



Week of May 1 Origins¹

Overview:

At some point in our lives, we have to wonder: Why are we here? How did all of this come to be? What are the origins of our universe, our story, and our purpose? In the first eleven chapters of the Genesis, we see a cosmic story unfolding—an epic narrative—of God shaping a good and meaningful world, what went wrong, and how God is redeeming the mess, restoring us to something good. Through this series, we will study this narrative and learn how to apply those tools to all of Scripture.

Group Objectives:

- Reflect on this past Sunday's message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- For the group to consider how "Covenants" might be applicable to us today.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We encounter the Father daily.* God the Father speaks to us through the Bible, and we commune with him through prayer.

Conversation Starters:

- Do you have a distinct memory of seeing a rainbow? Why was it so memorable?

Read and Reflect: Bible Study Discussion

Biblical Covenants are agreements or promises made between two parties (normally God and his people), which establish a relationship between them. They involve an oath by at least one party which is then ratified by a visual ritual.² Some Biblical covenants are conditional, meaning the people have a responsibility to uphold their side of the oath. Others are an unconditional promise reliant only on God's faithfulness. The covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David are all precursors to the New Covenant made in Christ.

*Just because a story is in the Bible does not mean God endorses the character's actions. Scriptural narrative, especially in Genesis, is often **descriptive** rather than **prescriptive**. Events are described as they happened, good or bad, without explicit value judgments. It is our job to use the context of the events as well as any consequences or parallels to previous events to discern whether a choice is right, wrong, or a complex mix of gray. We must read scripture in context, in its entirety, to guard against twisting select passages to support our own agendas.*

¹ This week's lesson was written by Rachel Vaughn; edited by Dawn Gentry.

² Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded 2015, *Covenants*, p. 355-356.

Opening our minds to new possibilities can be a painful process. Give grace to those in your group who struggle. This is a journey, and we are all in different places along the path. You will not have all the answers. That is okay; God can handle your questions. To help you in the process, some additional resources—including books, videos, and podcasts—can be found at cccomaha.org/origins. If you need any additional help, please reach out to a member of the Adult Ministries team.

- **Read Genesis 9:1-17**
 - What parallels do you see in this passage with Genesis 1-3? What differences? Why do you think lifeblood (v. 4-5) is so important?
 - What covenant does God make? With whom does he make it? What (if anything) does he ask of the people?
 - Why use a rainbow as the visual reminder? How would ancient people have thought about rainbows?
- **Read Genesis 15:1-21; Exodus 19:5-6, 24:3-8; Matthew 26:26-29**
 - How do each of these covenants compare to the Noachic covenant? What similarities or differences do you see?
 - How do these covenants build together? How do they help us understand the New Covenant with Jesus?
- **Read Genesis 9:18-29**
 - How would you describe what happens here? Where (if anywhere) does Noah fail? What is the root of Ham's sin? Who curses Ham and why does that matter?
 - Does the juxtaposition of Noah's curse alongside God's blessing and covenant alter your understanding of the passage? How do the different pieces work together?

Summarize and Respond:

- How would you explain covenant to a friend? How does a deeper understanding of covenants enhance or alter your perception of communion as a visual ritual?
- What lessons can we learn from the end of Noah's life? How do his failures enhance God's faithfulness? What hope do they give you in light of your own failures?

Prayer Prompts:

- Invite members of the group to share personal prayer requests.
- *Lord, thank you for your mercy and for the reminders of your faithfulness. May we find freedom in your grace and gratitude in your blessing.*

For Further Study:

- See this video on Covenant: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/covenants/>
- Read this blog on Covenant: <https://bibleproject.com/blog/covenants-the-backbone-bible/>