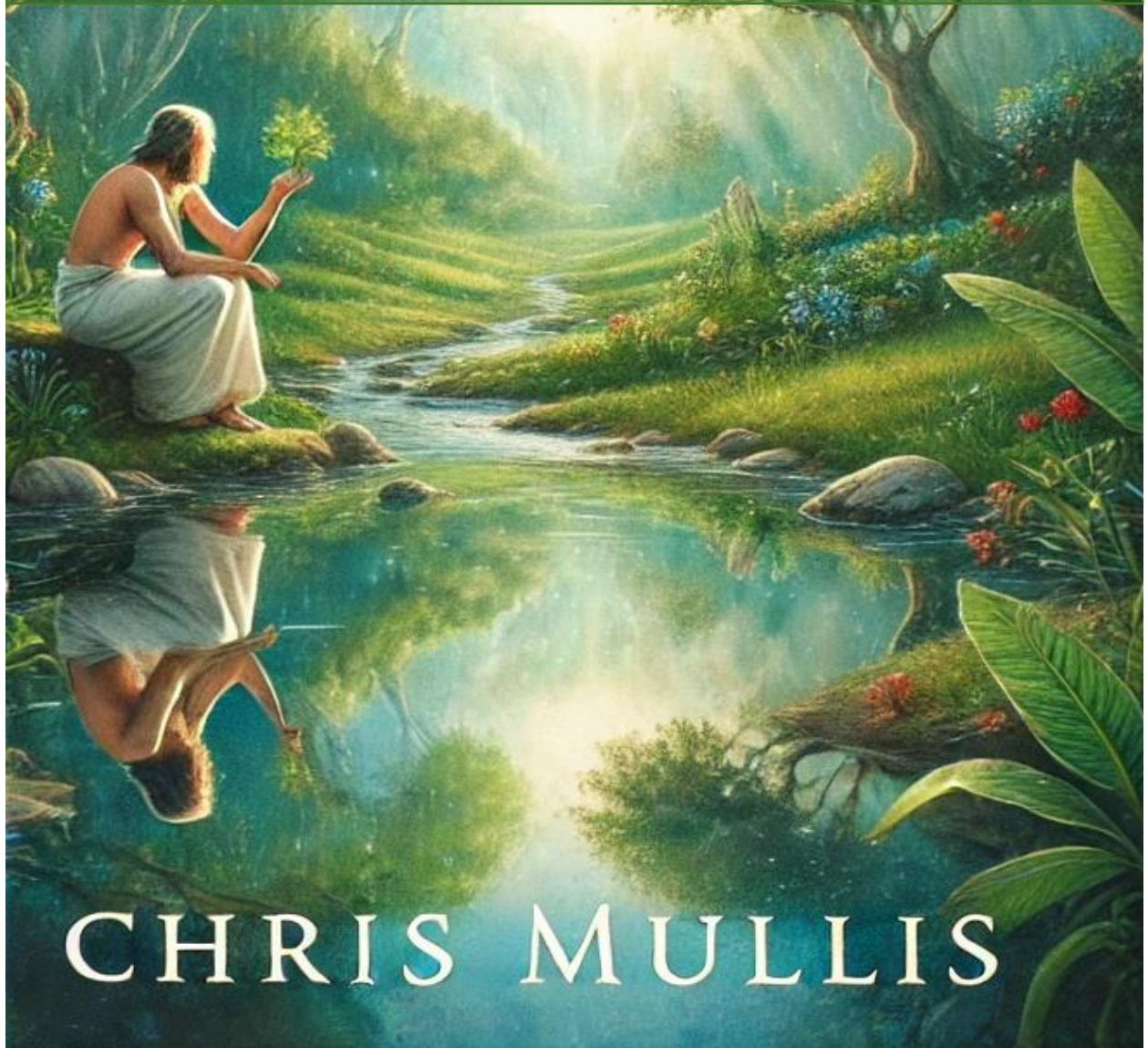


REFLECTIONS FROM EDEN

THE SECOND CREATION STORY

A Bible Study to explore God's purpose for humanity
through the lens of the Garden of Eden in Genesis.



CHRIS MULLIS

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
Suggested Format for this Study	5
Sample Schedule	7
Lesson 1: Are There 2 Creation Stories?	10
Lesson 2: God's Personal Touch – The Intimacy of Creation in Eden	18
Lesson 3: Building Godly Relationships	26
Lesson 4: Stewardship and Responsibility	35
Lesson 5: Free Will	42

**Scan the QR code to the right
to listen to free audio
versions of the lessons:**



Introduction: Reflections from Eden – The Second Creation Story

Welcome to *Reflections from Eden: The Second Creation Story*, a study exploring the powerful truths found in Genesis 2 and 3. While Genesis 1 offers a grand, cosmic view of God's creation, the Garden of Eden story zooms in on God's personal and intimate involvement with humanity. Together, these two accounts give us a fuller understanding of God's character—He is both powerful and personal.

In this study, we'll begin by comparing the differences between the creation story in Genesis 1 and the Eden story in Genesis 2 and 3. Then we'll explore God's intimate relationship with humanity and our purpose as stewards of His creation. We'll then reflect on our role as stewards. The last lesson considers God's gift of humanity's free will, examining the choices Adam and Eve made in Genesis 3 and the consequences that followed. Through these five lessons, we'll see how God provides, guides, and remains with us, even when life becomes messy and difficult.

Through interactive activities, discussions, and personal reflections, *Reflections from Eden* encourages us to embrace God's original design for our lives. As we study this ancient story, we'll uncover timeless lessons about stewardship, responsibility, relationships, and faith.

May this study challenge and inspire you to live as God's faithful steward, embracing the freedom to make wise, life-giving choices in alignment with His will.

Let's journey together back to Eden—and forward toward the life God created us to live.

Blessings,

Rev. Chris Mullis
October 22, 2024

Suggested Format for this Study

The following format is a suggestion that has worked well for me, but feel free to adapt it to your teaching style and the resources available. Each lesson can easily be adjusted to last between one hour and an hour and a half.

Pre-Study Preparation

I recommend providing participants with a schedule, which can be created using the “Schedule Template” document. This helps keep everyone informed of the material to be covered in each session. Additionally, you might consider starting with an “Orientation” session. This will give you a chance to introduce yourself, get to know the participants, distribute study materials, explain the study format, and answer any questions they may have.

It can also foster community to offer light refreshments at the beginning of each session. Participants can sign up to take turns providing simple snacks, such as coffee and cookies. This not only helps set a relaxed tone but also gives participants a sense of ownership in the study. They can sign up for refreshments in the "notes" section of the “Schedule Template.”

Weekly Materials

Each week, participants will receive a sermon to read in preparation for the following session. I suggest distributing one sermon at a time to help participants stay focused and not read ahead. However, feel free to provide all the sermons at once if that works better for your group.

General Session Format

Below is a general format for each small group session:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)**
 - Begin by welcoming participants and offering an opening prayer.
2. **Group Discussion (20-30 minutes)**
 - After the introduction, guide the group through the activities and discussions in the “Leader’s Guide” at the end of each sermon.
 - Your role as the facilitator is not to have all the answers but to guide and encourage meaningful conversation. The provided questions are a starting point—feel free to adapt or ask follow-up questions based on the group's thoughts and interests.
 - While some discussions may naturally stray from the topic, it’s important to discern whether these tangents are worth exploring or if it’s time to steer the group back to the main topic.
3. **Intercessory Prayer (5-10 minutes)**
 - End each session with a time of prayer. Allow participants to share any praises or concerns, and then pray over them as a group.
 - It can be helpful to keep a list of these requests to follow up on them in future sessions.



Bible Study

Reflections from Eden

The Second Creation Story

This discussion-based Bible Study series delves into the second creation story in Genesis, exploring its rich theological and spiritual insights across five sessions. The series begins by examining the existence of two distinct creation narratives, setting the stage for deeper exploration. Subsequent lessons will cover the intimacy of God's creation, the importance of human relationships, our role as stewards of creation, and the pivotal themes of moral choice and responsibility as illustrated by the Tree of Knowledge. Each session aims to connect these timeless biblical truths to contemporary life, fostering a deeper understanding and practical application.

Date	Topic	Notes:
	Introduction & Orientation	
	Are There 2 Creation Stories?	
	The Intimacy of Creation	
	Building Godly Relationships	
	Stewardship and Responsibility	
	Free Will	

Embark on a transformative journey through Genesis chapters 2 and 3 as we delve into Genesis's second creation story. This series not only explores the unique narrative of how humanity and nature came to be but also illuminates the intimate relationship between the Creator and His creation. Each session is designed to uncover the rich spiritual lessons



embedded within this ancient text, such as the significance of human relationships, our stewardship of the earth, and the profound choices that define our moral compass.

Join us as we explore how these timeless truths can be applied to our daily lives, enhancing our understanding of our role in the world and our connection to the divine. This study is an invitation to deepen your faith, broaden your perspective on creation, and discover the special place humanity holds in the grand scheme of God's universe. Whether you're seeking to enrich your spiritual knowledge or find deeper meaning in the biblical text, this series promises to offer valuable insights and a welcoming community eager to explore together. Don't miss this opportunity to see the Genesis creation story in a new light and to share in the collective wisdom and fellowship of our church family.

Are There Two Creation Stories?

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Genesis 2:4-8



Genesis 2:4-8

⁴ This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth. When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶ Instead, springs came up from the ground and

watered all the land. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸ Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.

The "Second" Creation Story

As I write this, my wife and I just celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary! We explored some of the most beautiful parts of God's creation, traveling from the Great Salt Lake in Utah to Yellowstone National Park, down through the Grand Tetons, and over the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Not only was it a wonderful way to celebrate our love and commitment to each other, it was also inspiring as I contemplated a new sermon series I want to share with you on the Garden of Eden story in Genesis.

Today, we begin a new sermon series that takes a deep dive into the second creation story in Genesis. We'll explore the foundational truths about who God is and what is His purpose for humanity. Before we look at the intimate details of the second story, we need to address an important question: Are there really two different creation stories in the Bible?

The 2 Creation Stories in the Bible

There are, indeed, two creation stories in the Bible. **Genesis 1:1-2:3** is considered the first creation story because it presents a structured, day-by-day account of God's creation of the universe in six days, followed by His rest on the seventh.

2 Creation Stories in the Bible

Creation Story 1 – Genesis 1:1-3

Creation Story 2 – Genesis 2:4-25

- The order in each story is different
- The literary style in each story is different
- How God creates in each story is different
- God's name in each story is different

Genesis 2:4-25 is considered a second story because it shifts focus from the cosmic scale to the intimate creation of humanity. It presents a more personal account, where God forms Adam from the dust of the ground, plants the Garden of Eden, and creates Eve from Adam's rib.

The two accounts also have slightly different orders. In **Genesis 1**, humans are created last, with man and woman made simultaneously in God's image after plants and animals.

In **Genesis 2**, man is created first, followed by plants, animals, and then woman, formed from Adam's rib. In the first story, God makes humans by speaking, whereas in the second story God makes Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from Adam's rib. So, there are differences and we should acknowledge this.

This brings up the first important point I want to express. God never intended the Genesis to be a scientific account of how everything began. It doesn't matter that the details about the order and methods of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 are different because the Bible's account of creation isn't a science book. It's a story that explains human nature and our relationship with God, our creator. The Bible conveys Truth that goes way beyond scientific information. We sell ourselves short when we try to reduce Scripture to science.

God never intended the Genesis to be a scientific account of how everything began.

The modern argument about whether a scientific or biblical explanation of our origins is true misses the whole point. Genesis is not science; it's the Word of God. And the Bible and science aren't in conflict because they address different issues. Genesis provides a spiritual explanation of the meaning and purpose behind creation, focusing on God's relationship with the world and humanity. Science, on the other hand, seeks to understand the mechanisms of how the physical universe works, without addressing the deeper spiritual truths conveyed in Genesis. It is more fruitful for us to stop fighting about whether science or religion is more important. They each address important, but different, issues.

Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 present two different accounts of creation, but today, we're going to see how they are actually two complementary perspectives on our origins. Think about it this way: Have you ever heard two people tell the same story but from completely different points of view? If you ask both me and my wife about our recent trip to Yellowstone, you will likely get two similar but different accounts. We both went on the same trip and spent all our time together. However, Kelly will highlight different aspects of the journey than me. We may focus on different details, but both our perspectives give a fuller understanding of what really happened. Furthermore, when we talk about our experience, we're not just giving you facts about where we went and what we did. We're sharing what the experience meant to us.

That's exactly what we see in Genesis. The two stories convey what it means to be human and what the God who create everything is like and what it means to for mortals to be in relationship with an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator God. Genesis 1 shows us the grand, cosmic view of creation, while Genesis 2 zooms in on God's personal relationship with humanity. Both share God's Truth, and both reveal something important about God and His creation.



The First Creation Story – God's Power and Order

Let's begin with Genesis 1. This passage starts with, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Right away, we are introduced to God as the all-powerful Creator who speaks everything into existence. With just His words, He creates light, separates the

waters, forms dry land, and fills the earth with plants, animals, and humans. It's an orderly, structured account where each day brings something new. God creates in six days, and on the seventh, He rests.

What does this tell us about God? First, it shows us His sovereignty and control. He is directly involved in every step of creation. He speaks, and it happens. His word alone is enough to bring life into existence. This is a picture of a God who is majestic, powerful, and authoritative.

God's order in creation is significant too. Genesis 1 shows us that there is purpose in everything He does. Light and darkness, day and night, land and sea—it's all part of His divine plan. And at the end of each day, God looks at what He's made and declares "It is good!" By the end of the sixth day, He declares it "very good" because human beings have been made *in His image*.

So, what does this mean for us today? It means that we serve a God who is not only in control of creation but also in control of our lives. Just as God brought order out of chaos in Genesis, He can bring order into the chaos of our lives. When we face challenges, uncertainties, or difficulties, we can trust that God is powerful enough to take care of us. His word still has the power to create and restore today.



The Second Creation Story - God's Intimacy with Humanity

Now, let's turn to Genesis 2. This second creation story gives us a different perspective. While Genesis 1 showed us the big picture of creation, Genesis 2 zooms in on God's relationship with humanity. Instead of speaking everything into existence, we

see God forming Adam from the dust of the ground with His own hands. Then, God breathes life into Adam's nostrils, and Adam becomes a living being.

This imagery is deeply intimate. It's personal. It shows us that God is not just a distant Creator; He is also a loving Father who is intimately involved in His creation. God didn't just create us and leave us to fend for ourselves. He cares for us. He is *with* us.

After creating Adam, God places him in the Garden of Eden and gives him responsibility over the garden. He tells Adam to work it and take care of it. Then, in an even more personal act, God creates Eve from Adam's rib, establishing the first human relationship. This act of creation shows us that humanity is not just another part of creation. We are made in God's image, and we are made to be in relationship with Him and with each other.

God's closeness in this account reveals His desire for a deep, personal relationship with us. He didn't just create us for tasks or for work; He created us to know Him, walk with Him, and experience His love.

The two creation stories of Genesis are two perspectives about the origins of human nature, our purpose, and our relationship with God. Each highlights different aspects of God's character and creation. Genesis 1 focuses on the grandeur of God's power and authority.

Genesis 2 focuses on God's personal relationship with humanity.

Complementary, Not Contradictory

God is both transcendent *and* imminent.

He is both far above us
and also very close to us.

He is both powerful *and* personal.

He is a God who can create the entire
universe with words, *and also* a God who
forms each of us individually...

Complementary, Not Contradictory

The two stories together show us a more
complete picture God.

He is both transcendent and imminent.

He is both far above us and also very
close to us.

He is both powerful and personal.

He is a God who can create the entire
universe with His words, and He is also

a God who forms each of us individually, breathes life into us, and desires a
relationship with us.

As we reflect on these two creation stories, let's remember they reveal the fullness of
God—His majesty *and* His intimacy, His power *and* His love.

So, what does this mean for us? It means we can trust God with both the
big *and* small things in our lives. We can trust Him to bring order out of chaos
because He has the power to do so. But we can also trust Him with the details of our
hearts because He cares about us personally. So, I want to encourage you to open
your hearts to the God who not only created the universe but also created you and me
with love and purpose.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, thank You for revealing Yourself to us through creation. Thank You for
showing us Your power and Your love. Help us to trust You more, knowing that You
are in control of all things and that You care deeply about each of us. May we draw
closer to You each day, experiencing Your majesty and Your intimacy. In Jesus'
name, Amen.

Lesson 1 Leader's Guide – Are There 2 Creation Stories?

Where are the 2 Creations Stories in Genesis?

The *first* creation story starts with Genesis 1:1 and ends in Genesis 2:3.

The *second* creation story starts in Genesis 2:4 and goes through the end of the chapter.

Why do some say there are 2 distinct creation stories in Genesis?

Scholars agree there are some notable differences between the two descriptions of creation in Genesis, which are explained in the following table:

	The First Creation Story (Genesis 1-2:3)	The Second Creation Story (Genesis 2:4-25)
The Order of Creation in Each Account is Different	God creates things in a specific order: plants, then animals, and then simultaneously God creates man and woman,	God creates things in this order: human, plants, then animals, and later He divides humans into male and female.
The Literary Style in Each Account is Different	Genesis 1 follows the seven days of creation in a chronological, organized manner, neatly separated into three-day cycles. The first 3 days, God creates the realms (sky, waters, and dry land). On days 4-6, God creates the rulers for each realm (sun/moon/stars, fish/birds, and then animals/humans).	Genesis 2 lacks both the structure and the focus of the first creation account. It is a dramatic narrative story in a series of seven scenes that don't correspond to a cycle of days.
How God Creates is Different in Each Account	The way God creates seems more detached. God speaks and things are created. God doesn't use His hands.	The way God creates seems more personal. God is intimately involved. He walks in the garden and fashions Adam out of clay (or dirt) with His own hands like a potter. He takes a rib from Adam's side and makes Eve with His own hands.
The Name used for God is Different in Each Account	The Hebrew name used for God is <i>Elohim</i> , which is the plural form of the word god. It is a more generalized name.	The Hebrew name used for God is the Jewish name <i>Yahweh Elohim</i> , which means "The I AM God".

The main ways some try to reconcile the apparent contradictions are:

1. **To reconcile the apparent conflict about when vegetation was created** (was it before or after people), some say God created vegetation in general before man (on day 3) and then workable/garden-able vegetation was created after man.
2. **To reconcile the apparent conflict about when animals were created** (was it before or after people), some say I that to do with the way *pluperfect* tense of ancient Hebrews words in Genesis 2 could imply animals had already been created prior to human beings.

Where Does Genesis 2:4 belong? Where you place 2:4 and whether you use a *comma* or a *period* can affect whether Genesis appears to have one creation story or two.

Gen 2:3-5 (NLT)	Gen 2:3-5 (NIV)	Gen 2:3-5 (NASB)
<p>³ And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.</p> <p>⁴ This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.</p> <p>The Man and Woman in Eden</p> <p>When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,⁵ neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil.</p>	<p>³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.</p> <p>Adam and Eve</p> <p>⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.</p> <p>⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth^a and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground,</p>	<p>³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created ^band made.</p> <p>The Creation of Man and Woman</p> <p>⁴ ^aThis is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.⁵ Now no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to ^acultivate the ground.</p>

Discussion Questions:

1. **Fixing Contradictions:** Do you think we need to make the stories fit perfectly without any contradictions, or is it okay if they are a little different? Why?
2. **The Role of Humanity:** Both stories establish humanity's role within creation but in different contexts. How do these roles complement or contradict each other, and what might this tell us about the biblical view of humanity's purpose?
3. **How God Creates:** In the second story, God makes things with His hands. How does this make you think about how God feels about His creations, especially people?

God's Personal Touch – The Intimacy of Creation in Eden

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Genesis 2:4-9, 18-22



Introduction

Today, we're continuing our series on the *second* creation story in Genesis. Last week, we learned the Bible tells two stories about creation. Genesis 1 gives us the cosmic view—God's powerful voice speaking everything into existence. The second story, found in Genesis 2, focuses on

the Garden of Eden and God's close, personal involvement in creation. Here, God doesn't just speak. He gets His hands dirty. He forms humanity from the dust of the ground. He breathes life into Adam's lungs. He plants a garden and walks with Adam and Eve. This is a God who is not just powerful but personal.

Today, we're going to explore what this intimacy means for us. We'll see how God's personal touch in the creation of Adam and Eve shows us that we are made for close, loving relationships—with Him and with each other.

Genesis 2:4-9, 18-22

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth. When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹The Lord God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden, he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ¹⁹So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

God Forms Adam With His Hands

"Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground..."
Genesis 2:7



God Forms Adam With His Hands

Let's start by looking at how God created Adam. Genesis 2:7 says, "Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person."

This image is so powerfully intimate. In Genesis 1, God simply speaks, and the universe comes into being. But here, in Genesis 2, we see God forming Adam with His hands, shaping him from the dust like a potter molds clay. This is personal. God didn't just speak us into existence—He formed us with intention and care.

I want you to think of the Almighty God, with His perfect divine hands squeezing and pinching and shaping a lump of muddy clay, until it forms the perfect shape of a human being.

We are not just one of many things God created. We are crafted by His hands, shaped with purpose. God is deeply invested in who we are. His fingerprints are all over us. The oil of His hands has soaked into us. His DNA is mixed with our own. And He knows every part of us because He formed us Himself.

This hands-on act of creation shows God's desire to be close to us. He's not afraid to get His hands dirty. He wants to be involved in our messy, muddy lives—shaping us, guiding us, walking with us every step of the way.

God Breathes Life & Spirit Into Adam

"...He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person."
Genesis 2:7



God Breathes Life & Spirit Into Adam

Next, after forming Adam, what does God do? He breathes life into him. Genesis 2:7 says, "Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person."

See that, in your mind. The Divine Creator stooping down over Adam's lifeless body, breathing His breathe into mankind. This breath of life is more than just air filling Adam's lungs. It represents the spirit, the soul, the divine spark that makes us human. God didn't just give Adam a body—He gave him life, both physically and spiritually.

And this life carries with it a kind of sovereignty. God wants humanity to *love Him*. But love must be freely given. It cannot be forced. It cannot be coerced. Therefore, God gave us *free will*—the freedom to choose *if* we will love God. There is every reason for us *to* love God, and no reason *not* to love God. But the choice is always left up to us.

God filing Adam with His divine breath, is a powerful reminder that we are not just physical beings. We are made in the image of God, filled with His spirit, and eternity is in our hearts. Our lives are not just about surviving day to day. We are made for something deeper. We are made to connect with God, to experience His presence, His love, His guidance.

When God breathed life into Adam, He was giving humanity the gift of relationship with Him. It wasn't just about existence—it was about communion with God. We are spiritual beings, designed to live in close relationship with our Creator.

The Garden – A Place of Provision and Relationship

“...the Lord God
planted a
garden in Eden
in the east...”
Genesis 2:8



The Garden – A Place of Provision and Relationship

After forming Adam and breathing life into him, God creates a beautiful garden for Adam to live in. Genesis 2:8-9 says, “⁸ Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹ The Lord God made all sorts of trees grow up from the

ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden, he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

The Garden of Eden wasn't just a place to live. It was a place where God provided everything Adam needed. There was food, beauty, and peace. There was work to do, but work wasn't a burden; it was a joy! But more importantly, the Garden was a place where Adam could walk with God. The garden represents the ideal relationship between God and humanity and creation—one where God provides for us and we live in His presence as we tend the beautiful Garden.

God wants to provide for us, not just physically but spiritually. He wants us to live in relationship with Him, trusting Him for our needs and walking with Him daily. Eden

was more than just a garden—it was a picture of what life with God can look like. It was a place of perfect provision, protection, and presence. It is a place where we have purpose and know the joy and peace of working out our purpose with the help of God.

The Creation of Eve

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.”
Genesis 2:18



The Creation of Eve – Companionship and Community

Finally, God recognizes that Adam needs more than just a beautiful garden. He needs companionship. Genesis 2:18 says, “Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.””

So, God creates Eve, not from the dust like Adam, but from Adam’s rib. See God in your mind, God laying Adam down into a deep sleep and then reaching tenderly into Adam’s body to remove part of him—a rib. He shapes that rib into a companion perfectly designed for Adam, to be his equal partner in life for eternity.

The creation of Eve shows that God values human connection. He didn’t just create us to worship Him—He created us to love and care for each other. Relationships are part of God’s design. Whether it’s marriage, friendship, or community, we are meant to live in connection with others.



The Beautiful Vision

The Beautiful Vision

As we reflect on the second creation story in Genesis, we see a God who is deeply involved in His creation. He forms us with His hands, breathes life into us, provides for us, and creates us for relationships. This is a God who is not distant but near, not detached but personal.

We need to embrace the intimacy of God’s relationship with us. He knows us, He loves us, and He wants to walk with us daily. It also means we need to value the relationships God has given us—our families, our friends, our communities. Just as God created Eve for Adam, He created us to be in relationship with each other.

Our Brokenness

Yet we also see the great divide between the beautiful vision God gives us in the Garden of Eden and the brokenness we experience in our daily lives

We do not live in harmony with each other. We sin. We are selfish. We betray and are betrayed. We hurt each other. There is war.

We do not live in harmony with creation. Work is a chore. There is famine. We thirst, we worry, and our world sometimes seems out to get us. (As I write this, thousands are recovering from the effects of Hurricane Helena.) We do not live in harmony with God. We are guilty. We feel ashamed. Or worse, we don't care about our disharmony with God.

Jesus came to take us back to Eden. Romans 6:23 – “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” When we sinned, Jesus came and died for us so that whoever believes in Him and repents of their sin and turns to Him and follows Him will be forgiven and inherit the eternal life. Jesus came to take us back to the Garden of Eden.

And He came for all of us. He came for you and He came for me. It doesn't matter what you've done or how far you've strayed, Jesus can bring you back. You can come back today. Jesus says, “Come to me all you who are weary and heaven laden. I will give you rest.” Won't you decide to come back with Him today?

No matter what mess you've made in your life, isn't it comforting to know that God isn't afraid to get down in the dirt and remake you? Just as He formed Adam from the dust, God can reach into your broken, sinful life and restore you. He can reshape you from the ground up if needed, giving you a new heart, a new life, and the promise of an eternity where you'll live forever in the beautiful Garden of Eden once again. Won't you turn to Him today and ask for help?

Prayer

Lord, we thank You for Your intimate love and care in creating us. Thank You for breathing life into us and walking with us through life. Help us to deepen our relationship with You and with others, recognizing the beauty of the connections You've created for us. When we stray, bring us back. Forgive us through Jesus' grace. There are some who need to come back today. Bring us back. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Lesson 2 Leader's Guide— The Intimacy of Creation in Eden

Introduction

In my last lesson, we looked at compelling evidence that there are two unique creation stories in Genesis that tell slightly different versions and emphasize different truths about God and our world.

In this lesson, we explore the intimacy of God's relationship with humanity that is a clear theme of the second creation account. Genesis 1 focuses on order and God's sovereignty over all creation. Genesis 2 shows God is intimately involved in creation, using His Divine Hands to personally sculpt Adam out of dirt and Eve out of the bloody rib of her husband.

There are so many interesting ideas and themes to explore in the creation story, but *today* let's try to keep our thoughts and discussion focused on the idea of God's intimacy with humanity.

Read Genesis 2:4-7

Object Lesson/Activity

Supplies: enough playdough and balloons for each person in the class.

Use playdough to form your own "Adam".

- How did it feel to have the playdough squishing in your hands?
What kind of connection (if any) do you feel with your "Creation"?
- For those who have been pregnant, how did it affect your connection/intimacy with your child when it was born?

Blow up a balloon. Let it go to fly around the room.

- How did it feel to exhale your breath into the balloon?
- Think of how God exhaled His holy breath into Adam to bring him to life. The Hebrew word in Genesis 2:7 for breath is *neshama* and it is used for "breath, divine inspiration, intellect, soul, and spirit".
- Some have said that the name of God—YHWH (or Yahweh)—is the sound of a person breathing. Yah is the inhaling breath; Weh is the exhaling breath.
- What do you think about God's divine breath inside you giving life, inspiration, and a soul?

Read Genesis 2:8-9

Object Lesson/Activity

Supplies: a bag of seed starting mix (soil), a Styrofoam coffee cup and a sunflower seed for everyone.

Use a pencil to pole a hole in the bottom of the cup.

Fill each cup with seed starting mix. (It's ok if it makes a mess; creation is messy.)

Plant a sunflower seed about an inch deep in the soil.

(People can water their seed cup when they get home.)

- What do you think about the idea of God getting down in the dirt to plant a garden for Adam?
- What does God's willingness to get His hands dirty in the garden say about His willingness to deal with your life when it gets messy?



Read Genesis 2:18-25

Why is it “not good for the man to be alone?” (verse 18)

Eve being made from Adam's rib suggests a partnership and shared identity, illustrating intimacy in human relationships as designed by God.

How does this intimate portrayal of God impact your relationship with Him?

Summary

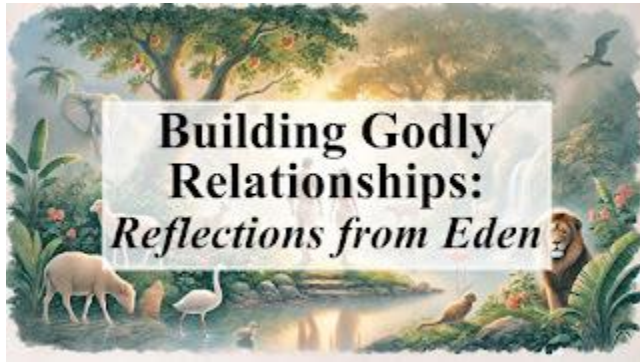
The second creation story from Genesis 2:3-25 shows the intimacy of creation. It presents a more personal and hands-on depiction of God as compared to the first creation story in Genesis 1. The details about Adam's creation from the dust of the ground shows God's intimate involvement. The creation of Eve from Adam's rib emphasized the deep connection and partnership intended for men and women and all humanity. The story's setting in the Garden of Eden as a specially prepared place shows God's care and provision. Through it all, unique role of humans in God's creation underscores our responsibility to steward the earth and maintain a close relationship with our Creator.



Building Godly Relationships

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Genesis 2:18-23; Matthew 7:12



Introduction

Today, we're continuing our series on the *second* creation story in Genesis. Last week, we learned how the story of God's creation in the Garden of Eden shows how intimately God was involved in creating us and how it shows He cares deeply for us and is not afraid to be involved with our

messy lives.

Today, we'll learn how the creation story teaches us the importance of relationships—with God, with creation, and with others. And we'll learn about Jesus' most important rule about relationships. Are you ready?

Genesis 2:18-23

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ¹⁹ So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰ He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³ "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh!

She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'"

God Is Our Deepest Need

The story of the Garden of Eden shows God created us for relationships. First of all, there is our relationship with God. Something every one of us needs



to understand, we were made for God. Life is not about us, alone. If you have everything in the world you desire, but don't have a relationship with God, you will be unfulfilled. There will be a hole deep in your soul you cannot satisfy. And it will unsettle everything else about your life. So, if you skip this first idea, you will always struggle in the rest of your life. You have to start by getting right with God...

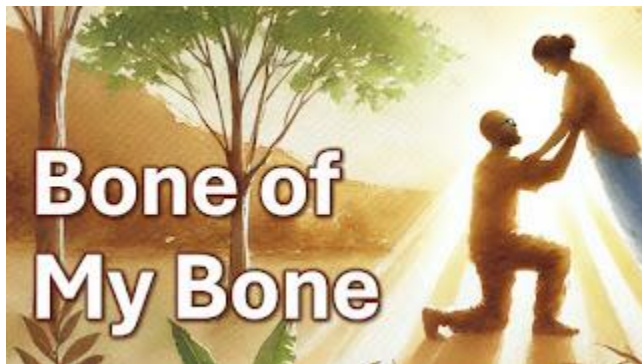


But People Need People Too

But isn't it interesting what God says in verse 18? "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." Even God recognizes that people need people. You might think God is all we need. But even God knew we need relationships with other people. That's

why church is so important. Our spiritual life and our worship of God is not complete without including other people.

So, God created all the animals and let Adam name them. And this shows how humanity has dominion *and the important responsibility* of taking care of creation. We were created to "tend" the Garden and "watch over it", not to just exploit it and use it however we wish. But of all the animals God created, none was just right for Adam.



Bone of My Bone - Genesis 2:21-23

²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. ²³ "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my

bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'"

Finally, Adam had a *helper* just right for him. And I just learned this week some insights about the Hebrew word for helper. The Hebrew word for "helper" in Genesis 2 is *ezer*. It is a combination of two words, one meaning "to rescue" or "to save" and the other meaning "to be strong". It can also be used as a verb, meaning "to defend, protect, surround, and cherish". It is the same word often used for God in multiple places in the Bible—such as in Psalm 115:11, "[God] is their *help* and their

shield.” So, think about that if you ever think a woman being man’s “helper” is a weak or degrading thing. In the Bible, God is also called helper and uses the same word used for wives!

Eve was created from Adam’s very own rib. This illustrates the unity and partnership God intended in human relationships. We are to love each other, help each other, nurture, respect, and build up each other. We are to be strong for each other when the other is weak. We are to defend, protect, surround, and cherish one another. What a beautiful and fulfilling design God gave us.

Unfortunately, we are broken. We don’t experience the beautiful vision of the Garden in real life. Because we sin, we live in a fallen world full of broken relationships. People mistreat each other, use each other, and we all suffer the consequences of sin.

That’s why Jesus came to save us. He showed us how we were meant to live. He lived as the perfect human—doing everything right that we had done wrong. Jesus suffered the same troubles we suffer, and he was tempted in all the ways we are tempted, but He did not sin. He was faithful to the end. And then He died for our sins so that we can be forgiven if we will repent and turn to Him and follow His way of living.



The Golden Rule
Matthew 7:12
“Do to others
whatever you would
like them to do to
you. This is the
essence of all that is
taught in the law and
the prophets.”

The Golden Rule

As the perfect Son of God, Jesus taught the most important rule about healthy relationships. In Matthew 7:12, Jesus said, “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.”

You see, not only did Jesus wash away our sins, He also shows how we can break free from the power of sin. He shows us how to live. And it goes right to the very core of who we were design by God to be—people who live in harmony with each other. We are to treat people the way we want them to treat us. How do you want people to treat you?

Do You Want People to Be:

- Fun to be around
- Loyal, honest & trustworthy
- Genuinely caring
- Want what’s best for you
- Praying for and protecting you
- Forgiving
- Cheering for you/supporting you
- Were generous with you

- Honored & respected you
- And truly loved you

Wouldn't that be nice! Don't we all want to be treated that way? Jesus says, "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you."

How to Have Great Relationships with Others:

So do you want to know how to have great relationships with others? Here's the secret: Treat others the way you want to be treated.

- Have fun
- Be loyal, honest, & trustworthy
- Genuinely care and want what's best them
- Pray for them and protect them
- Quickly forgive
- Cheer for them and support them
- Be generous with them
- Honor them & respect them
- Truly love them

Maybe you have some other ways, you want to be treated. What would you add to your list? The secret, in every situation, is to treat others the way you want to be treated. Did your friend win a major award? How would you want to be treated if you won an award? Did your friend make a huge mistake? How would you want to be treated if it was you? Did your friend hurt your feelings? How would you want your friend to treat you if it was you who hurt their feelings?

The key to great relationships is to imagine how you would feel if you were in their shoes and then to treat them the way you would want to be treated.



Holy Communion

As we reflect on God's beautiful design for relationships, we are reminded of how sin has distorted that plan. But through Jesus, we find hope. Jesus came to restore what was broken. His sacrifice on the cross was the ultimate act of love, making up for our sin and showing us how we can live in harmony

with God and each other once again.

In Holy Communion, we remember this sacrificial love. We remember how Jesus' body was broken and His blood shed so that our brokenness could be healed. As we come to the table, reflect on your relationships—with God and with others. Where there has been brokenness, seek restoration. Where there has been hurt, seek forgiveness. And as we take the bread and cup, may we be reminded of Jesus' love and commitment to restore our lives and relationships to God's original, beautiful design.

And remember, Jesus is not dead. He is risen! He is risen indeed! And as we come to His table today, He is here with us to nourish and strengthen us, to impart His grace to equip us to live in His Kingdom where we live in harmony with God, with each other, and with all creation.

Lesson 3 Leader's Guide – Building Godly Relationships

Introduction

In our last lesson, we explored the intimacy of God's relationship with humanity that is a clear theme of the second creation account.

Today, we will consider the importance of relationships that the creation story in Genesis 2 (and 3) emphasizes.

There are so many interesting ideas and themes to explore in the creation story, but *today* let's try to keep our thoughts and discussion focused on the idea of relationships.

Read Genesis 2:15-17

God places Adam in the Garden of Eden to care for it, establishing a relationship of stewardship and responsibility towards **creation**. Furthermore, God's command regarding the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil introduces the element of **trust and obedience**, emphasizing the importance of making wise choices within the relationship with God. These verses underscore how our actions and decisions affect our relationships with the divine and the natural world, highlighting the interconnectedness and responsibilities inherent in these bonds.

Object Lesson/Activity

Supplies: A pen and sheet of blank paper for each person. A trash can labeled "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil".

- Place the trash can in the center of the group on the floor.
- Have each person write down the first time they can remember getting in trouble for being disobedient. (***Do not write your name on your paper.***)
- Have participants ball up their paper and try to throw it in the trash can.
- Collect some of the papers and read their "sin". Have the group try to guess who it is.

Our decision and actions affect our relationships. Kindness, love, and faithfulness build trust. Cruelty, scorn, and infidelity destroy trust and tear relationships apart.

- Who did your "sin" you wrote down effect your relationships?
- When was a time when someone else damaged their relationship with you by their bad behavior

Read Genesis 2:18-20

These verses underscore the importance of companionship and the inherent social nature of humanity. God says it is not good for man to be alone and decides to create a suitable helper for Adam. Adam names the animals, showing his authority and responsibility over creation, yet none of these creatures provide the companionship he needs. This sets the stage for the creation of Eve, emphasizing that true companionship and relational fulfillment come from partnerships

that complement and support one another, underscoring the fundamental human need for connection and community.

Object Lesson/Activity

Supplies: A large piece of paper or posterboard and a marker. A list of different animals.

- Have each table nominate an “artist” to represent their table.
- Give each artist the name of an animal (but don’t let their table know which animal).
- Have each artist come up and draw their animal and try to get their table to guess what it is within 60 seconds.

List of Animals for Game:

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Kangaroo | 5. Elephant | 9. Cat |
| 2. Tiger | 6. Zebra | 10. Giraffe |
| 3. Chicken | 7. Penguin | |
| 4. Monkey | 8. Dog | |

Adam gave all the animals names, enabling us to communicate about them to each other. How does communication help or hinder our relationship?

What do you think is our role as stewards of creation today?

Read Genesis 2:21-25

These verses illustrate the intimate connection between man and woman, symbolizing that they are fundamentally linked and designed to support and complete each other. The passage introduces the concept of marriage, where two individuals become "one flesh," highlighting the importance of mutual support, love, and unity. This foundational relationship model underscores the significance of partnership and companionship in human interactions, reflecting God's intentional design for close, nurturing, and interconnected relationships.

Object Lesson/Activity

Supplies: A large piece of paper or poster board for each table group. A magazine or collection of pictures for each table. Markers, pens, tape, and glue sticks for each table.

- Have each table group take 5 minutes to create a poster that visually represents the unity and partnership described in Genesis 2:21-25.
- After 5 minutes, have each group present their poster to the larger group and explain their creative choices and discuss the themes they focused on.

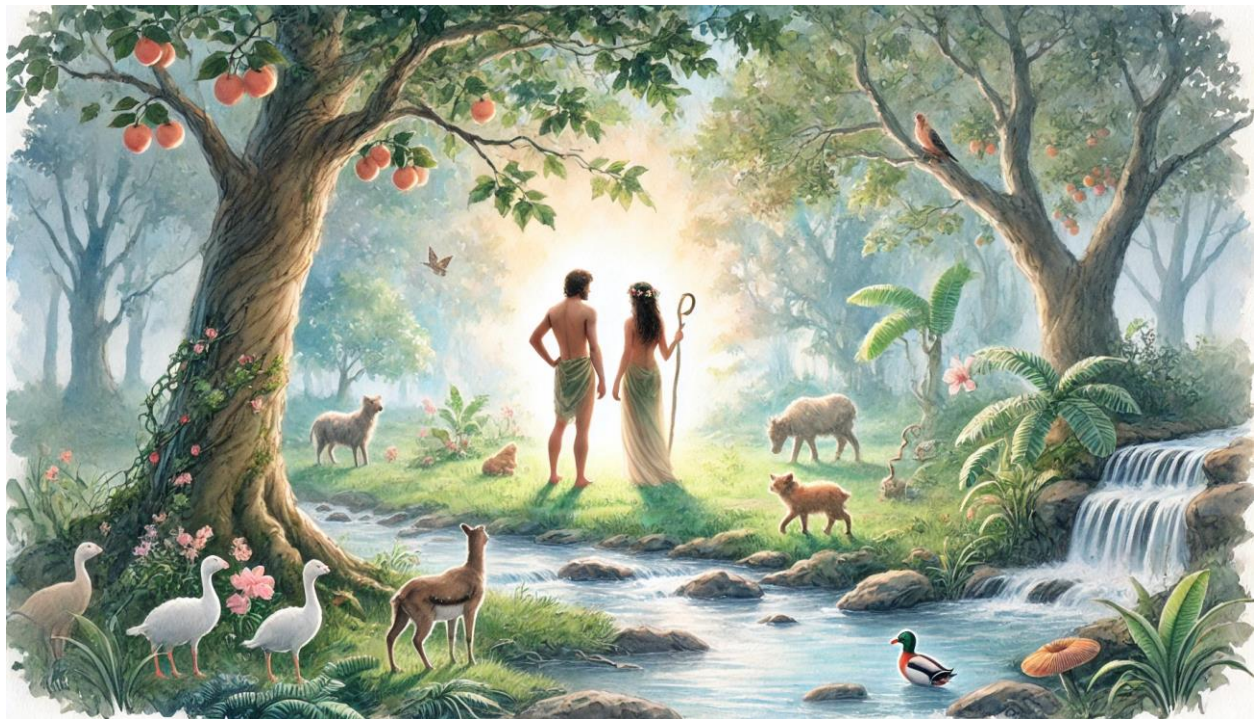
How does the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib symbolize unity and partnership in relationships?

What does it mean to be “one flesh” in the context of marriage and close relationships?

Summary

Genesis 2:3-25 offers insights into the importance of relationships. This passage not only

highlights God's intimate involvement in creating humanity but also underscores the fundamental need for companionship and unity. Through God's actions of forming Adam and breathing life into him, we see the personal nature of our relationship with the Creator. The establishment of the Garden of Eden and Adam's role as its caretaker reflect our responsibility toward nature and the environment. Most significantly, the creation of Eve from Adam's rib and the subsequent introduction of marriage illustrate the deep, inherent need for human connection and partnership. These verses remind us that relationships, whether with God, nature, or one another, are central to our existence and well-being. By embracing the principles of communication, trust, and mutual support found in this passage, we can cultivate healthier and more fulfilling relationships in our own lives. Let us strive to reflect the unity and love exemplified in these verses, recognizing that we are all part of God's intentional and interconnected design.



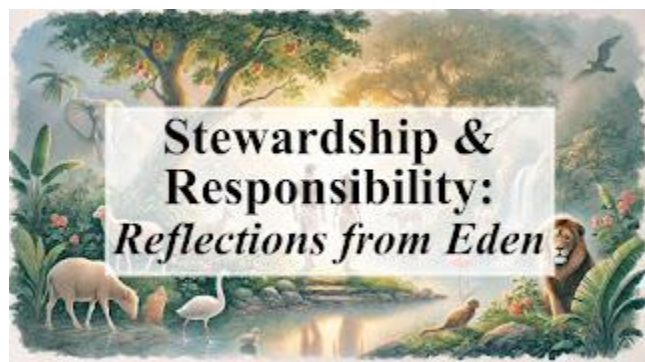
The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil



Stewardship and Responsibility

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Genesis 2:15-20; Matthew 25:14-30



Introduction

Last week in our message, we explored the importance of relationships that the creation story in Genesis 2 emphasizes. There are so many interesting ideas and themes to explore in the creation story, but *today* I want to focus on the idea of stewardship and responsibility. Let's start by reading

part of the Garden of Eden story and consider what it may teach us about stewardship and then we're going to look at what Jesus said about stewardship.

Genesis 2:15-20

¹⁵ The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶ But the Lord God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— ¹⁷ except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ¹⁹ So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰ He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

God Created Us to Be Stewards

entrusted by
God to manage
and care for His
creation and
resources



God Created Us to Be Stewards

God places Adam in the Garden of Eden and instructs him to work and take care of it, showing humanity's role as caretakers of creation. God also has Adam name all the animals. In ancient Middle Eastern culture, knowing someone's name often meant having power or authority over them. Adam's

job of naming the animals shows his responsibility and authority over nature. This story reveals part of our purpose in life is to watch over and manage God's

creation. We are to be *stewards*. That is why we can use the resources of creation to help sustain us. But, that doesn't mean we abuse creation, because it belongs to God.

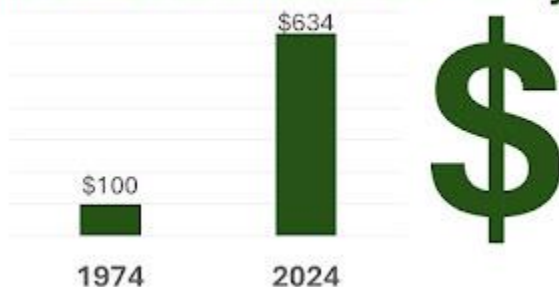
A steward, from a biblical Christian perspective, is someone entrusted by God to manage and care for His creation and resources. This includes everything from the environment to personal relationships to our talents and our finances. A steward is called to faithfully use these gifts with responsibility, wisdom, and obedience, reflecting God's will and purpose. Ultimately, a steward's role is to honor God by fostering growth, serving others, and making choices that align with God's plan. Jesus told a parable to remind us of our purpose as God's stewards. The parable is found in Matthew 25:15-30.

Matthew 25:14-18

¹⁴ “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

¹⁶ “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money.

The Effect of Inflation on Money:



The Effect of Inflation on Money

I want to point out a basic financial principle about “interest” here, because it answers a question people often have about this parable. Money doesn't hold its value. If someone gave you \$100 50 years ago and you put it in a mason jar and buried it in the ground, and then dug today, how much would it be

worth? Still \$100, right? But \$100 today doesn't go as far as it did 50 years ago, right? Because of inflation, you would need at least \$634 today to have as much buying power as \$100 had 50 years ago. So, the two servants who invested their master's money ensured the money didn't lose value. But the money the third fearful servant buried has lost value.

Matthew 25:19-30

¹⁹ “After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. ²⁰ The servant to whom he had entrusted the

five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

²¹ “The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²² “The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

²³ “The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²⁴ “Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

²⁶ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, ²⁷ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’



Which Servant Do You Want To Be?

Jesus’ Parable teaches us the importance of being good stewards and managing the resources God has given us. In the story, a master gives his servants different amounts of money and expects them to use it wisely while he is away. But this is a story about us. We are the servants in the

story. God is the Master. He made us. He placed us on this earth. He entrusted to us all the talents and resources we have. We are responsible for using what God gives us and God expects us to use it all for His glory, not just for our own selfish desires. And we are to be fruitful with God’s resources.

Jesus' parable also gives us a warning. One day, the Master is going to return and ask each and everyone of us to give an account on how we managed God's resources. Were we fruitful?

Now which one of the servants do you want to be when the God asks you to give an account?

Stewardship involves every aspect of our lives, because everything we have and all that we are is a gift from God. Jesus came to call us back to this way of living. A life where we fulfill our God given purpose to be good stewards who view everything in our lives as a way to honor and glorify God. Glorify Him with the work you do. Glorify Him with the money you have. Glorify Him by the way you lead your family. Glorify Him by the way you treat your friends, raise your children, serve in your church... Honor and glorify God as a good steward in every part of your life.



Stewardship Challenge

In my church, we did a special activity to practice what it means to be a good steward. Each person who came to worship that day received a \$5 bill as part of a stewardship challenge. Their task was to pray and ask God how they could use the \$5 to bless someone that week. They were free to

spend the money however they felt led, but the goal was to make a positive impact in someone else's life. I encouraged them to be creative, thoughtful, and prayerful in how they choose to use this gift.

What would you do if you received \$5? Would you:

Buy a meal or a coffee for someone in need or surprise a stranger by paying for their order.

Purchase a small gift to give someone (like a greeting card or flowers).

Buy supplies (such as snacks, bottled water, or hygiene products) to give to someone in needs.

Combine your \$5 with others to make a larger impact, such as buying groceries for a struggling family.

Part of the point of this exercise is to make it plain to everyone that the money is not theirs. It was given to them to be used for a purpose: to be a blessing to others. When we think of our own resources--our money, our talents, our time--these also are not our own. They were given to us by God. And we are to use them in ways that align with God's values and purposes for our world. We are to be good stewards who use God's resources in ways that honor and glorify Him. Are you being a good steward? How do you need to change to do better?

Lesson 4 Leader's Guide – Stewardship and Responsibility

Introduction

In our last lesson, we explored the importance of relationships that the creation story in Genesis 2 emphasizes.

There are so many interesting ideas and themes to explore in the creation story, but *today* let's try to keep our thoughts and discussion focused on the idea of stewardship and responsibility.

Read Genesis 2:15-20

God places Adam in the Garden of Eden, instructing him to work and take care of it, which establishes humanity's role as caretakers of creation. In ancient Middle Eastern culture, knowing a being's name often implied power and authority. This belief was rooted in the idea that a name encapsulates the essence or identity of a being. Adam's task of naming the animals signifies his authority and responsibility over the natural world. Verses 15-20 also emphasizes that stewardship involves actively managing and nurturing the environment, making wise choices, and fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to us by God. Through this, we learn that being a steward is not just about caretaking but also about fostering a respectful and obedient relationship with the Creator.



Object Lesson

How to up pot a sunflower.

Sunflowers (and most plants) can only grow as big as their environment will allow. This particular sunflower can grow to 4-5 feet. But if left in a small cup, it will remain stunted and may even die prematurely.

Furthermore, a sunflower needs 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day. Keeping “Samuel” the sunflower in my office does not provide enough light and has already caused the plant to be a bit “leggy”—a condition where the plant stem grows extremely long, thin, and weak. Samuel needs more sun.

I am Samuel the sunflower's steward. It is my responsibility to care for this flower.

If I continue to keep him in a small cup, he will be stunted and die.

If I continue to keep him in my office, he will also die.

So, I will put him in a larger pot and move him outside where there is more direct sunlight.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some things/people of which you are (or have been) a steward?
2. What might be the danger of clinging too tightly to your kids? What about our employees, church staff, members, etc.? Do we think only of our needs in our relationships? Why?
3. What are some ways we are stewards of creation today?



Read Matthew 25:15-30

The Parable of the Talents emphasizes the importance of stewardship and responsible management of the resources entrusted to us, which directly relates to the concept of stewardship in Genesis 2. In the parable, a master gives his servants varying amounts of money to manage while he is away, expecting them to invest and multiply these resources. Similarly, in Genesis 2, God places Adam in the Garden of Eden to work and care for it, symbolizing humanity's role as stewards of God's creation. Both passages highlight the expectation that we actively nurture and wisely use the gifts and responsibilities given to us, reflecting our accountability to God and our duty to foster growth and well-being in our environments.

Discussion Questions:

1. What warning does Jesus' parable give us about how we steward?
2. *Brainstorm* some ways we may fail as stewards? (Write these on a large piece of paper.) Which of these do you struggle with most?

Object Lesson/Activity

Stewardship Homework

Give each participant a \$5 bill. Participants are to pray and ask God how they can use the \$5 to bless someone in the next two weeks. They can spend the money anyway they like as long as it is a blessing to someone else.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does it feel to receive this \$5?
2. *Brainstorm* some ways you could be a good steward of this \$5. (Write these on a large piece of paper.)

Summary

In this lesson, we learned about stewardship and responsibility from Genesis 2:15-20 and Matthew 25:15-30. In Genesis, God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to take care of it, showing that humans are meant to look after the world. Adam naming the animals also shows his role in managing and caring for creation. In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus tells a story about a master who gives his servants money to manage while he is away. The servants who use the money wisely are rewarded, but the one who does nothing is punished. This teaches us that God wants us to use our abilities and resources wisely and to take care of what He has given us. We should be responsible and work hard to make things better, just like Adam in the garden and the good servants in Jesus' story.



Free Will

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Genesis 3



Introduction

Last Sunday, we learned God designed us to be good stewards of His creation and all that He entrusts to our care. Everyone in church last Sunday received a \$5 bill and was asked to pray about how they could use the \$5 to bless someone. How did you use your \$5 “talent” to be a blessing? Don’t forget

to place your stewardship survey on the altar today. I look forward to reading how everyone used their talent.

Today, we are going to read about free will in Genesis 3. God wants us to be able to love Him and love cannot be coerced. It must be freely given. So, God created us with free will, the ability to make choices freely, without being forced, allowing people to decide between right and wrong. Of course, the freedom to love and obey God also comes with the possibility people will choose to hate and disobey Him. All this plays out with tragic consequences in Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:1-7

¹The 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.”

⁶The 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. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.



The Temptation

"Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

Genesis 3:1

The Temptation

Our reflection from Eden takes a pivotal turn in chapter 3. The serpent, described as the shrewdest of all the wild animals, slithers onto the scene with a deceptive question: *"Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"* (Genesis 3:1). This was no innocent question. It was designed to

introduce doubt into Eve's mind—doubt about God's words, intentions, and authority.

Notice the serpent's strategy: he doesn't outright deny God's command. Instead, he twists it, planting the idea that God may be holding something back from Adam and Eve. The serpent tells her in verse 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."* The suggestion is subtle but powerful: What if God isn't as good as He seems? What if He's keeping something wonderful from you?

This is the same tactic the enemy uses on us today. How often are we tempted by the thought that God's way is too restrictive, or we're missing out if we follow His commands? Temptation often comes disguised as something good—a chance to get ahead, pleasure, or fulfillment—convincing us that what we want is better than what God offers.

Eve was faced with a choice. She could trust God's command, believing He knew what was best, or she could trust her own desire. In verse 6, we see the tragic moment unfold: *"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."*

And I want to point out verse 6 says Adam was with her when all this happened. Adam is just as guilty as Eve. He stayed silent while Eve listened to the serpent and chose to disobey God. And then Adam also actively disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit when Eve offered it to him. Martin Luther King, Jr. once remarked, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Sometimes, our sin is not in what we say or do, but in what we *don't* say or do. Adam was silent when Eve trusted Satan and disobeyed God. Then Adam disobeyed God and ate the fruit too.

Adam and Eve had free will and they chose disobedience. That's the challenge with free will—it requires us to trust God's wisdom and love Him, even when we don't fully understand His reasons.

Genesis 3:8-24

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.”

²⁰ Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of
all who live. ²¹ And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his
wife.

²² Then the Lord God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing
both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it?
Then they will live forever!” ²³ So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of
Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been
made. ²⁴ After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east
of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to
guard the way to the tree of life.



Consequences

*“At that moment
their eyes were
opened, and they
suddenly felt shame
at their nakedness.”*

Genesis 3:12

The Consequences

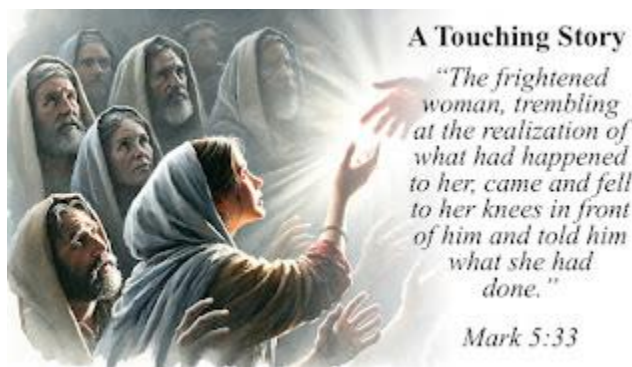
After Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, everything changed in an instant. Genesis 3:7 says, *“At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.”* What was once a state of innocence was replaced by guilt and

shame. They become painfully aware of their vulnerability and tried to hide it. But you can’t hide anything from God.

This is what sin does. It distorts our relationship with God, with others, and even with ourselves. Where there was once openness and trust, now there was shame, fear, and hiding. Adam and Eve’s choice broke their connection with God and corrupted everything else about the world.

And isn't that how sin works in our own lives? When we make wrong choices, it creates distance—between us and God, between us and others, and even turmoil within our own hearts. We try to cover up our mistakes, hoping no one will notice, but deep down we know things aren't right.

But even in the midst of this brokenness, God doesn't abandon Adam and Eve. Though they face consequences, God still cares for them. He gives them clothing made from animal skins (Genesis 3:21). This act foreshadows the ultimate hope we have in Jesus, who would come to cover our sin and restore our broken relationship with God. God's grace is always at work, offering hope and restoration. The question for us is: Will we continue hiding, or will we come to God for healing?



A Touching Story

I want to end with a touching story in the Gospel Mark (5:25-34) about a woman who suffered for 12 years with constant bleeding. Can you imagine? I had a nosebleed once that wouldn't stop bleeding for about 15 minutes. Imaging bleeding for 12 years! Not only would it be embarrassing, but it would also

make you feel awful to constantly lose blood. And in Jesus day, given the Jewish ceremonial laws, bleeding would make this woman an unclean outcast from society. I'm sure she would do everything she could to hide her embarrassing problem. But then she heard about Jesus—a man they said could heal any sickness. A man full of love and compassion. A man with the power and authority of God. And the woman was faced with a choice: keep hiding her shame or come to Jesus for healing. She decided to seek healing from Jesus.

I'm sure this poor woman would have preferred to come see Jesus privately and ask for healing. But Jesus was constantly surrounded by crowds, so it had to be done in front of everyone. One day, she thought If I could just touch the hem of His robe, it would heal me. So, she got on the hands and knees and crawled through the crowd and reached out and touched the hem of his robe. And as she did, she was immediately healed.

Jesus said to the whole crowd, "Who touched my robe?"

Mark 5:33-34 – ³³ Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. ³⁴ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

We have a choice too. We may not be bleeding like the woman in the story, but we all have sinned. And our sin makes us feel ashamed. We don't want anyone to know. We keep our dark deeds hidden away. But we know in our hearts we are broken. And when we hear about Jesus, a man who can heal our sin and makes us whole and restore our relationship with God, we have a choice. Do we keep hiding in shame or do we come to Jesus and seek healing?

Today, you have a choice. Are you going to be like Adam and Eve who sinned and realized they were naked and then tried to hide from God? Or are you going to be like the woman who set aside her pride and crawled through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus' robe?

We all have a choice. God created us with free will. How will you use your freedom today?

Lesson 5 Leader's Guide – Free Will

Introduction

In our last lesson, we explored the idea of stewardship and responsibility. Each participant in class last session received a \$5 bill and was asked to pray about how they can use the \$5 to bless someone. **How did you use your \$5 “talent” to be a blessing?** Did you run into any difficulties? How did the exercise make you feel? Did you gain any new insights from this exercise?

Genesis 3 – Knowledge and Moral Choice

In Genesis chapter 3, we read the tragic story of how Adam and Eve used the freedom of choice to disobey God, leading to awful consequences.



The Temptation

In Genesis 3:1-7, the serpent, the shrewdest of all the wild animals, introduces doubt and temptation by questioning God's command, asking Eve, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" This question is meant to make Eve doubt God's words and intentions. The serpent challenges God's authority, suggesting that God is withholding something desirable and implying that He may not have Eve's best interests at heart. This questioning introduces the possibility of disobedience and sets the stage for the temptation.

The Choice

Eve is convinced by the serpent's argument that the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is desirable for gaining wisdom. She decides to eat the fruit and shares it with Adam, who also eats. This decision represents the exercise of free will and moral choice. Eating the forbidden fruit symbolizes using free will to go against God's command, highlighting the responsibility that comes with the ability to make choices. Adam and Eve's decision to disobey God shows the potential consequences of exercising free will in opposition to divine guidance.

The Immediate Consequence

As soon as Adam and Eve eat the fruit, their eyes are opened, and they realize they are naked. This newfound awareness signifies a loss of innocence and the beginning of shame and guilt. They quickly sew fig leaves together to cover themselves, indicating their sudden sense of vulnerability. The immediate consequence of their disobedience is the loss of the pure, innocent state they previously enjoyed. Their realization of nakedness and their efforts to cover themselves symbolize the end of their innocence and the introduction of sin and separation from God. This loss of innocence marks a fundamental change in their relationship with God and with each other.

Genesis 3 Skit Script (NLT)

Acting Out Genesis 3

Genesis is such a wonderful story. Today, we are going to act it out instead of just reading it.

- Assign different participants a role or character in the story. You can encourage other participants who don't have a part to help with sound effects.
- **Characters for Scene 1:** Narrator, Serpent, Eve, Adam, God
- **Characters for Scene 2:** Narrator, Eve, Adam, God
- **Props:**
 - A tree with hanging fruit (can be a simple prop or picture)
 - Fig leaves or simple costumes for Adam and Eve
 - A snake tongue cut out and taped to the actor's chin

Scene 1: The Temptation

Narrator: (Genesis 3:1) The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman,

Serpent: (Genesis 3:1) "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

Eve: (Genesis 3:2-3) "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. "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.'"

Serpent: (Genesis 3:4-5) "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "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."

Narrator: (Genesis 3:6-7) 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. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Discussion:

- How did the serpent deceive Eve in Genesis 3:1-7? What strategies did he use to tempt her, and how can we recognize similar tactics in our own lives today?
- What were the immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit? How did their actions affect their relationship with God and with each other?

- What does this passage teach us about free will and the importance of making moral choices? How can we apply these lessons to our daily decisions and our commitment to follow God's commands?

Scene 2: The Consequences

Narrator: (Genesis 3:8) 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. Then the LORD God called to the man,

God: (Genesis 3:9) “Where are you?”

Adam: (Genesis 3:10) “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

God: (Genesis 3:11) “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?”

Adam: (Genesis 3:12) “The woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

God: (Genesis 3:13) “What have you done?” the LORD God asked the woman.

Eve: (Genesis 3:13) “The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

God: (Genesis 3:14-15) (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. 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.”

Narrator: (Genesis 3:16) Then he said to the woman,

God: (Genesis 3:16) “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.”

Narrator: (Genesis 3:17-19) And to the man he said,

God: (Genesis 3:17-19) “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. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. 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.”

Narrator: (Genesis 3:20-21) Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife. Then the LORD God said,

God: (Genesis 3:22) “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!”

Narrator: (Genesis 3:23-24) So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Discussion:

- What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's choice?
- How did their decision affect their relationship with God and each other?
- What does this story teach us about the importance of obeying God's commands?

Summary

In this lesson, we explored the themes of knowledge and moral choice as depicted in Genesis 3. The serpent tempts Eve by questioning God's command, leading her to doubt and eventually disobey. Eve and Adam's decision to eat the forbidden fruit symbolizes the exercise of free will and the weight of moral choices. This act results in immediate consequences: their eyes are opened, and they realize their nakedness, signifying a loss of innocence and the beginning of shame and guilt. It is important we make righteous choices; the impact of disobedience on our relationship with God and each other is more terrible than we know. May this lesson encourage you to reflect on your personal decisions and the pursuit of wisdom in aligning with God's will.

