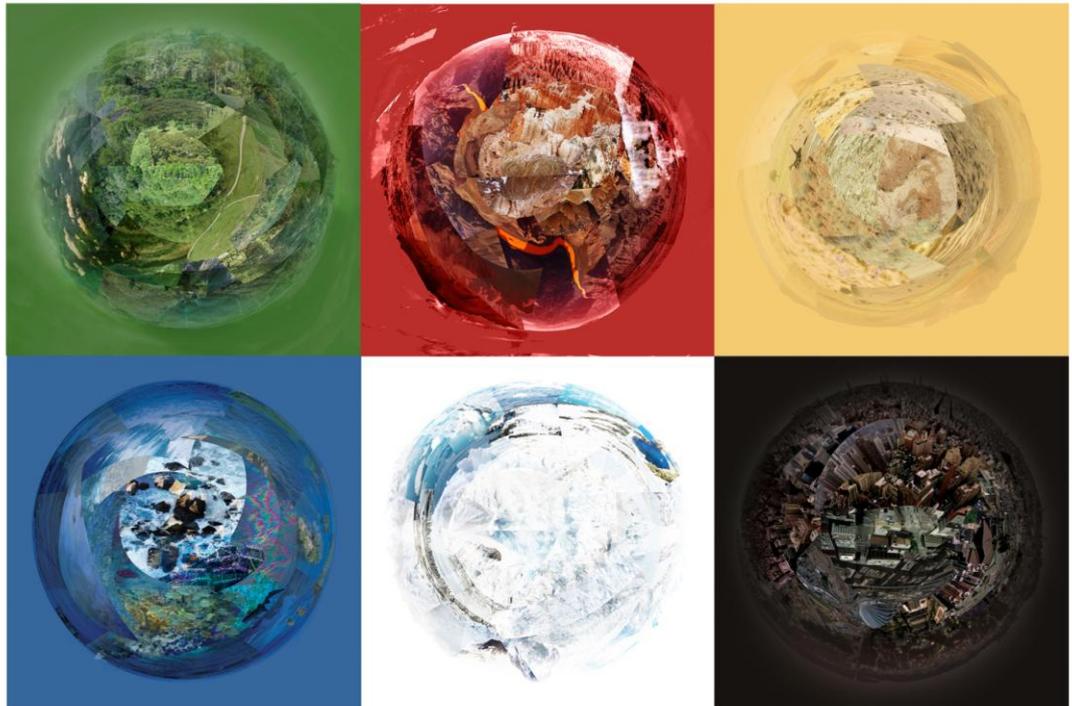


# Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden



## A Sample Lesson From: Discover God's Ancient Story A Study of Genesis

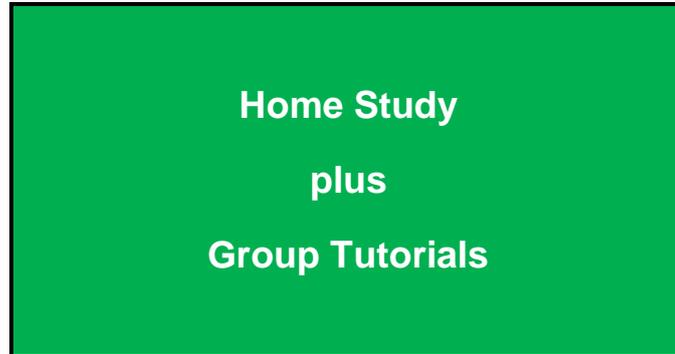
A flexible open learning course from  
the [Group-based Open Learning Discipleship Project](#)

GOLD



## Introduction

Our Open Learning courses are designed to help you learn by means of:



## Home Study

**Each course** is made up of **five Blocks** and each Block has **eight lessons**. If you have about  $\frac{3}{4}$  hr to spare (very roughly), you can complete one lesson. These lessons require you to read and interact with the course material as well as with your Bible.

Each lesson is **programmed** to help you check your progress as you work through. To get the maximum benefit it is important that you use the course in the way it was intended:

1. Read section 1 (often referred to by the technical term 'frame' 1).
2. Make the response required, if there is one.
3. Check that your answer corresponds with the feedback given in the 'feedback' section at the end. (Wherever feedback is given, it is marked with a raven). 
4. Proceed to section 2.

Note that the **course** is programmed—**you** are **not** being programmed! The aim of programming is that:

1. you can check frequently that you have understood the material presented;
2. you are stimulated to active and critical thinking;
3. you reinforce what you learn and are better able to remember it.

Sometimes, discussion frames are given. These are clearly indicated by a heading 'For Discussion' and box. Here you should answer the question in your own words and come to the tutorial prepared to discuss the question as indicated.

At the end of each lesson, we encourage you to spend some time in reflection on how what you have learnt applies to you in the situation where God has placed you.

## Group Meeting

Regular group meetings take place (normally fortnightly) where you will have the opportunity to discuss points of interest that have arisen and think through with others how your learning may be applied. At the end of each block of home study, you will also normally be given a five-minute quiz.

The group tutorials give the opportunity for you to clarify ideas and to share your own thoughts and to listen to the ideas of others. The process of learning from the Bible in a group is an essential part of the programme. It is here that you are able to think through areas of application and to pray and support each other in your studies.

## Preparing for this lesson:

- Take a moment to pray that God will help you reflect on the story of the Garden of Eden and how it can be explained.
- Remember to keep a notebook handy to note down any questions or issues for discussion.

## Objectives

- At the end of this lesson you will be able to:
1. summarise Genesis 2:4-25 in two sentences;
  2. explain the need for observation and explanation as steps in interpreting a Bible passage;
  3. suggest how Genesis 2's teaching on the relationship between men and women may be important today.

## a. Introducing Genesis 2

1. We have spent quite a lot of time studying Genesis 1 and we will be returning to it in relation to some wider questions about science and the environment. However, now we will turn to Genesis 2.

### Activity

Read Genesis 2:4–25 now. As you read through, you will see that there are two sections. The first deals with the Garden of Eden and the man's responsibility to care for it. The second deals with God's creation of woman as a 'suitable helper' in this task.

2. In this lesson, we are going to try and use our three principles of interpretation in a little more detail. Remind yourself what they are:



## b. The context of Genesis 2

3. One of the questions that we ask when we observe any biblical passage is: What is the literary context of the passage?

How do you think this relates to the story of creation that we have looked at in chapter 1?

- a. They are completely separate.
- b. They are parallel but different stories (my Bible has the heading: "Another account of Creation").
- c. Genesis 2 follows on chronologically from Genesis 1.
- d. Genesis 2 comments on and explains Genesis 1.
- e. Any other opinion: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Now, let's ask how the passage relates to the rest of Genesis. Look at verse 4. What does this say?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Look at Genesis 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1,9; 37:2. What do all these verses have in common?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. The Hebrew word *toldot* which is translated by the NRSV as 'descendants' is actually the same as the word for 'generations' in Genesis 2:4. So, in the Hebrew Bible, the phrase "these are the descendants/generations of..." recurs throughout Genesis.

So, we have *observed* a phrase that recurs throughout Genesis. How, then can this be *explained*? What do you think?

- a. There is no particular significance to the phrase.
- b. The phrase acts as a section marker or title, introducing the next important section.
- c. Any other opinion: \_\_\_\_\_

7. In my Bible, the editors have placed verse 4 with the story of creation in chapter 1. Do you think that they are correct in doing that? Give reasons.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. By *observing* how Genesis 2 relates to the previous passage as well as to the context of the whole of the book, we can begin to *explain* the text more precisely. It seems to me that the phrase "These are the generations of..." is used by the author of Genesis as a marker for where a new section of the text begins. If this is so, then Genesis 2:4 begins a new section of the text that runs all the way to 4:26. Genesis 2 should therefore be linked more closely with:

- a. Genesis 1.
  - b. Genesis 3-4.
9. Whatever we conclude about the particular phrase, what do you think this says about the need to study carefully (i.e., observe) what the text actually says?
- a. It is not that important. The overall gist is what matters.
  - b. It is very important. It helps us understand the text more clearly
  - c. Any other opinion: \_\_\_\_\_

### c. The Garden of Eden

10. It is important that we learn to *observe* what the text itself says and that we do not depend on what others say, however educated they may be. One way to make sure that you have observed the text for yourself is to summarise what it says. So here is a challenge!

#### For Discussion

Try and write 4 sentences that summarise verses 4-17 in your own words. Make sure that you are stating what the text actually says and not trying to explain its meaning at this stage.

---



---



---



---

11. The point of this exercise is not that you agree with my summary, nor that you agree with everyone in your group. Instead, it is so that you know for yourself what the text says. Once you have a clear idea of the actual content of a passage, you can begin to ask what needs to be explained. Are there any words or phrases in these verses that do not make sense to you?

---



---

12. Obviously, I can't read your mind about the things that you think need explaining in this passage. Instead, let's ask the question where might we look to find out an explanation of:
- a. The connection between the 'day' of Genesis 2 and the 'days' of Genesis 1?

---

b. The river that waters the Garden with no rain?

---

c. The rivers and places mentioned in vv.10-14?

---



**13.** We are privileged to have access to Bible Concordances, Bible Dictionaries, Old Testament Introductions and Commentaries that give us access to the writings of those who have studied the text in far more detail than ourselves and are able to explain it to us. For example, in *Exploring the Old Testament: Volume 1: The Pentateuch*, (London: SPCK, 2003), Gordon Wenham suggests the following:

- a. "Chapter 2 takes up motifs already addressed in chapter 1 but discusses them in greater detail: chapter 1 gives a panoramic view on the whole of creation, but 2:4-25 zooms in with a close-up on the creation of man and woman." (p.22)
- b. "The symbolism of Eden is clearer than its location. Eden means 'delight', and it is portrayed like a beautiful paradise island with abundant water and delicious fruits." (p.23)
- c. "The location of the garden is tantalizing. Because the Tigris and Euphrates are fed by the river of Eden it might be surmised that Eden was located somewhere in the North, where these rivers rise. But on the other hand, 3:24 tells us that no one can enter the garden because it is guarded by the cherubim. This suggests that somehow the garden is real but inaccessible to man." (pp.22, 23)

In his commentary (1987), Wenham adds that:

- d. "It seems likely that this description [of Eden]... is symbolic of a place where God dwells. Indeed there are many other features that suggest it is seen as an archetypal sanctuary, prefiguring the later tabernacle and temples." (p.61)

So, while it is important that we learn to *observe* the text for ourselves to make sure that we know what the text says, it is also helpful to find tools produced by experts to help *explain* parts of the text that we do not understand.

👉 *Go on to the next frame.*

## d. A suitable helper

### 14. For Discussion

Now let's try and summarise verses 18-25. As before, try and write 4 sentences in your own words to state what happens in these verses.

---



---



---



---

15. Again, the point of this summary is not that we all write exactly the same, but that we learn to observe what the text actually says. We should therefore make sure that what we have said agrees with what the text says. Now for the next step: Explanation.

Here there is potentially a significant problem in terms of our understanding of the role of the woman. The Bible uses the word 'helper' to describe the woman's role in relation to the man. Do you think this is a positive or a negative term? Give reasons.

---

16. Now, look at the text more closely. Is it only the woman who is created to help the man? (See vv.18,19)?  Yes  No

17. The animals are created as potential companions to help the man in the task that God has given him to look after the Garden. There is:

"No suggestion that they are a danger to him or that he will exploit them."

(Wenham: 2003, 22)

However, the man needs something more than the companionship and help of the animals in order to fulfil the task given to him. It is in this context that the woman is made to be a 'suitable' helper (NRSV – 'a helper as his partner').

Now look up Psalm 54:4 and Psalm 121:2. Who is the helper in these verses?

---

18. In fact, the story in Genesis clearly suggests that women have an important place alongside men (hence the NRSV's translation – partner). While animals may provide a certain companionship and help to men, the relationship between men and women is unique and different. Women cannot and must not be treated as the animals. Such a teaching was

probably counter-cultural at the time Genesis was written. It is certainly counter-cultural in certain societies today where women are sometimes treated as less important than possessions and occasionally treated only as 'workhorses'.

### For Discussion

Are you aware of places in the world, or even in our own country, where women are treated 'like animals'? What does this passage in Genesis have to say about this and what should our response be?

---

---

---

## e. Review

19. In this lesson, we have been focussing on the skills of observation and explanation. We have particularly used the skill of summarising. In conclusion, we are going to ask you to summarise the two summaries that you made above. Write down in one sentence your summary of:

a. Verses 4-17 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Verses 18-25 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### Reflecting on this lesson

Note down in your notebook anything from today's lesson:

- that you want to discuss in your tutorial;
- that is significant for your own personal faith;
- that is significant for explaining the Old Testament to others.

Spend some time in prayer asking God to help you apply what you have learnt.


**Feedback: Adam and Eve**
**block 2 lesson 5**

2.5.2	Observation; Explanation; Application [These have been studied earlier in the course].
2.5.3	Your answer. I prefer d. However, read on.
2.5.4	These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.
2.5.5	The phrase “these are the descendants”
2.5.6	Your answer. I think b.
2.5.7	Your answer. I would say no, because elsewhere in Genesis this phrase begins a new section.
2.5.8	b.
2.5.9	Here I hope you said b. but it's your choice.
2.5.10	Your answer. It will be good to see what other people wrote. Here is mine: At the time of creation, before there was any vegetation, there was a river that watered the earth (vv.4-6). After that, God created human beings (man – v7). God planted a garden called Eden with all kinds of edible plants and watered it by means of the river (v8-14). God put man in the garden of Eden and allowed him to eat anything except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vv.15-17).
2.5.11	Your answer. I wondered how the “day that the LORD made the earth and the heavens” (v.1) relates to the ‘days’ of chapter 1. I also wondered about a river before rain (vv.5,6) and the location of the rivers and places mentioned (vv.11-13).
2.5.12	Your answer: What about? a. Bible concordance, dictionary or a commentary; b. a bible commentary; c. a Bible handbook, an atlas or a commentary.
2.5.14	Your answer. Again, it will be good to see what other people wrote. Here is mine: God seeks a suitable partner for the man and brings the animals to him to name (vv.18,19). No suitable partner is found to help man and so God makes the woman out of man (vv.20-22). The woman is exactly what the man needs (v.23). A pattern for marriage is established and there is no shame (vv.24,25).
2.5.15	Your answer. A helper can be a very positive term but, having just watched the film “The Help”, it can also be a negative term that speaks of slavery and ill-treatment.
2.5.16	No.
2.5.17	God.
2.5.19	Your answers. Here are mine: a. God plants the garden of Eden and places man there to tend and enjoy its fruit except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. b. God seeks a suitable partner to help man in his task and so creates woman to be an intimate companion.



This study forms part of an Open Learning programme based on local study groups for anyone who:

- wishes to grow in knowledge of God and understanding of the Christian faith;
- is committed to systematic, disciplined and in-depth personal study;
- is ready to learn from others in small discussion groups;
- is willing to make use of God-given gifts for mission and ministry in the local church.

The programme is designed to be accessible to those who have no previous theological study as well as to those who want to engage with the Bible at a deeper level. The courses are suitable for those who feel called to involvement in different avenues of ministry and mission in the local church as well as those who want to work out how to live more effectively as Christians in daily life whether at home or in workplace and society.

**For more information, contact:**

**The GOLD Project**  
**Stockton House**  
**Stockton Avenue, Fleet**  
**Hampshire GU51 4NS**

**01252 614323**

**[info@goldproject.org](mailto:info@goldproject.org)**

**[www.goldproject.org](http://www.goldproject.org)**

<https://twitter.com/GOLDiscipleship>

<https://www.facebook.com/groupbasedopenlearningdiscipleship/>

The Group-based Open Learning Discipleship (GOLD) Project is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered in England, registered charity no. 1166567

Learning churches... growing churches