

### **A journey through the Ancient Near East**

This is a series designed to go through some of the key events in Genesis and Exodus. It is a 11-session series, meaning it can be run across a full-term with a break-week for half term, or any additional key points that are necessary for the group being used for.

Each session overview below has the session number, the bible passage an overview of the key teaching with an Apply to Our life point encompassed at the end. This point is something that is aimed to be a challenge or a thinking point for the next period of time before the next session. The previous sessions point can be used as a check in point for the group the next week. Some of these are more challenging than others, and so adaptation to the group is necessary as and when needed.

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Bible Passage</b>	<b>Overview of key teaching</b>
1	Creation	Genesis 1 & 2	<p>God is a just, Kind, inventive, loving creator who created an ordered creation meant for peace, productivity and humanity to rule over unlike other gods of the time and their stories.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> We are created by a just, loving almighty creator who is above all things, and we are known by him.</p>
2	The Fall	Genesis 3	<p>Humanity Rejects the covenant and the original divine plan. Sin &amp; darkness enter the world, through human disobedience and so we no longer can live in a perfect Eden in perfect presence of God. But God instead of a mass destruction, he chooses a redemptive path.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> God has a redemptive plan for humanity, and has a redemptive plan for each individual person to come into the original plan for them</p>
3	Noah & the Flood	Genesis 6-9:17	<p>Since Genesis 3, we see Humanity going downhill, with a path of violence and destruction. God decides that enough is enough and to “start again.” Again, comparing to other renditions of “a great flood” we see a difference in these stories and that YHWH’s reasoning behind the flood is at Human Wickedness, not on a whim or to create a submissive human race to be his slaves, but to start his redemptive plan. Again it ends with peace (the dove).</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> reiterate the previous sessions point; God has a redemptive plan for <i>you</i>.</p>
4	Tower of Babel	Genesis 11:1-9	<p>Literally the next <i>narrative</i> after this covenant with Noah is based around humans pride, disobedience and thinking we are deserving of the level of divine authority. We see God’s justice again and the need for someone to come live faithfully for YHWH.</p>

			<p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> in the next few sessions we learn about Abraham who is a bit of a “Hero of the Faith” and someone who will bring humanity together, who is it in our lives we can see who we want to try and learn from them in how they follow God, so that we are working together for God <i>not to be God</i>.</p>
5	Call of Abram	Genesis 12	<p>We see God choose someone relatively ordinary, but faithful in his life. It is the beginning of the promise of a chosen nation, and therefore the next step along in God’s redemptive plan. We see that God calls faithful people and is with them, not people that have it all figured out.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> Pray about what might our next step be. It could be a small step it could be a big step.</p>
6	God’s Covenant with Abraham	Genesis 15	<p>This is such a pivotal moment, with many key features in the passage. If we take v1-6 we see a depiction of hard-fought, unwavering but not passive faith. We see God reiterating his promise to make Abram a father of a great nation (v1) followed by Abram protesting and questioning this (v2&amp;3) followed by God’s response and reiteration again of his promise of the stars (v4&amp;5) and then Abram BELIEVED the Lord (V6). Here we see a real and reassuring demonstration of faith. Abram has every reason to doubt the promise, he is old, his wife is old and they have no children so how would his descendants be a great nation. But he Believed. YHWH also later in the passage gives explanation as to why Abraham shouldn’t be anxious, (v15) and then in a unique moment (v17) we see God take on both sides of the covenant.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> Having questions, having fears and anxieties are normal, and God sees these, and meets us each with a promise that he is there and wants to walk alongside us in them. But that we need to have the faith (like Abraham) to trust God when we hear these promises.</p>
7	Issacs Birth	Genesis 21	<p>We see this promised in chapter 17, after Sarah and Abram have taken things into their own hands (leading to the birth of Ishmael via Hagar). Despite this, God comes through on his promise. We see here that God is trustworthy, that even when things seem impossible God delivers his promises (sometimes not how we expect), We also see God’s grace for Hagar and Ishmael and his protection on them, showing his inclusivity of all in his promises.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> God fulfils promises, sometimes not how we expect, and he is gracious in his fulfilment</p>
8	Sacrifice of Issac	Genesis 22	<p>Here Abrham is seeing the fulfilment of his promises, and at this point God asks him to sacrifice Issacc (the one whom the rest of his</p>

			<p>covenant is due to be fulfilled through) as a burnt offering. This is confusing to Abraham but he goes along with it. We see Abraham be prepared to lay down everything in order to be faithful to God, and we see God is there with him in it. There is also a foreshadowing of “god will provide the sacrificial lamb” to the new testament in Jesus.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> Big challenge this week, what are we prepared to lay down in order to see what God has for us in the longer term?</p>
9	The Burning Bush	Exodus 3	<p>Through the introduction of Moses’ early life we understand that he has fled Egypt and is a sheppard to his fathers-in-law sheep. In this miraculous scene we see that God appears to Moses via a burning bush and calls him to go and free the Israelites from Egyptian oppression. In this beautiful moment, Moses is obviously quite scared and doubts himself is saying, me really but who am I that I should do this, (with the subtext being I am only a sheppard, I have already been exiled from Egypt I can’t do this), and God’s answer is “I am with you.” Moses is met with the answer of who am I, the questions of identity with a I am with you, and this is where we should learn and grow in where our identity lies. The next important revelation is God revealing the “I AM WHO I AM” as his response to what is his name. This shows that to know who God is, you need to know God.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> Your identity is in the fact that God is with you, and that the more you get to know him the more you know of who God is.</p>
10	Ten Plagues & the Exodus	Exodus 6-12	<p>The Plagues are used to make it known to Pharoah and the people of Egypt that he means business and his as powerful as he says he is. Some of the plagues target pharaohs authority, and others target the Egyptian gods. But ultimately these come in together to demonstrate his power and ultimate authority. Ultimately this leads to the EXODUS!</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> God is powerful and almighty. He is above all other things, and yet the previous weeks points are still true!</p>
11	The 10 Commandments	Exodus 20	<p>In a direct translation this are the 10 words, rather than the commandments. They are given again in Deuteronomy 5 and are sometimes described as the Law condensed. However, they are much more than that and are more of a guide for living. The first 3 are YHWH-centric, the 4<sup>th</sup> is a transition and highlights the importance of sabbath, a key distinction from other religions and cultures, and the final 6 are community-centric. These words are descriptions of moving closer to God and relationship with him and notice that other than making idols none of these are given with a punishment. These are a way of life that we should strive to be like, first centred on</p>

			<p>YHWH, then centred on community. This is summed up when Jesus gives us the greatest commandment “love the lord your God with all your heart soul, mind and strength” followed by second “love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:24-40). We see the inclusivity of the biblical narrative that perhaps is missed out in delivery of these. We see slaves and homeowners, male and females being addressed. God is giving these for ALL and wants ALL to be part of his holy nation. But this is not a legalistic code but an invitation to live like a holy nation.</p> <p><b>Apply to our life point:</b> Can we try and live a life this week which looks more like a God-centric first, Community centric second, me-centric last?</p>
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### Helpful resources for the series:

Some helpful resources that have been used for the series are below. There are many really good commentaries that are great to understand the complexities of the biblical writing, and help highlight important things we may miss in our usual reading of the bible

Resource	Type	Where to find
The Epic of Eden by Sandra L Ritcher	Book	
The Bible Project videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Genesis 1</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Overview of Genesis part 1</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Overview of Genesis part 2</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Overview of Exodus Part 1</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Overview of Exodus part 2</a></li> </ul>	Video	<p>Other videos can also be found on the bible project website: <a href="https://bibleproject.com/">https://bibleproject.com/</a></p> <p>Or click the link of the suggested videos</p>
Genesis by Walter Brueggemann	Book	
Genesis by Andrew E Steinmann (Tyndale Old Testament commentaries)	Book	