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*UCM @ UBC Fall 2009 Core Study:*

# **GENESIS**

**“Blessed to be a Blessing”**

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## UCM'S VISION FOR CORES:

Our desire is that Core would be a place where students can grow in their relationship with Jesus and journey together in seeking to be more like Him. That's why we call it CORE, because it's central to who we are becoming. Our vision is that there would be Core groups in every corner of campus pursuing spiritual growth and transformation in community with one another.

### CORE VALUES:

Every Core will be made up of a unique small group of students, and consequently every Core will be different and have it's own identity. At the same time, our Cores are committed to these 5 core values that that keep us balanced and on track as we follow Jesus: discipleship, fellowship, outreach, prayer and worship.

With approximately 11 available weeks for group meetings in the Fall 2009 term, it's important that each Core leader and Co-leader plan ahead and through out the term to keep a balance in their Core. It's easy to fall into a routine of only studying scripture together and closing in prayer. But remember: this isn't a bible study, this is CORE!

### BALANCING CORE VALUES:

First semester is a critical time for forming authentic and spiritually transformative Core groups. Every Fall semester we choose a book of the Bible that all of our Cores will study. This semester your UCM Staff have prepared 7 Core studies on the book of Genesis. We have purposely chosen only to prepare seven studies so that there is space in these eleven weeks for you as leaders to ensure your Core is balanced and pursuing all the essential elements that make up Core.

### SUGGESTED SCHEDULE:

How do we keep all 5 values in balance? We could make sure that in each meeting there is an equal amount of time given to each. However, most Cores function better where there is a greater emphasis at the beginning on fellowship and sharing your spiritual stories, and gradually increasing emphasis on prayer, worship & outreach. We have prepared the following schedule as an example of how to plan to roughly incorporate our five values of prayer, worship, discipleship, outreach and fellowship in your Cores:

Week:	Core Focus:	Passage:
1. (Sep 21-23)	Core Vision & Leaders share their spiritual stories	Devotional: Acts 2:42-47
2. (Sep 28-30)	Study #1 & Sharing spiritual stories	Genesis 1:1-2:3
3. (Oct 5-7)	Community Building Activity (Dinner/Sports/etc)	
4. (Oct 12-14)	Study #2 & Sharing spiritual stories	Genesis 2:4-3:24
5. (Oct 19-21)	Study #3 & Sharing spiritual stories	Genesis 6; 8:1-5; 8:20-9:3
6. (Oct 26-28)	Study #4 & Prayer focus	Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21
7. (Nov 2-4)	Core Date	
8. (Nov 9-11)	Study #5 & Worship focus	Genesis 22:1-24
9. (Nov 16-18)	Outreach	
10. (Nov 23-25)	Study #6 & Prayer focus	Genesis 32:1-32
11. (Nov 30-Dec 2)	Study #7 & Worship focus	Genesis 37:1-8; 39:1-23

## PLANNING YOUR CORE SCHEDULE:

These first 11 weeks will go by fast – trust me! Sit down with your co-leader, take time to pray and discuss the visions you have for your Core and schedule it out. Take a look at some of the suggestions below and then use this calendar to roughly plan your semester of Core meetings:

Week:	Core Focus:	Passage:
1. (Sep 21-23)	_____	_____
2. (Sep 28-30)	_____	_____
3. (Oct 5-7)	_____	_____
<b>Core Huddle Training</b> this week (Topic: Spiritual Storytelling in Core)		
4. (Oct 12-14)	_____	_____
5. (Oct 19-21)	_____	_____
6. (Oct 26-28)	_____	_____
7. (Nov 2-4)	_____	_____
<b>Core Huddle Training</b> this week (Topic: Outreach in Core)		
8. (Nov 9-11)	_____	_____
9. (Nov 16-18)	_____	_____
10. (Nov 23-25)	_____	_____
11. (Nov 30-Dec 2)	_____	_____

## ESSENTIAL PRACTICES IN CORE:

Over the years students have found the following practices and experiences to be an essential part of a Core:

- Reading and studying scripture together with the purpose of personal and communal application.
- Authentically getting to know one another by sharing our personal stories/history and testimonies of coming to follow Jesus.
- Challenging one another and keeping each other accountable in our walks of faith and obedience to Jesus.
- Serving or planning an outreach project to do together each term (e.g. being a welcome team at a Thursday Night, dorm outreach, or serving at a mission downtown).
- Praying for one another, relationships in dorm, and for the campus.
- Incorporating time and space for worship.
- Connecting with another guys/girls Core (i.e. a "Core date").

## 5 PRACTICAL IDEAS:

1. Make time in the first 5 weeks of your Core meetings for each person in your Core to share their story. (One or two people each week depending on the size of your Core).
2. Take time to pray for the person right after they share their story.
3. Book one night early on in the semester to do a community building activity together, like eating dinner together, playing sports, or a game that allows social interaction.
4. Plan to have one or two Cores where there is space to worship together (e.g. through music or time of silent contemplation) or to have an extended time in prayer for one another (e.g. laying on hands and praying for anointing in mission and our callings).
5. Meet somewhere accessible in dorm and pray about a practical way to purposefully engage your dorm or neighborhood.

## **PASSAGES & THEMES:**

Our over-arching theme as we study through the book of Genesis is to focus on being "blessed to be a blessing." You'll notice each study will have some practical emphasis on how as the community of God we've been called to be a blessing to others. Below are the titles, passages, and themes of the bible studies we are preparing as a resource that will be available on the website this fall semester (week by week):

### **[God Created Us in His Image]**

Passage: Genesis 1:1-2:3

Themes: God as Creator; Made in the Image of God; Blessed and called to cultivate the earth

### **[God Designed Us for Relationship]**

Passage: Genesis 2:4-3:24

Themes: Designed for relationships; Nature of disobedience and self-autonomy, and its effect on all our relationships; God's grace is a blessing that out runs sin.

### **[God Remembered Noah]**

Passage: Genesis 6:5-22, 8:1-5, 8:20-9:3

Themes: Society's propensity toward corruption, God's judgment, God's remembering gives hope for a new humanity, God's promise to Noah

### **[God Covenanted with Abraham]**

Passage: Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21

Themes: God's promise to bless his people, that they might be a blessing; Responding to God's call, courage and obedience.

### **[God Tested Abraham]**

Passage: Genesis 22:1-24

Themes: God's testing, Radical faith in action

### **[God Renamed Jacob]**

Passage: Genesis 32:1-32

Themes: God's presence, Identity, Perseverance and Prayer, God's continues to keep his covenant in extending grace to those he has chosen to bless, so that they might bless others.

### **[God Choose Joseph]**

Passage: Genesis 37:1-8; 39:1-23

Themes: God's surprising choice, Providence and Transformation, Joseph's faithfulness in the midst of sin. The story of God's blessing of Joseph who then became a channel of blessing to his own family and whole nations affected by the drought.

## **READING STORY BY STORY:**

Genesis is a great book to be reading through out the week, story by story, seeing how God has blessed his people to be a blessing. The best way for your Core members to engage the text during the Core meeting is if they have been reading the context through out the week. Encourage this by modeling it yourself.

## **BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW:<sup>1</sup>**

### **"IN THE BEGINNING"**

No other first line of a book can beat Genesis. This is actually its Hebrew title, in conformity with the ancient Near Eastern practice of naming a book by its first words. In English, the title Genesis comes from the Greek, meaning origins. In two words, it's a book about beginnings and origins.

### **AUTHORSHIP & PURPOSE:**

Unlike a letter in the New Testament that clearly addresses to whom the recipient is and often alludes to the purpose or the issue being addressed, these questions are a bit more complex when it comes to Genesis. Although all theologians agree that the Pentateuch (Genesis – Deuteronomy) has been edited as a unity (e.g. obviously Moses didn't write about his own death), many would generally say that Moses authored its essential shape. Tradition, inter-textual references and even Jesus thought of Moses as the author.

Why did Moses write this book of origins? Often overlooked is the backdrop of Moses writing this book to Israel while they are wandering in the wilderness, confronted with pagan myths, both from their Egyptian past and from the new cultures they will soon encounter. God is preparing the Israelites to be his light to the nations. Moses writes this book of origins to tell them where they have come from and who they are to be; their story caught up in God's story.

Something that you shouldn't be surprised by (especially in your Religion 101 class) is the fact that Moses wasn't the first to write a flood story, genealogies, or a creation account. "Having been highly educated in Pharaoh's court as the son of Pharaoh's daughter ... Moses had unique access to the ancient Near Eastern myths that show close connections with Genesis 1-11" (Waltke, 30). Moses not only knew about these myths, but Genesis could be seen as a rebuttal against the worldviews perpetrated in these myths. This is why it's critical when reading Genesis to look for the meaning behind the narrative, and not to get caught up in the details. Part of the point of the narratives, especially in Genesis 1-11, is specifically to teach the people of Israel about what this exodus-rescuing God is like and how he is Creator and Lord over all.

### **LITERARY GENRE:**

Another tricky subject to summarize effectively is the genre of Genesis. Generally one could certainly call Genesis historic narrative, validated by the material located in space and time, genealogies, and the giving of evidence of various sorts at times. This shows that the narrator intended to write real history, not "myth" or legend. At the same time, it's clear the purpose the author intends in retelling these historical narratives is to provide a theological interpretation of history. Each event is told in a way to describe who God is and how he is relentless in his initiative to save the world. "Unlike a geometry textbook that may aim to be only didactic, Genesis is literature because it communicates doctrine in an artful way; it is ideological art ... He teaches by telling stories" (Waltke, 31).

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<sup>1</sup> A great resources used for the content of this section was *Genesis: A Commentary* by Bruce K. Waltke. This and many other commentaries on the book of Genesis can be discovered in the Regent Library. Ask one of the staff how to find these books in the Library.

## **ADVICE FOR READING GENESIS:<sup>2</sup>**

The most important advice we could give you would be to encourage you to read this book story by story, remembering that God is the ultimate protagonist. In each story we learn more and more about the character and nature of God and his relentless desire to redeem human kind, blessing them, that they might be a blessing.

### **TWO PARTS: PREHISTORY AND THE STORY OF REDEMPTION**

One way to see the book of Genesis would be to see it in two parts: a prehistory (Gen 1-11), with stories about creation, human origins, the fall of humanity, and the downward spiral of the progress of evil; and a story of redemption (Gen 12 and on till Revelation), beginning through God's covenant to Abraham and on going through his "seed" (descendants).

### **WATCH GOD INTERVENE**

The major plot of the book has to do with God intervening in the history of human fallenness by choosing a man and his family. This turning point happens when God says to Abraham: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you ... and all people on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12: 1-3). Notice how each major character becomes a part of God's ultimate story (and ours). We are blessed to be a blessing!

### **HEAR GOD'S COVENANT**

It's crucial to take note of the two covenants made by God to his people (Noah, Abraham, then repeated to Isaac and Jacob). In God's covenant with Abraham, he is promised the gift of "seed" and the gift of land. "All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth..." (Gen 13:14-16). These serve as the basis for the next two covenants of the gift of law and kingship (through the rest of the Old Testament). Keep note of the themes of seed and land throughout the whole narrative, as they propel the narrative forward.

### **UNDERSTAND GOD'S CHOICE**

Follow the subplot of God's choice of the younger or weaker, or most unlikely character (e.g. not Cain but Seth, not Ishmael but Isaac, not Esau but Jacob, not Rueben but Judah). Related is the fact that they are not chosen because of their own goodness, but that they trusted God.

### **SEE JESUS IN IT ALL**

Finally pay attention to all the ways this narrative points forward to the climatic redemption through Jesus breaking into human history to be the ultimate sacrificial lamb, the new Adam, and the beginning of new creation and new life if we are willing to trust in Him.

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<sup>2</sup> Another great resource used for the content of this section was *How To Read the Bible Book by Book* by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart. Every student of scripture should own a copy of this book.