION  
AND  
THE OLD  
TESTAMENT

CHRIS WARDWELL

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# REVELATION AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

High School Framework Course 1

CHRIS WARDWELL



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# Thanks and Dedication

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This book is dedicated to the Basilian Fathers, to whom I am eternally grateful for the love and support they have given me.

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# UNIT 1

## God's Original Revelation

HOW DOES  
THE BIBLE  
HELP ME  
KNOW  
GOD?



# LOOKING AHEAD

CHAPTER 1 Page 10  
God's Original Plan

CHAPTER 2 Page 36  
God's Revelation

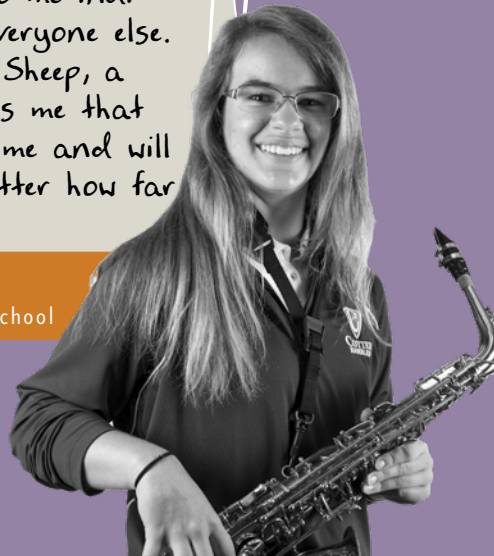
CHAPTER 3 Page 58  
Overview of the Bible

CHAPTER 4 Page 84  
Interpreting the Bible

The Bible helps me realize that God loves ME. The love revealed in the Bible completely applies to me individually as it does to everyone else. The Parable of the Lost Sheep, a personal favorite, reminds me that God is always there for me and will be waiting for me no matter how far I've strayed.

**VIVA**

Cotter High School



# CHAPTER 1

## God's Original Plan



“Word of God Speak”

WHY IS THERE EVIL IN THE WORLD? WAS THAT PART OF GOD'S PLAN?

### SNAPSHOT

#### Article 1 Page 11

##### The Divine Architect and His Plans

- Pre-read: Genesis 1:1-2:3
- Pre-read: Genesis 2:4-25

#### Article 2 Page 18

##### The Bible or Science—Which One Is Right?

#### Article 3 Page 23

##### Right People, Wrong Turn

- Pre-read: Genesis 3:1-24
- Pre-read: Genesis 4:1-16
- Pre-read: Genesis 6:5-9:29
- Pre-read: Genesis 11:1-9

#### Article 4 Page 30

##### Sin's Ripple Effect

## Article 1

# The Divine Architect and His Plans

Is there a God? How do we know? Did something create God, or has God always existed? Did God create everything, or did the universe just sort of happen? Why did God create us? If God is good, why are suffering and evil part of creation? Each mystery leads to another greater mystery. Then your head just starts spinning with the immensity of it all!

The Bible, and in particular, the Book of Genesis, lays the foundation for our belief in the one true God, Creator of **Heaven** and Earth. It recounts the family histories of our ancestors in faith and the messy fall from grace because of their choices. This biblical text pulls no punches when it comes to facing the darker side of human behavior with its shocking portrayals of murder, rape, infidelity, tribal wars, and more. Even though human failings and **sin** get lots of attention, the important thing that Genesis teaches is that this is not how it started. It was not even the plan. On the contrary, God's plan was very good.



“In the beginning, . . . God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

**Heaven** ➤ A state of eternal life and union with God, in which one experiences full happiness and the satisfaction of the deepest human longings.

**sin** ➤ Any deliberate offense, in thought, word, or deed, against the will of God. Sin wounds human nature and injures human solidarity.

## In the Beginning

The Book of Genesis appropriately opens the Bible with the words “In the beginning.” In Greek, the word *Genesis* means “beginning.” The first few chapters address how God created everything, how the human race took a turn down the path of sinful disobedience, and how that path brought about a separation from God and one another. As you read these chapters, you may notice that the Bible has two complementary Creation accounts. The first account tells how God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh. The second account continues with a unique narrative focused on Adam and Eve, which many scholars believe was written centuries before the first one.

Why are there two Creation accounts in the Book of Genesis, and which one of them is true? The short answer is that both of them are true. Both express the religious or spiritual truths that God wanted to convey for the sake of our salvation. Each Creation account has its own complementary set of truths to teach us about God, humanity, and all of creation. And though these accounts use symbolic language and are not intended to be strict historical accounts, they do convey some historical truths. One such truth is that all humanity descended from a first set of parents, who are symbolically named Adam and Eve. (We will further explore Catholic principles for interpreting the Bible in chapter 4).

### TAKE IT TO GOD

To our creator God who . . .

has the humor to create the platypus,  
the extravagance to create fields of wildflowers,  
the majesty to create the stars and galaxies that fill the night sky,  
the wisdom to create the day of rest,  
and the love to create men, women, children, and babies.

Fill me with your humor, your love of beauty, your creativity, and your wisdom. I thank you for my community and ask for the strength to love my neighbors and see your image in everyone I meet. Amen.



Genesis 1:1–2:3

## It Was Good

Have you ever had a teacher who repeated something over and over in order to drive home a point to make sure you would remember it? When this happens, we know it must be something important. The author of the first Creation account does something similar. This account describes how God created the universe within a six-day period. Notice how the author declares, “God saw that it was good,” as God finishes each act of Creation.

Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light. *God saw that the light was good.* . . .

Then God said: Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear. And so it happened. . . . God called the dry land “earth,” and the basin of water he called “sea.” *God saw that it was good.* Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it happened. . . . *God saw that it was good.* . . .

Then God said: Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. . . . God set them in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. *God saw that it was good.* . . .

Then God said: Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky. God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of crawling living creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. *God saw that it was good.* . . .

Then God said: Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal. And so it happened: God made every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, and every kind of thing that crawls on the ground. *God saw that it was good.*

(Genesis 1:3–4,9–25, italics added)



## 6 DAYS OF CREATION



In the first Creation account, God creates the world in six symbolic days. This graphic shows the key things God created on each day.

Finally, the author tells us that on the sixth day “God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good” (1:31).

This belief that all of creation is good is an essential part of our faith. It guides our interaction with other human beings and all of creation. We also learn something about the Creator: because everything he creates is good, we can conclude that God is also good.

The first Creation account also notes one thing that sets human beings apart from the rest of the created world: God made human beings in his own image (see Genesis 1:27). We share this wonderful gift with the angels, whom God also made in his image, having intellect and free will just as we do. All human beings—male and female, no matter the color of their skin, the country where they live, the religion they profess, or the sins they have committed—are made in God’s image. This means that every person, without exception, is worthy of our care and respect.

These Creation accounts also teach us about the nature of God. Many creation stories from other cultures written during this time period depict creation resulting from violent struggles among many gods. This is not true of the Creation accounts in Genesis; there is only one God who created everything out



of love, not violence. His all-powerful nature is demonstrated in how he brings light, earth, sky, plants, animals, and human beings into existence by merely speaking. The God revealed in Scripture loves his creation and desires to be in close relationship with it, especially the human beings he created in his image.

## Adam and Eve

In the second Creation account, we are introduced to the parents of all human beings, Adam and Eve. God first creates Adam, providing him with everything he needs for physical survival in the Garden of Eden, but God notes that it is not good for Adam to be alone. God then makes a companion for Adam (see Genesis 2:18–25). Here we learn God's desire for us to be part of a community. The most basic cell of a community is the family. By bringing Adam and Eve together, God establishes a community of people who are bound to him and to one another. The union of Adam and Eve with God **prefigures** the People of God called together by Jesus Christ to be his **Church**.



God created human beings in his image and likeness.

**prefigure** ► Similar to foreshadowing, it is an indication of a type of thing, person, or event that points to its future fulfillment. The meaning of what is contained in the Old Testament is unveiled in the New Testament.

**Church** ► The term *Church* has three inseparable meanings: (1) the entire People of God throughout the world; (2) the diocese, which is also known as the local Church; (3) the assembly of believers gathered for the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist.



The union of Adam and Eve is so close that the author of Genesis writes, “The two of them become one body” (2:24). The curious phrase “become one body” could refer to the sexual union that brings about children, but it also refers to the deep bonds created by people who love one another. Perhaps you know a friend who has lost a parent or someone else very close. You might not have even known the person who died, but somehow you are able to feel the loss and sadness your friend is experiencing. This is called compassion, which literally means “to suffer with.” It occurs when one has a deep love for another. This bond is God’s intention for us all—to be united in one body. Saint Paul calls the Church “the Body of Christ” and writes, “If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

## Longing for . . . Something

A new phone, a new car, winning the game, getting an A on your test, finding your true love, fame and fortune. . . . The list goes on and on. Everybody wants something. It seems to be an unending cycle of craving, grasping, fulfilling, and repeating. Too often we remain unaware that there is a hole in our heart that only God can fill. We all have this empty place that longs for God’s love and connection. In showing the close and intimate relationship between God and Adam, Genesis helps us to see that God’s plan from the beginning has been for human beings to be in intimate relationship with him.

Though this emptiness can feel quite uncomfortable at times, the desire to fill that hole is nonetheless good because it is what draws us closer to God. It is like an empty stomach that hungers for food. Without the hunger, we do not know to seek nourishment. This healthy yearning for God is actually from God, because he desires to be in a relationship with us. It is God’s way of drawing us nearer to him. The good news is that God fills that hole!

## A Square Peg in a Round Hole

If we were to believe every commercial message we see on television, we might think our joy in life could be found in choosing the right toothpaste. How often has that worked? The media constantly bombard us with messages that happiness can be found by dressing in a particular way or participating in certain activities. Why would any of these be more likely to make us happier than the toothpaste? None of these things provide us with any lasting satisfaction, yet that is where we often go to fill the void. Trying to find a lasting happiness in possessions, experiences, and other worldly things is like trying to

fit a square peg in a round hole. It just does not fit. The more you try to force it, the more pain and frustration it brings.

These things to which we gravitate in our search for happiness are what Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) called particular goods. A **particular good** is something that shares in the goodness of God but ultimately leaves us unsatisfied. Food, sporting events, scientific endeavors, relationships, sex, power, and so on—these are all things that can help us to experience the goodness of God, but any one of these by itself will not bring us deep and lasting happiness.

Aquinas says that the **ultimate good** is the source of our complete fulfillment. This fulfillment can be found only in our union with God. It is God alone who can bring us lasting peace and joy both in this life and in the next. Attempting to fulfill this fundamental desire elsewhere leads only to frustration and sometimes failure. Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–k+430) offered a similar sentiment when he said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O Lord.” The Creation accounts in Genesis help us understand why we have this longing. ✨

## OVERVIEW of the Book of Genesis

- **Themes:** The goodness of creation, sin and its consequences, covenant, and bringing good out of evil.
- **Important people:** Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

# HMMMMMM.

If some of our desires do not lead us to happiness, what might help us determine the desires that do?

**particular good** ► Something that shares in the goodness of God but ultimately leaves you unsatisfied.

**ultimate good** ► The source of our complete fulfillment, which can be found only in our union with God.

## Article 2

# The Bible or Science—Which One Is Right?

The Book of Genesis says that God created the entire world and all of its inhabitants in only six days (see Genesis, chapter 1). Your science teacher may say that the universe started with the big bang over thirteen billion years ago. The Book of Genesis says that God created man “out of the dust of the ground” (2:7). Your science teacher may say that human beings evolved from apes. This seems to set up a conflict between the Bible and science. Which one is true? Actually, they are both true, just in different ways.

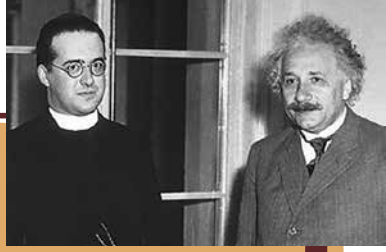
That may seem like a poor excuse for an answer, but consider this analogy. A baby boy is born into the world. One could say that the love his parents had for one another and their desire for a family is what brought this beautiful boy into existence. One could also say that the infant was the result of the fertilization of an egg by a sperm, which then began a nine-month-long gestation, followed by the baby's birth. Which one is true? Are they both true, just in different ways?



We “do not have to choose between religion and science because both are true.” —Pope Leo XIII



Did you know that a Catholic priest is responsible for the big bang theory, a scientific theory explaining how the universe began? It's true! The theory was first suggested by Fr. Georges Lemaître, a priest from Belgium. In the 1920s, he proposed that the universe originated from the explosion of a single primeval atom. Subsequent studies by Edwin Hubble and others have confirmed that the universe was indeed expanding. Though there are other hypotheses, Father Lemaître's big bang theory remains one of the world's best scientific explanations for the beginning of our universe.



## Truth We Can Figure Out

What does it mean when a science book says that something is true? It is important to note that science deals strictly with *objectively measurable phenomenon*. A *phenomenon* is a fact, event, or situation that can be observed. *Measurable* means that one can calculate its observable qualities in a certain way. *Objective* means that one is describing something based on facts as they truly are, rather than being influenced by one's personal biases. For example, height, length, weight, and speed are all phenomenon that can be measured. They are also objective facts. They are objective because, if calculated correctly, they will be the same no matter who is measuring them. When numerous scientists find the same results in their measurements, they will declare something to be true. Even then, it does not mean it is true forever. With new information, scientists reevaluate and sometimes later come to different conclusions.

Often people equate the words *true* or *truth* with the scientific meaning of the terms. Yet some things that we know are true even though we cannot measure them objectively. For example, you might say that you are happy. Happiness is not a phenomenon that we can measure objectively. Even though you know it to be true, it cannot be scientifically proven.

A great deal of confusion could be avoided if people understood that religion and science address different kinds of truth and use different methods to discover what is true. For example, there are spiritual truths that are logical and can be known through human reasoning rather than through scientific proof. And there are some truths beyond the abilities of humans to know, except when they are revealed by God.

## The Truth That Is Revealed

God gave human beings the wonderful gift of reason, which is the power of gaining knowledge through the use of logic. Human reason is limited though. First, we are not completely logical beings. We are often swayed by emotions, and our viewpoints can be tainted by selfishness or misunderstandings. Second, our knowledge is limited by our experiences. We do not have the benefit of being everywhere, all the time. But there is one who does have that benefit!

God is not constrained by his own creation. Our ability to grasp him is limited, but his ability to reveal himself to us is unlimited. Throughout history, God has done exactly this. The Bible is the record of how God has revealed himself and his plan to us. The most important truths revealed in the Bible are not scientific truths but religious truths. For example, in the first Creation account, we learn that God is good. This truth is not something that can be measured objectively. God's goodness has no height, weight, speed, and so on. The truth of God's goodness is outside the realm of science, but it is nevertheless true. We look to the Church to help us relate the truths of faith to those of science. (We will explore God's Revelation more completely in chapter 2.)

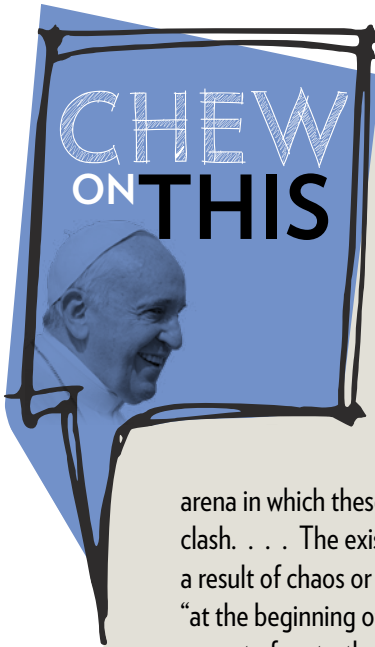
## The Truth Is Always True

Pope Leo XIII wrote, "Truth cannot contradict truth" ("Encyclical on the Study of Holy Scripture", number 23). You do not have to choose between religion and science because both are true, even though we come to know their truths through different methods. And if both are true, then one cannot invalidate the other. "There can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason"<sup>1</sup> (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]*, 159). Ultimately, if the truths of religion and science appear to contradict each other, we have not fully understood one or both.

Faith and reason actually complement each other. The sciences have greatly helped deepen our understanding of the Bible itself. Sacred Scripture has a divine source, but each of its many human authors lived in a particular location and historical situation, spoke a specific language, and had an understanding of the world that was unique to their place and time. Science helps us understand these



Pope Leo XIII was head of the Catholic Church from February 20, 1878, to July 20, 1903.



The issues you have been addressing . . . are of particular interest to the Church, because they have to do with questions that concern us . . . the beginning of the universe and its evolution, and the profound structure of space and time. . . . It is clear that these questions have a particular relevance for science, philosophy, theology and for the spiritual life. They represent an arena in which these different disciplines meet and sometimes clash. . . . The existence and intelligibility of the universe are not a result of chaos or mere chance, but of God's Wisdom, present "at the beginning of his work . . ." (Prov 8:22). . . . We ought never to fear truth, but welcome new scientific discoveries with an attitude of humility. (Pope Francis, "Greeting of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants at the Conference Organized by the Vatican Observatory," May 12, 2017)

people, places, languages, and situations. The disciplines of archaeology and anthropology have been indispensable to bringing us a far better understanding of the written words of Sacred Scripture.

## Looking at the Big Picture

Some Christians read the Bible literally. That is, they believe that every part of the Bible teaches not just religious truth but scientific truth as well. Because of this, they do not support the scientific theories of evolution or the big bang theory. This **fundamentalist approach** embraces an interpretation of the Bible that ignores the literary forms used by the Bible's human authors and the historical settings in which the writings were developed.

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**fundamentalist approach** ► The interpretation of the Bible and Christian doctrine based on the literalist meaning of the Bible's words. The interpretation is made without regard to the historical setting in which the writings or teachings were first developed.

Catholics do not read the Bible with a fundamentalist approach but rather with a **contextualist approach**. Our interpretation of the Bible takes into account various contexts in order to understand the truth God is revealing through the Bible's words. These contexts include the literary forms used, the historical situation at the time, the human authors' cultural beliefs and practices, and a number of other things. These contexts provide us with clues to help us better understand the intention of the human authors in expressing God's Word. (We will look more closely at this in chapter 4.)

## Biblical Truth

Much of what is written in the Bible is scientifically and historically correct, but not all of it. The Bible was never intended to be a science or history book in the way we understand those fields of study today. Offering scientific explanations and recalling historical events are not its main goals; the purpose of the Bible is to reveal religious truth. In this sense, "the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures"<sup>2</sup> (*CCC*, 107). When the Bible teaches what God wants us to know for our salvation, it is fully accurate and true. This is something we can count on! \*

HMMMMMM...

What might be the biggest challenge to understanding the intentions of the Bible's human authors?

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**contextualist approach** ► The interpretation of the Bible that takes into account the various contexts for understanding. These contexts include the senses of Scripture, literary forms, historical situations, cultural backgrounds, the unity of the whole of Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the analogy of faith.



## Article 3

# Right People, Wrong Turn

Kenoba's eyes were filled with tears as she texted her friend. "Why does it have to be like this?" she asked. "Why did Missy have to die in that accident? Why do my mother and brother have to fight all the time? Why can't everyone just get along and love each other?"

The Bible's answer in the Book of Genesis is that the world isn't supposed to be as Kenoba described. Instead, Genesis depicts Adam and Eve living with God in the Garden of Eden in a state of **original holiness** and **original justice**. Holiness refers to their loving union with God and being free from sin. Justice is a condition in which rights and duties within relationships are respected and everyone gets what is due to them. In other words, God created a world with no suffering or hatred or even death for our first parents to live in.

This original state of holiness and justice allowed Adam and Eve to share in the divine life of God, which certainly brought them complete happiness. They experienced this happiness because they lived their lives the way God intended—in full communion with God, with each other, and with the world God created.

We do not know how long this blessed state lasted for Adam and Eve. We do know that temptation came in the symbolic form of a snake and a forbidden fruit (see Genesis 3:1–13). Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience is where humanity takes a wrong turn and sin and evil enter history. This is sometimes simply called **the Fall**. Instead of following God's way, Adam and Eve decided to take on the role of God themselves—to "be like gods, who know good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). This **Original Sin** is how humanity lost its original holiness and justice and became subject to death.

**original holiness** ► The original state of human beings in their relationship with God, sharing in the divine life in full communion with him.

**original justice** ► The original state of Adam and Eve before the Fall, a state of complete harmony with themselves, with each other, and with all of creation.

**Fall, the** ► Also called the Fall from Grace, the biblical revelation about the origins of sin and evil in the world, expressed figuratively in the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis.

**Original Sin** ► From the Latin *origo*, meaning "beginning" or "birth." The term has two meanings: (1) the sin of the first human beings, who disobeyed God's command by choosing to follow their own will and thus lost their original holiness and became subject to death, and (2) the fallen state of human nature that affects every person born into the world, except Jesus and Mary.





Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience is where humanity takes a wrong turn and when sin and evil enter history.

## The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Numerous questions often arise from reading this story. If Adam and Eve had never eaten the fruit, would we all be happy now and never die? Why did God allow the serpent to be there in the first place? Why would God not want Adam and Eve to know the difference between good and evil? If they were supposed to stay away from the tree, why did God put it right in the middle of the garden?

These are all good questions, but they assume that these events occurred exactly as they are stated in the text. It is important to remember that this narrative is not intended to be a historical report. The author instead used figurative language to represent what happened to humanity's first parents, their disobedience to God, and the consequences for those actions. The account symbolically expresses several important truths regarding our relationship with God: sin is a free choice, sin destroys the harmony and union humans have with one another and God, and sin brings about pain and suffering.

Why was it wrong for Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? It is important to recall the symbolic nature of this account and look at the tree within the context of the entire narrative. What happens immediately after they eat from the tree? Adam and Eve notice they are naked, and they cover up what makes them different—the things that separate them from each other. He is a man. She is a woman. Before this they were one body—“bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23)—who felt no shame in each other’s presence.

Consider what it would be like to stand naked in front of a classroom of your peers. Most of us would run out of the classroom immediately or do what Adam and Eve did—try to cover our private parts! We would react this way in part because we fear others judging an intimately personal part of who we are and categorizing us as beautiful or ugly. In fact, we do this to ourselves all the time: What do people think of me? Am I loved? Am I worthy of being loved? We also look upon others with the eyes of judgment. We label one another—this person is good and that person is evil.

Adam and Eve hid from God after their disobedience because of their shame and fear of judgment. They pulled away from the one who loved them, and tried to hide the beauty that he had created. Like a parent saddened at the irreversible mess his children made, God asked Adam and Eve: “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat?” (Genesis 3:11). God knows that we cannot bear the burden of judgment on one another, “For by the standard by which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the very same things” (Romans 2:1). If we were to see through God’s eyes, we would know that his unconditional love is greater than any judgment or label we place upon one another.

## MAKE IT SO

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). Cain’s response was just a dodge. The truth he did not want to face is that all of us are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. You are responsible for taking care of the clueless classmate who just transferred to your school; the lonely kid searching for a welcoming lunch table; the young, first-year teacher who has not gotten control of classroom discipline yet; or your mother or father, who had a bad day at work. They are all your brothers and sisters (yes, even your parents). Though you certainly cannot be everything to everyone, you can be something special to someone.

## Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Let's consider the other accounts in the first eleven chapters of Genesis: Cain and Abel, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. These stories are also considered prehistorical narratives, which is not to say that they did not happen; rather, these events simply occurred before the time in which human beings wrote down their history. Ancient people passed these stories on orally, and over time they were written down to become the Book of Genesis, reliably preserving the truths God intended to reveal. They offer us many important religious truths about the inherent goodness of humanity, the consequences of sin, and God's mercy.

After Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, Genesis moves on to the events surrounding their two sons, Cain and Abel (see 4:1–16). If you have brothers or sisters, you might find Cain and Abel's story of sibling rivalry and jealousy kind of familiar. Cain's jealousy reflects something that every human being feels to some greater or lesser degree: the desire to be noticed and appreciated. But when that desire becomes twisted and turns into jealousy, it reflects one of the consequences of sin: a self-centered temperament.

When asked about Abel's whereabouts, Cain avoids answering God's question with a dismissive and rude response, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Cain's comeback to God reflects an attitude that lies at the heart of sin: my life is about me, not about you or anyone else. When we take on



Cain's fierce jealousy of Abel drives him to commit murder.



*All of us are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.*

this mindset, we tend to look at other human beings as objects who can either contribute to, or get in the way of, our own happiness. We delude ourselves and think that we are “like gods, who know good and evil” (3:5). Thinking we know it all, we look with eyes of judgment and decide who is worthy and who is not. This attitude can lead to something as commonplace as deciding who sits with us at the lunch table, and it can also lead to something as atrocious as genocide. Cain and Abel remind us that this self-centered temperament clouds our emotions and thoughts, and when we act on these emotions and thoughts, peace and harmony begin to disintegrate.

## The Great Flood

The account of Noah and the Flood is probably one that is very familiar to you. Perhaps as a child you had a toy ark with a tiny set of Noah and his family, along with pairs of various animals from around the world. Noah's adventure has also been used as the plot for popular comedic movies as well. Images of rainbows and cheerful animals getting along together on a seafaring vessel might leave the impression of a happy-go-lucky story. On the contrary, the biblical account is a much darker experience for Noah and his family.

The account begins with God observing the wickedness of human beings. When he saw “how every desire that their heart conceived was always nothing but evil, the LORD regretted making human beings on the earth” (Genesis 6:5–6). God regretted creating human beings? That is pretty bad! It was so bad that it seems that God found it best to just start over with the one good man

left on Earth: Noah. The plan was to use a great flood to wipe out every human being and animal on the planet, except for Noah, his family, and the pairs of animals they loaded on to the ark.

The Flood comes and the ark stays afloat on the waters for forty days (see Genesis 7:17). Forty is a number that you see often in the Bible. The biblical authors sometimes convey a deeper truth using symbolic numbers like forty. Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days (see Exodus 24:18). The Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years (see Joshua 5:6). Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert for forty days (see Matthew 4:1–2). So forty is a number indicating a period of testing, trials, or purification. Knowing this, we are able to connect God's purification of the world's sin by the Flood with other times of testing and purification in the Bible.

It is in this account that we see the first mention of the word *covenant* in the Bible. A **covenant** is a solemn agreement between human beings or between God and humans in which mutual commitments are recognized. Covenants play a significant role throughout the Bible. They are often accompanied by some sort of physical, outward sign that reminds those involved of the covenant. With Noah, God promises never to destroy all the creatures of the Earth with another flood and offers the rainbow as a sign of their covenant. “When the bow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature—every mortal being that is on earth” (Genesis 9:16). Covenants are a way that God expresses his desire to be in communion with his people, and a way that we express our love for and fidelity to God.



The rainbow is the sign of the covenant between God and Noah.

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**covenant** ► A solemn agreement between human beings or between God and a human being in which mutual commitments are made.

## Stop Your Babeling!

The Tower of Babel is the last of the prehistorical events covered in Genesis. It is an interesting account of how sin separates us from God and one another. On the surface, the builders of the tower seem a little arrogant but rather harmless in the grand scheme of things. What is so wrong about building a tower? We can get a clue from understanding a bit of the Hebrew language that was used to write most of the Old Testament. “Babel” is the Hebrew form of the name “Babylon.” For the ancient Israelites, the story of the Tower of Babel would call to mind the Babylonian Empire and all its evils.

The chief sin of the builders of the Tower of Babel was their pride. The tower they planned to build would bridge the gap between Earth and sky (Genesis 11:4). For them, the sky represented the dwelling place of God. They arrogantly believed they could bridge the gap between God and fallen humanity. This is the sin of many of the empires encountered by the Israelites: the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians. God thwarts their ambition by confusing the people’s language (see Genesis 9:5–8), reminding them—and us—that God alone is the source of our salvation.

## The Root of Evil

If you spend 30 minutes watching the world news, you will come across enough stories of war, poverty, human trafficking, and other types of violence that you might question the goodness of God. But the accounts from Genesis that we just reviewed make it clear that the source of evil in the world has nothing to do with God’s action and everything to do with the actions of human beings. God created everything good, but humans have free will and can choose to do good or evil.

Imagine that your parents give you a car so that you can get to school, attend church youth group events, or participate in service projects. These are all good things, but what comes attached to those car keys is both freedom and responsibility. You can use the car to travel to school and church, or you can use the car to participate in selfish, illegal activities. If you are caught doing something wrong in the car, you cannot blame your parents for the choices you freely made. In a similar sense, God has given us many gifts for us to use for the good of all. If we use them selfishly, we cannot point the finger of blame at God. ✨

# HMMMMM...

How does the author of The Tower of Babel use language and location to represent the consequences of sin?

## Article 4

# Sin's Ripple Effect

If you toss a stone into the water, it sends circular ripples outward from the center point where the stone landed. If you were only able to see these waves going out in circles, you could still pinpoint the spot in which the stone landed. Similarly, the prevalence of sin in the world today can be traced backed to the disobedience of Adam and Eve.



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The negative effects of sin can ripple outward, affecting many other people.

## The Consequences of Sin

The consequences of sin are quite natural: a loss of unity, harmony, and justice. For example, if your best friend was angry with you and posted something hurtful about you on social media, your friendship would certainly face some rough waters. Perhaps you both might hold a grudge and not talk to one another for a long time. Maybe this would even cause a split in your group of friends—some supporting you and others backing your friend. Sin brings about pain, suffering, a loss of unity, and a ripple effect that can be devastating.

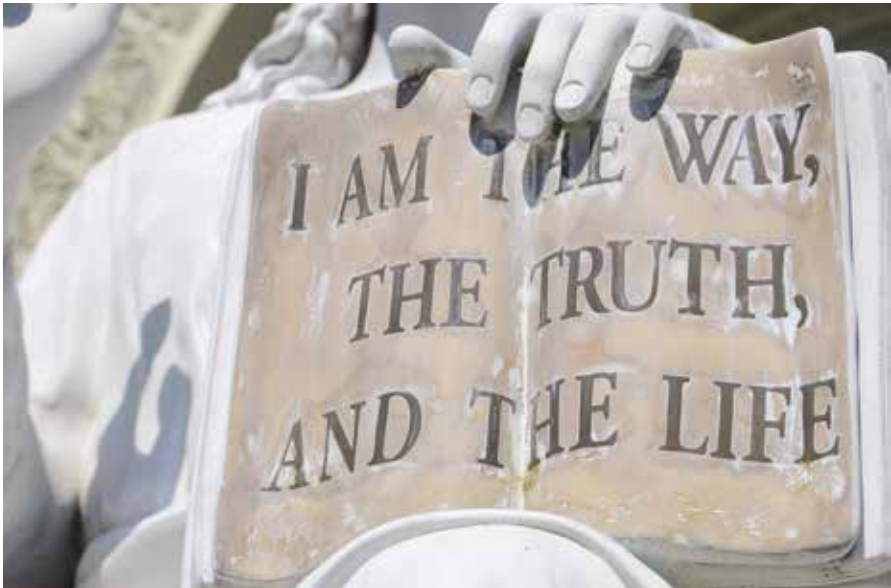
The consequence of our first parents' sinful choice was a loss of their original holiness and justice. Their intimate union with God was disrupted. Humanity still suffers from the effects of their Original Sin; we lack the freedom and holiness that God intended for us. Our self-centered outlook distorts our sense



of right and wrong. Because of Original Sin, our human nature is weakened. Our power to relate to God and choose what is good has been undermined, therefore we are inclined to sin. All human beings have inherited this tendency toward sin, which is called **concupiscence**. We experience concupiscence when we feel tempted to cheat on a test, to lie to our friends, or to post something mean about a classmate on social media. How this tendency is passed on is a mystery. One thing is certain: sin entered the world and its effects have been lasting.

## Sin and Salvation History

We can see the effects of Original Sin throughout all of **salvation history**. Salvation history is the pattern of specific events in human history through which God clearly reveals his presence and saving actions. The Bible communicates salvation history, particularly how God never gives up on his people despite the times they turn away from him. The People of God repeatedly swing between faithfulness and unfaithfulness. They often seek the quick and easy route of self-satisfaction, rather than following God's will.



Jesus indicated he was the fulfillment of God's saving plan when he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life . . ." (John 14:6).

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- concupiscence** ➤ The tendency of all human beings toward sin, as a result of Original Sin.
  - salvation history** ➤ The pattern of specific events in human history in which God clearly reveals his presence and saving actions. Salvation was accomplished once and for all through Jesus Christ, a truth foreshadowed and revealed throughout the Old Testament.



Ultimately, the good news is that sin does not have the final say. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16). The Bible repeatedly teaches that God still cares for us: God made clothes for Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:21), and God protected Cain from being killed (see 4:14–15).

As we continue through this course, we will study how God has revealed himself, his love for us, and his plan for our salvation. Our guide will be the Bible, God's Holy Word. We will explore how the Bible came to be and how to understand, or interpret, its stories and teachings. We will take a close look at the accounts in the books of the Old Testament and what they mean for us today. And we will conclude with a brief look at the New Testament, in which the fullness of God's plan is revealed by the coming of his Son, Jesus Christ. ✨

## A Little Fun!

The Book of Genesis has been a great source for Bible-based puns over the years. Have you heard any of these?

Q. Where is the first baseball game in the Bible?

A. In Genesis because it says “In the big inning, Eve stole first, Adam stole second, and Cain struck out Abel.”

Q. How did Noah's family find their way around the ark at night?

A. They used floodlights.

Q. Why didn't they play cards on the ark?

A. Because Noah was sitting on the deck.

## CATHOLICS MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Imagine an island far off the coast of California, whose inhabitants are all infected with a contagious, disfiguring disease. Now, imagine going there, by choice. This is what Saint Damien of Molokai (1840–1889) did. Leprosy is a deadly, contagious disease that damages the skin, limbs, nerves, and eyes. At the time of Saint Damien, it was incurable, so to stop its progress the authorities banished lepers to an isolated Hawaiian peninsula called Kalaupapa. Saint Damien was a Catholic priest from Belgium who was sent as a missionary to the Hawaiian Islands. He saw the inherent value of these people and the terrible way they were treated. He volunteered to move to Kalaupapa in 1873. He lived closely with the people he served and tended to their needs. Damien eventually contracted leprosy and died in 1889. He was **canonized** a saint in 2009.

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# HMMMMM.

Describe a time when you have witnessed one sin leading to other sins.

**canonize** ► The act by which the Church officially recognizes a deceased Catholic as a saint.



1. What does it mean to say that both Creation accounts in the Book of Genesis are true?
2. “God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good” (Genesis 1:31). What important beliefs does this verse lead us to?
3. How can science and religion both be true?
4. Explain the differences between the fundamentalist and contextualist approaches to interpreting the Bible. Which approach do Catholics take?
5. Why do we consider longing for God to be something good?
6. Define *Original Sin* and explain the consequences that followed from it.
7. Use one of the prehistorical narratives to explain the ripple effects of sin.



Chapter 1 Quiz

Chapter 1  
PresentationChapter 1  
Vocabulary



## ART STUDY

### “AND GOD SAID IT WAS GOOD”

The two accounts of Creation in the Book of Genesis reveal that all creation is good.

1. What mood does this painting convey?
2. How does the artist show the perfection of God's creation?
3. What in the painting, gives you a hint of what will happen in Genesis, chapter 3?