



I N T H E B E G I N N I N G

W E E K 2 D E V O T I O N A L : S T E W A R D S H I P

DAY 1

WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP ?

The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden as its gardener, to tend and care for it.

GENESIS 2:15

READ GENESIS 1 : 2 6 - 2 : 3 ; 2 : 8 - 1 5

QUESTIONS

1) Research the word stewardship. What does it mean?

2) Read Genesis 1:26-1:31. What instruction does God give to man in this passage?

3) Read Genesis 2:5-9 and 2:15-17. What instruction did he give Adam in verse 15? What one exception is given to Adam in verses 16-17?

4) What do these passages tell us about how we are to be stewards of His creation? How do we do this?

DAY 2

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

All Scripture is God-breathed...

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

WHY ARE THERE TWO CREATION ACCOUNTS?

After reading the creation story in Genesis 1, it may seem odd to find another account in Genesis 2. When the Bible seems “odd,” it is helpful to remember that first and foremost, the Bible is about God. It helps to look at each of these stories through a theological lens. Theology means “the study of God.” What do each of these creation stories teach us about God?

While there are many aspects of these stories that are consistent, there also are some significant ways in which the stories are different. These differences provide clues that help us learn about God. Some of the differences in the stories are:

1) In the original Hebrew, the stories use different names for God. Genesis 1 uses “Elohim” and Genesis 2 uses “Jehovah.” (Compare the words used for God in Genesis 1:26 and 2:8. Your Bible may translate “Elohim” as “God” and “Jehovah” as “Lord.”) Elohim is generally the name used to describe the God of all creation. Jehovah is the special name of the God of the Israelite people. Thus, the first account views creation from the perspective of the whole world and the second account zeroes in and provides the perspective of God’s chosen people, Israel.

2) The Genesis 1 account is transcendent, grand and lofty. God speaks the world into being and does not physically interact with the creation. In Genesis 2, God seems to be much more relational and almost “human-like.” God even gets his hands dirty by planting a garden (Genesis 2:8).

3) The writing style is different. Compare the way the two stories are laid out in your Bible. Genesis 1 is poetry. Genesis 2 is prose. You might be able to imagine the Genesis 2 account as a drama.

In many ways, these 2 accounts teach us from the very beginning that God is not easily described and cannot be put in a box. For example:

1) God is the God of all people AND the special God of the chosen people.

2) God is lofty, above all things (transcendent) AND God is intimately involved with his creation (immanent).

3) God acts on such a grand scale that his deeds can only be described in poetry AND God is personally paying attention to and relating with individuals, like an actor in a drama.

In short, the 2 creation accounts teach us that God is so far beyond human descriptions and categories that we need 2 accounts to begin to tell God's story. God can never be fully or completely described.

*If God is indescribable, where does that leave us? It leaves us walking more humbly than we've ever walked before—bowed at the thought of such a mighty and mysterious God. It leaves us safe in the knowledge of His ultimate control—that the One who spoke these awe-inspiring, inconceivable wonders into being will never lose the plot or drop the ball. And it leaves us pondering just how much He—this creative God of hidden wonders—has in store for those who've chosen to love and follow Him (Louie Giglio, *Indescribable: Encountering the Glory of God in the Beauty of the Universe*).*

W H A T I S T H E " W O R K " G O D G I V E S H U M A N K I N D T O D O ?

In both creation accounts, God says that the role of humankind is to work in the garden God has created. In Genesis 1:28, God says that humans are to be fruitful and increase and fill the earth and subdue it. In Genesis 2:15 God put the man in the garden to work it and take care of it. And in Genesis 2:19-20 Adam's stewardship responsibility includes naming the creatures in the Garden.

But "work" in the Garden isn't like "work" after the fall. In the Garden being fruitful and increasing does not involve the pain of childbirth (Genesis 3:16). Working and caring for the garden does not involve sweat and does not yield thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18-19). In God's good creation, the work of humans is to harness creation's potential and create beauty and order.

The Hebrew word "work" means to serve. Adam has a commission to till the ground in respectful, close relationship with it. Adam's authority to name the creatures and to subdue the earth does not mean that Adam can abuse creation To "subdue" means to develop the created order. In Genesis, humans are not isolated, dominating creatures but are integrated to and interdependent on all of creation. If you have a pet, think about what it meant to you to name your pet. Naming a pet isn't an act of exploitation as much as it is an act of building relationship. A name is chosen that both honors the pet's identity and its relationship with the human who names it.

The work that the humans are given to do is a reflection of the reality that Eden is not a paradise of static perfection. Instead, God's Garden is dynamic and God gives humans the responsibility of working not as a burden but as an opportunity to bring the world along to its fullest possible creational potential. God's creation is good and is full of potential. It is the work of humans be stewards of that Garden and to unlock the potential and cultivate the goodness of God's good creation.

Q U E S T I O N S

1) What do the creation stories found in Genesis 1 and 2 teach us about God?

2) Does it inspire you or frustrate you that God cannot be put in a box or easily described?

3) In what ways can you cultivate the goodness of God's good creation?

DAY 3

G O O D & F A I T H F U L
S E R V A N T S

*For whoever has will be given more,
and they will have an abundance.*

MATTHEW 25:29a

R E A D M A T T H E W 2 5 : 1 4 - 2 9

Q U E S T I O N S

- 1) Who are the servants working for? Who are we working for?
- 2) Why were the first two servants praised? Why was the third servant criticized?
- 3) What does this parable tell us about how we should be stewards (servants) of what God has given us?
- 4) Is there a connection to be made between this parable and this week's passage in Genesis?

DAY 4

B Y G R A C E

For it is by grace you have been saved...

EPHESIANS 2:8a

R E A D E P H E S I A N S 2 : 8 - 1 0

Q U E S T I O N S

1) According to verse 8, what saves you?

2) Based on this passage, salvation is not from what?
(Verse 9)

3) Why were you created? (Verse 10)

4) Write a truth or "I believe" statement that summarizes the three previous answers.

DAY 5

G O I N G D E E P E R

*...for it is God who works in you to will
and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:13

R E A D P H I L I P P I A N S 2 : 1 2 - 1 6

Q U E S T I O N S

1) The phrase "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" from verse 12 can be a confusing one. Spend some time thinking and praying over that verse, while also remembering yesterday's devotional—we are not saved by our works. What message does that verse convey about us as stewards?

2) What part does God play in our stewardship? (Verse 13)

3) Assess your effectiveness as a steward of God's purpose. In what areas do you feel you are an effective steward of the gifts God has given you? In what areas of your life do you feel you could be a better steward?

F O R G R O U P S

Q U E S T I O N S

1) Our focus this week was on stewardship. How might you be called to be a steward of God's good creation and unlock the creative potential in the world around you?

2) How can you be a better steward of God's creation?

3) What connections did you see between the creation accounts in Genesis and the New Testament passages that you read this week?