

Introduction

Why Faith Factor?

A popular saying I once heard states, “Faith is walking to the edge of all the light that you have—and taking one more step.” And that’s exactly what God is calling you and me to do today. But it’s not a blind leap of faith. God has given us all the light we need, and that light is found in His Word, the Bible. All we need to do is read, understand, and apply God’s Word to our lives. That’s the purpose of this book.

Some of you who are familiar with my former titles, *Caution: Dangerous Devotions* and *Caution: More Dangerous Devotions*, may be wondering, *Are Faith Factor OT and Faith Factor NT different?* To that I would say yes! While maintaining the same quality of retelling the biblical text, these two books have been updated and expanded to include more background information, cultural explanations, more sidebars, and, in the case of this book, the entire Old Testament (rather than just through the book of Psalms). You will also find comparative timeline tidbits that place biblical and secular history side by side, as well as online access to more devotional lessons we simply had no room to squeeze into the books. You can find those lessons online at www.cookministries.com/FaithFactor as well as a convenient topical index for both devotionals.

It’s my prayer that *Faith Factor OT* and *Faith Factor NT* will ignite your heart and grow your faith—and may all the glory for that go to God alone.

Walk on!

“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’

“He replied, ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed ...’”

(Luke 17:5–6)

“It’s impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him”

(Heb. 11:6 MSG).

Genesis

Faith facts

Where is the best place to start anything? At the beginning! Appropriately, the word Genesis means “origin” or “beginning.” In this book we’ll read about the beginning of the world, humans, sin and God’s judgment, languages, and nations. Genesis is the very foundation upon which the whole Bible stands. Those who don’t want to acknowledge God often attack this book, but don’t let their unbelief influence your opinion. As you read through Genesis, keep your eyes on the truth found here.

Genesis was written by Moses, although he wasn’t born until about three hundred years *after* the events in this book happened! Is this a problem? No. God may have allowed long life spans for the first man, Adam, and his descendants so that firsthand accounts of historical events could be passed from generation to generation. For instance, Shem (one of Noah’s sons who lived through the flood) could have passed along historical records to Abraham. Since both oral and written records existed in Abraham’s day, Moses would later have access to accurate information. Regardless of how God revealed His word to Moses, the message of Genesis is one God didn’t want us to miss.

As you journey through this first book of the Bible, keep your eyes open. Genesis has lots of twists and turns, ups and downs, and even a few bumps. Some of the terrain may look familiar, while some may seem confusing and a little disorienting. But don’t let that discourage you. There are some important roads to explore in this book that will keep you from getting lost later on. So stay the course and keep your eyes and heart open to what God wants to teach you. When you finish your journey through Genesis, you’ll be stronger in your faith because of the experience!

Check out a bonus lesson online at www.cookministries.com/FaithFactor: “My Way or the Highway” (taken from Genesis 9-11), which talks about being wise in your own eyes.



Said and Done!

Taken from Genesis 1

Foundation

Just as you need to get yourself ready each morning before starting your day, so you need to prepare your heart before reading God's Word. The best way to do this is to spend a few minutes in prayer. It doesn't need to be a long prayer—a simple sentence expressing your heartfelt desire to God will do. Each time you read God's Word, ask Him to open your eyes and teach you.



Have you ever wondered where we really came from? Did God really create us, or are we the result of a "big bang" and a long period of evolution?

"In the beginning God ..." Notice that the Bible doesn't begin with "In the beginning ... life." From the very first verse of Genesis, God wants us to know that He is the One who created the heavens and the earth. How we respond to that news is our choice. We can either reject it or accept it as fact. When the world was created, was anyone around besides God to verify what happened? Can science either prove or disprove Genesis 1:1? The answer to both of these questions is no.

In the beginning, God created. Because of His power and creativity, it took only a spoken word on His part to bring everything into existence.

This is the God of the universe; this is the message He wants us to know. We aren't a clump of cells that happened to group together and form life on our own. God specifically tells us that He created the heavens and the earth and the life found on the earth. God wants us to know that He is responsible for creation—all of it.

How did God do it? First, Scripture tells us that He created everything in six days and then rested on the seventh. Was He tired? No. God rested because He was finished and wanted to provide an example for us to follow. That's the basis for our week to this day—days of work followed by a time of rest. (It's interesting to note that almost all known cultures throughout history have revolved around a seven-day week!)

On the first day of the week, God created night and day by separating the light from the darkness. On day two, He created our atmosphere with just the right mix of elements to support life. On day three, God gathered the waters to form the seas and created dry land. He also created plants and trees. God looked at what He had made and was pleased. Day four brought the creation of the sun, moon, and stars, which gave light to the earth and marked days, years, and seasons.

Now the stage was set for God's next act of creation. On day five, He brought into existence the birds of the air and the creatures of the sea. He made them complete and perfect, with everything they would need to produce more of their kind. He then created all the animals and insects on day six—but He didn't stop there. On that same day God unveiled His crowning achievement: He created people. Up until now, God had spoken everything into existence. But when it came to man, He did

Adam (pronounced ah-dahm) is the Hebrew word for "human being."

It's related to another Hebrew word, Adamah (pronounced uh-dah-muh), which is the word for "ground."

Interestingly, all the chemicals in our bodies are the same chemicals found in dirt!

God spoke into existence everything in our universe—except for man. God formed Adam with His own hands and, in a very intimate way, blew the breath of life into him. It was almost like divine CPR!



something very hands-on and personal. He shaped man from the dust of the ground and then breathed life into him (see Gen. 2:7). Then He created Eve from Adam.

Unlike the animals God created, He created humankind with souls. He did this so we could have relationships with Him. God gave us a will so we can choose our emotions—so we can love—and a superior mind so we can communicate with words. This is where human life began. It didn't take millions of years for us to evolve!

So what about evolution? Evolution is a theory that humans evolved (came into being) from lower life forms over a span of millions of years by trial and error. Not surprisingly, the more scientists learn about the complexities of the human body, the more they're abandoning the idea of evolution and investigating the idea of "intelligent design" or some kind of creative act. God has been telling us all along it is He who created everything.

Footwork

Note: Anything worth having usually requires some effort. In this section, you'll need to use a little energy. But don't panic! Your Bible is all you'll need. Just look up the Scripture verses and answer the questions that follow. Doing this will build your spiritual muscles and make you strong in the Lord. Really!

Turn to Genesis 1:1 in your Bible. (Go ahead; look it up and read it!) What does it say? "In the beginning" mentions the creation of something: time! This verse also mentions the creation of space and matter—our universe and all that's in it. (It's interesting to note that most other cultures, histories, religions, and sciences recognize that time, space, and matter already existed before they did, though they don't know how it all happened.) Also, notice what this verse doesn't say. It doesn't try to prove that God exists. That's because it was written in the beginning when no one doubted God.



Science textbooks contain both facts and theories. Theory is different from fact. Don't be fooled into thinking that evolution is a scientific fact. It's not. All scientists know that a theory must be tested to be considered scientifically accurate. That is, the theory and the conditions it is tested under must be repeatable in a laboratory under exact conditions. The theory of evolution isn't based solely on scientific evidence; rather it's based on a belief system that rules God out. Evolution isn't pure science; it's a form of religion. So whose word would you rather believe? The word of those who weren't around when things began and can't reliably explain how matter came into being, or the word of the Creator Himself, who was there and made everything? Think about it.



Don't Look at *Me!*

Taken from Genesis 2—3

Foundation

Stop and pray before you begin today's lesson. Ask God to open your eyes and help you understand what He wants to show you in His Word. Thank Him that He is a just yet loving God.



Have you ever done something you later regretted? You're not alone!

Everything was so perfect just moments ago! What happened? Adam and Eve both wondered. They suddenly felt ashamed and wanted to hide from God—the very One who created them. The peace they once enjoyed in their hearts had vanished. Something was dreadfully wrong.

Adam's mind was racing as he thought about his life up to this point. God had given him the task of caring for the garden, studying what God had created, and naming all the animals. While observing the animals, Adam had noticed that each one had a mate, yet there was no mate suitable for himself. A smile came to Adam's face as he remembered how God had met that need. He placed Adam into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, and fashioned a companion especially for him. When Adam awoke, there stood Eve! She was a perfect match for him! But then Adam's smile quickly faded. He knew that he had been created to walk in the cool of the garden with a loving God, but now all he wanted to do was hide!

Sin literally means “to miss the mark.” It is living independently of God and relying on yourself as your own authority. Sin isn’t just breaking God’s law; it’s betraying God Himself.

Eve was tempted by wanting great pleasure, wanting what she didn’t have, and wanting to advance her own cause (“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” [1 John 2:16, KJV]). Jesus was tempted in the same ways, but didn’t give in (Matt. 4:1–11).

Eve also felt guilty about what she had done. She had never experienced such a horrible feeling before. Why had she listened to that serpent? Why hadn’t she obeyed that one simple rule God had given her?

The serpent told her the fruit from the tree of knowledge was really the most desirable thing in the garden. He even promised that it would make her like God! All that power and knowledge seemed irresistible. And the fruit looked so delicious! What harm could it do to take a bite? Perhaps God had been mistaken or hadn’t really meant what He said about the consequences of eating the fruit. Besides, the serpent had assured her she wouldn’t die if she ate it. So, perhaps God had been mistaken or didn’t really mean what He said.

Eve grabbed the fruit and took a bite. Then she turned around and offered some to Adam as well. After eating the fruit, something inside them changed. Instead of wanting to be with God, they were afraid of Him.

“Adam, where are you?” God called out, knowing exactly where he and Eve were and what they had done. He had created them with a free will to choose, and the forbidden tree was a test of their obedience and love for Him. Would they choose God’s way or their own way? God knew the answer. They had been

tempted and had chosen their own way above His.

“Did you eat from the forbidden tree?” God questioned.

Adam panicked. “Don’t look at *me!*” he said, pointing a blaming finger. “Eve gave me the fruit to eat.”

Eve quickly added, “Don’t look at *me!* The serpent said it would be all right!”

Because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, sin had entered their lives. As a result, they faced separation from God and had to leave the garden forever. Not



only that, but the land they worked would now be cursed, and they would experience pain, sorrow, and death. What had promised to be so pleasing brought only regret.

It would be sad if the story ended here, but it doesn't. Even in the midst of Adam and Eve's denial—"Don't look at *me!*"—God stepped in and said, "Yes, I know. Instead, look to *Me.*"

As Adam and Eve left the garden, God didn't abandon them. He provided clothing for them to wear made out of animal skins (the first animal sacrifice), which would serve as a constant reminder that sin comes with a cost.

Footwork

Open your Bible to Genesis 3:14–15. As a result of Adam and Eve's sin, God also cursed the serpent. What does verse 14 say? Now look at verse 15 and read about the threat to Satan and the promise to mankind! The offspring (or seed) of the woman—Jesus, who would be born of a virgin—would crush the serpent's head (completely destroy the work of Satan).



Satan twisted God's truth in order to plant a seed of doubt in Eve's heart. He then challenged God's words and replaced them with a lie. Satan still tries to do this today. Do you have doubts or questions about God's Word? Write them down on a piece of paper and tape it to the back inside cover of this devotional. Be honest and tell God about your questions and/or hang-ups. Ask Him to help you with your doubts, then get ready for an exciting journey as you explore the Old Testament and learn about His truth.