

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

UNDERSTANDING OUR WORLD ACCORDING TO GENESIS 1-11

## Universal History - Week 1

Pastor John kicked off our new sermon series on Sunday titled “Universal History.” Over the next few months leading into Easter we’ll be going through Genesis 1-11 to explore the early history of humankind. The hope of this series is to help us develop a biblical worldview for our lives and the world we live in. This week in lifegroup we’ll read the first half of the creation account from Genesis 1.

**VISION:** Explain the purpose of lifegroup.

### **FAMILY TIME:**

- Introduction Question: Has there ever been a time where you were really glad you had, or wished you had, a flashlight?
- Share praise reports and prayer requests.

### **DISCUSSION: GENESIS 1.1-19**

Accountability Question: How have we put into practice the things we discussed last time?

**Genesis 1:1-19** - **1** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2* *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3* *And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4* *God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5* *God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. 6* *And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” 7* *So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8* *God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. 9* *And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. 10* *God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. 11* *Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. 12* *The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13* *And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. 14* *And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15* *and let them be lights in the*

*vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. **16** God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. **17** God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, **18** to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.*

Discussion Questions:

- What strikes you from this text and why?
- What do you learn about God?
- What does it mean to you that God created light in the midst of darkness?
- What might God want to say to you through this text (particularly about the darkness you might feel in your life)? How can you put this into practice this week?
- Are there people in your life who might feel like they are living in darkness? How can you love them and be a light for them this week?

Close by praying for each other over the things we've shared!

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

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## Universal History - Week 2

Pastor John continued in our “Universal History” series by preaching on the creation story (Genesis 1:1-2:3). During this message, he raised the issue of how this biblical narrative of creation seemingly contradicts scientific theories of the earth’s beginnings. He took time to address how science does not necessarily challenge biblical authority. For folks who might be interested in this discussion, you can direct them to listen to the sermon. We are also working on hosting a Life U class to explore science and faith. This week in lifegroup, though, we’ll turn to the creation of humankind and consider what this might mean for us today.

**VISION:** Explain the purpose of lifegroup.

### FAMILY TIME:

- Introduction Question: What’s something you created that made you really happy?
- Share praise reports and prayer requests.

### DISCUSSION: GENESIS 1.26-31

Accountability Question: How have we put into practice the things we discussed last time?

**26** Then God said, “Let us make man [mankind] 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.” **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **28** 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.” **29** And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. **30** And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. **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.

Discussion Questions:

- What strikes you from this text and why?
- What do you learn about God?
- What do you learn about yourself/people?
- What do you learn about our role in the earth?
- What might God want to say to you through this text? How can you put this into practice this week?
- Are there people in your life who might not be living in alignment with God's purposes for the world? How can you pray for them and be a light for them this week?

Close by praying for each other over the things we've shared!

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

UNDERSTANDING OUR WORLD ACCORDING TO GENESIS 1-11

## Universal History - Week 3

As we continue in our “Universal History” series, we turn to the second account of the creation story. Though similar to the first account, this one gives some different details that help us understand our role in the world and our relationship with other people. Starting this week we’ll also begin incorporating training and tools as we look ahead to Easter on April 1.

**VISION:** Explain the purpose of lifegroup.

### **FAMILY TIME:**

- Introduction Question: What does your name mean? Or how did you get your name?
- Share praise reports and prayer requests.

### **DISCUSSION: GENESIS 2.15-25**

Accountability Question: How have we put into practice the things we discussed last time?

**15** The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. **16** And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat[d] of it you shall surely die.” **18** Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” **19** Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. **20** The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. **21** So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. **22** And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” **24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. **25** And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Discussion Questions:

- What strikes you from this text and why?
- What do you learn about God?
- What do you learn about yourself/people?
- What do you learn about men and women?
- What might God want to say to you through this text? How can you put this into practice this week?
- Close by praying for each other.

### **EASTER EQUIPPING 1: PRAYER MAPS**

Easter is a time of the year when many people who don't typically attend church are open to coming. As we begin moving towards Easter, let's start praying for those around us who might not be close to Jesus yet.

- On a piece of paper, write down all the different communities you are a part of on a weekly basis (e.g., work, neighborhood, gym, hobbies). Then write down everyone you can think of in those communities who is not close to Jesus.
- Share generally with each other the names of the people on your list. Then put all your papers in the middle of the group and lay your hands on the paper and pray for God to encounter each one of them in a deep way.
- Keep praying for the ones on your list throughout this week. As you pray, pay attention to any names that may seem to stand out to you. Highlight these names and bring them with you to next week's lifegroup.

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

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## Universal History - Week 4

As we continue in our “Universal History” series, we reach the story of the fall—humankind’s first sin. As we dive into this text, let’s pay attention to the way in which the serpent was able to get the man and woman to compromise and sin against God. This will help us to understand how it is Satan continues to try and tempt us to sin today. We’ll end the night by looking ahead to Easter so make sure to save time at the end to get into some practicals!

**VISION:** Explain the purpose of lifegroup.

### **FAMILY TIME:**

- Introduction Question: What’s something you didn’t really want to do, but got talked into doing?
- Share praise reports and prayer requests.

### **DISCUSSION: GENESIS 3.3-19**

Accountability Question: How have we put into practice the things we discussed last time?

**3** *The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”* **2** *“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied.* **3** *“It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”* **4** *“You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman.* **5** *“God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”* **6** *The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.* **7** *At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.* **8** *When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees.* **9** *Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”* **10** *He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”* **11** *“Who told you that you were naked?” the Lord God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”* **12** *The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”* **13** *Then the Lord God asked the*

woman, "What have you done?" "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it." **14** Then the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. **15** And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." **16** Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." **17** And to the man he said, "Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. **18** It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. **19** By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return."

#### Discussion Questions:

- What strikes you from this text and why?
- How does the serpent get the woman and man to disobey God?
- What was the result of their sin?
- Are there ways in which we are tempted to disobey God and sin in similar ways?
- What might God want to say to you through this text? How can you put this into practice this week?
- Close by praying for each other.

#### **EASTER EQUIPPING 2: SHARING STORIES OF HOPE**

As we saw in the passage tonight, we humans are constantly tempted to disobey God and give in to sin. Was there a time when in the aftermath of our mistakes or in spite of our mistakes, God reached out to rescue us or responded to us with love? Aim to share this story in 2-3 minutes as a way to prepare ourselves for opportunities that might arise in the next few weeks. If it helps, you can even imagine sharing this story with someone on your prayer map.

#### **PRAYER MAPS**

Lastly, pull out your prayer maps that you made last week. (If you have some newcomers, you can pause here to give them some time to draw out their prayer maps. Others can use this time to pray for those on their maps.) Share with each other about the ones who have been highlighted to you as you've been praying over your map. Then close this time by praying together for these ones to encounter God in deep and transformative ways!

Let's keep praying for these folks as we move forward! If it helps, you might even consider establishing a regular daily prayer time to help you build this habit.

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

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## Universal History - Week 5

We are continuing in our “Universal History” series by looking at the story of Cain and Abel. It’s interesting that this story takes place right after the fall story of Adam and Eve. Similar to in Adam and Eve’s temptation, God warns Cain what will take place. In fact, God is even more forward with Cain, telling him, “sin is crouching at the door” (Genesis 4:7). In spite of this warning, Cain still succumbs to temptation. As we study this passage tonight let’s take this as a warning to rise up against the temptations that we face today lest we fall into sin.

We’ll also continue with some practical equipping as we keep moving towards Easter so make sure to leave space for that at the end!

**VISION:** Explain the purpose of lifegroup.

### **FAMILY TIME:**

- Introduction Question: Have you ever done something that someone warned you not to?
- Share praise reports and prayer requests.

### **DISCUSSION: GENESIS 4.1-16**

Accountability Question: How have we put into practice the things we discussed last time?

*1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” 2 And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 6 The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” 8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. 9 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” 10 And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” 13 Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can*

*bear. 14 Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”*  
*15 Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.*  
*16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

Discussion Questions:

- What strikes you from this text and why?
- What do you learn about God?
- What do you learn about people?
- What do you learn about temptation/sin?
- Are there ways that “sin is crouching at our door”?
- What might God want to say to you through this text? How can you put this into practice this week?
- Close by praying for each other.

### **EASTER EQUIPPING 3: SHARING STORIES OF HOPE**

As we saw in the passage tonight, we can either choose to do good things or choose into sin. Was there a time when God helped us turn away from the sin that was crouching at our door? Or when God helped us walk out of sin we had ventured into? Aim to share this story in 2-3 minutes as a way to prepare ourselves for opportunities that might arise in the next few weeks. If it helps, you can even imagine sharing this story with someone on your prayer map.

Also practice ending your story with some sort of connection point or invitation for your listener. Here are some examples:

- “Are there ways in which you feel stuck doing something you don’t want to do?”
- “Can I pray for God to help you step into the good things he has for you?”
- “Can I pray for God to give you hope in the midst of the difficulties and struggles you are facing?”

### **PRAYER MAPS**

Let’s pull out our prayer maps and take 5-10 minutes on our own asking God to guide us in praying for some of the ones who have been highlighted for us over the last few weeks. Then share a little of this with each other and end by praying together for these ones.

In the week to come, keep taking time to ask God to lead you in praying for these ones and look for opportunities to get together with them. If appropriate, you might even tell them you’ve been praying for them and ask if there are any specific things they need prayer for.

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

UNDERSTANDING OUR WORLD ACCORDING TO GENESIS 1-11

## Universal History - Week 6

We are continuing in our “Universal History” series by looking at the story of Noah. Noah’s story is the result of a culmination of events that began with Adam and Eve’s initial sin. The idea that God would wipe away humankind because of our evil can be difficult to grasp. However, that God can rebuild an entire world through a single faithful person gives us hope even in the midst of our chaotic world. What we see in this story, then, is a promise that God can use us to impact the communities around us as we walk with him and an invitation to turn away from the evils in our society today.

We’ll also continue with some practical equipping as we move closer to Easter so make sure to leave space for that at the end!

**VISION:** Explain the purpose of lifegroup.

### **FAMILY TIME:**

- Introduction Question: Have you ever made a mistake that forced you to have to start all over again? Or were you ever moving in a certain direction only to discover you were going the wrong way and have to route all the way back?
- Share praise reports and prayer requests.

### **DISCUSSION: GENESIS 6.5-22**

Accountability Question: How have we put into practice the things we discussed last time?

**5** The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. **6** So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. **7** And the Lord said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing— all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.” **8** But Noah found favor with the Lord. **9** This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. **10** Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. **11** Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. **12** God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. **13** So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they

have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth! **14** “Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. **15** Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. **16** Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper. **17** “Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. **18** But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. **19** Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. **20** Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. **21** And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.” **22** So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

#### Discussion Questions:

- What strikes you from this text and why?
- What do you learn about God?
- What do you learn about people (through the people of the earth and also through Noah)?
- Are there ways in which God might be calling us to turn away from the ways of the culture around us and pursue paths faithful to him?
- What might God want to say to you through this text? How can you put this into practice this week?
- Close by praying for each other.

#### **EASTER EQUIPPING 4: 15-Second Testimonies**

As we saw in the passage tonight, our world is filled with much brokenness and wickedness. The sad thing, though, is many people don't know there's an alternative path to take. We get a chance to show the people around us who God is and invite them to encounter him. 15-second testimonies are a tool for sharing a glimpse of who God is to folks and seeing how they might respond and if they might be curious to learn more.

Create your own 15-second testimony based on the follow template and practice sharing it with your group (3 times each):

“There was a time in my life when I was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (who you were or what life was like before you met Jesus). Then I \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (a taste of your encounter with Jesus) and since then, I've \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (who you are or what life is like after encountering Jesus). Have you ever experienced something like this before?”

*Example 1: There was a time in my life where I was angry and selfish. Then I learned about the forgiveness that God had for me and made Him my King and now I'm full of joy and have a desire to help others. Have you ever experienced something like this before?*

*Example 2: There was a time in my life where I was fearful and lonely. Then I encountered the love of Jesus and chose to follow Him completely, and now I know I'm loved and secure. Have you ever experienced something like this before?*

## **PRAYER MAPS**

Let's take 5-10 minutes on our own to pray for the people on our prayer maps. Ask God to show you how to pray for them and to help you identify the ones he might want you to reach out to. Then share with each other about the ones that God seems to be highlighting.

Next, brainstorm with each other practical plans for reaching out to those who have been highlighted. Then end by praying over each other as we reach out to these ones and for open doors.

As you are engaging with those on your list, purposefully look for opportunities to share your 2-minute story of hope, 15-second testimony, or even how God has been leading you to pray for them. You might also invite them to Easter Sunday on April 1, which will be geared towards unchurched folks.

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY

UNDERSTANDING OUR WORLD ACCORDING TO GENESIS 1-11

## Universal History - Week 7

We are concluding our “Universal History” series this week with the story about the Tower of Babel. At the end of the story about Noah and the flood, God has wiped away all wickedness in the world and given humankind a second chance to be the people God created them to be. Unfortunately, as we reach Babel, we see that the people are still struggling to do things God’s way. Instead of fulfilling their creation mandate of filling the earth and subduing it (Genesis 1:28), the people gather together to build a city for themselves. This story highlights the tendencies of humankind to do things on our own and to be afraid of stepping out into the world and into what God might have for us.

We’ll also continue with some practical equipping as we are now under two weeks away from Easter!

**VISION:** Explain the purpose of lifegroup.

### **FAMILY TIME:**

- Introduction Question: What’s the coolest thing you’ve ever built?
- Share praise reports and prayer requests.

### **DISCUSSION: GENESIS 11.1-9**

Accountability Question: How have we put into practice the things we discussed last time?

*1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” 5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. 6 The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” 8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*

#### Discussion Questions:

- What strikes you from this text and why?
- What do you learn about God?
- What do you learn about people?
- Why do you think the people were so scared of being scattered over the face of the earth?
- Why do you think God wanted to confuse the people?
- What might God want to say to you through this text? How can you put this into practice this week?
- Close by praying for each other.

#### **EASTER EQUIPPING 5: Inviting People to Easter**

As we're only about a week away from Easter Sunday, let's practice inviting people to church! Practicing these simple invitations will help it to feel more natural when we're actually talking with our friends. Picture 2-3 people from your prayer map and make an invitation with them in mind. You might mention that Easter is one of the most important Christian holidays and that it's a day to celebrate Jesus! You could also tell them about our picnic after service where we cater a bunch of food and run an Easter egg hunt for kids.

#### **PRAYER MAPS**

Let's take 10 minutes on our own to pray over the people on our prayer maps that God has been highlighting for us. As you pray for them, ask God to bring to mind ways that you might be able to reach out to them or things he might want you to share with them. As we're only about a week away from Easter Sunday, let's make concrete plans for reaching out or following up with those God has placed on our hearts. Then as we're spending time with them, let's look for opportunities to share about our own testimonies with them, see if we can pray for them, or invite them to Easter Sunday.

End by praying for each other as we step out to help those around us encounter God! We won't be putting out any curriculum next week so we'd encourage you to take an off night so you have more space to spend time with those on your prayer maps.