

01

CREATION AND COVENANT

COMMENTARY



the **GOSPEL**PROJECT.

ADULTS



FALL | 2024

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

A SUMMARY OF THE BIBLE

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. By God's grace in Christ, repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.

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THE EDITOR

Welcome to The Gospel Project! We're glad you're with us as we start a brand new cycle of study. If you've been with us before, you might be struck by our brand new look and layout. What better way to start with the theme of creation than to create a whole new look and method to study through the Bible. What you'll still have is a chronological, gospel-centric study that helps you grow in your knowledge of how all of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. But you'll also see new graphics and new activity-based learning methods that will help you engage with Scripture and your group discussion.

It's fun to use our creative ability to explore different ways of studying Scripture as image-bearers of the creative God we worship. He began it all with His precision, creativity, and goodness. As we look at how God created the world good and how humanity's sin led to the brokenness of the world, we see a gracious God and sinful humanity as the basis of the gospel message. Studying the beginning of Genesis gives us how we got to where we are today and why we are all in need of a Savior.

I'm mesmerized by the mercy of God throughout these stories, growing up always thinking they were narratives of punishment and judgment. Yet weaved between the pain of the consequences of our own choices, God threads a message of hope, love, and rescue because of His patient compassion for His created beings.

As you study how it all began, may you "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity" (2 Peter 3:18).

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The Gospel Project for Adults

The Gospel Project®

Adult Commentary
Volume 1, Number 1 Fall 2024

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Printed in the United States of America

The Gospel Project®: Adult Commentary
(ISSN Applied For; Item 005849195) is
published quarterly by Lifeway Christian
Resources, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100,
Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, Ben Mandrell,
President. © 2024 Lifeway Christian Resources.

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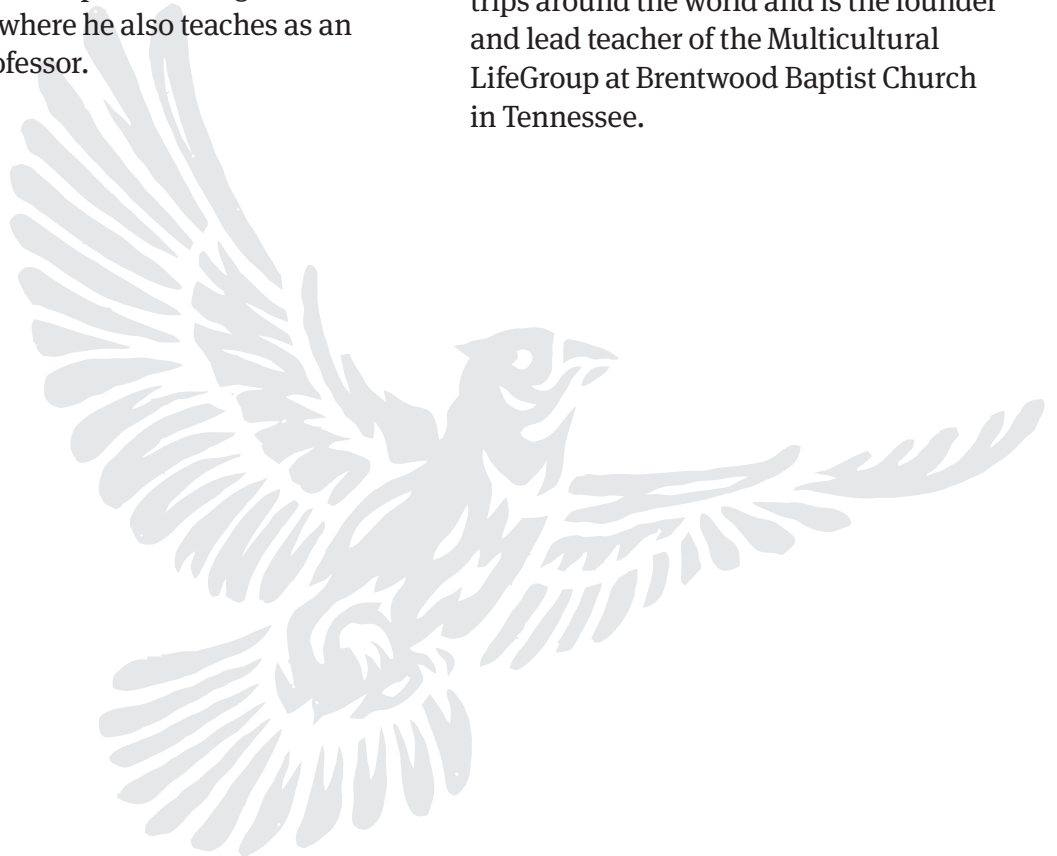
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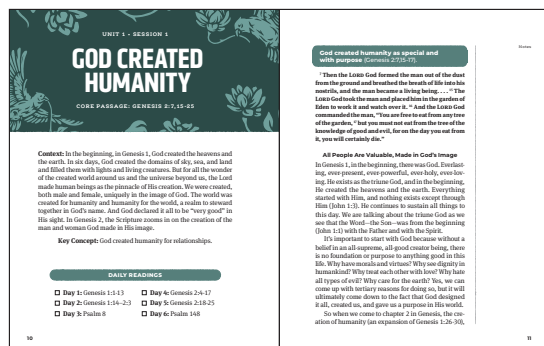
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HOW TO USE THE COMMENTARY

The Commentary is a vital tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here are different ways on how to make the most of your time with it:

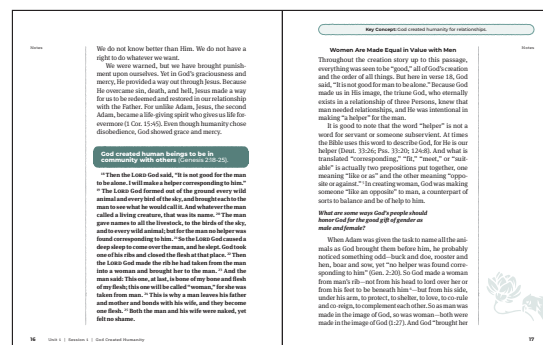
1) AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE LEADER GUIDE



The Leader Guide takes you through the same Personal Preparation your group members will follow in their Personal Study Guide so you can experience that with them during the week. And then the Leader Guide provides you with step-by-step instructions for the weekly Group Experience, including the learning activity and application questions.

You can use the Commentary to supplement your learning and personal preparation. The context, key concept, and daily readings as well as the Scripture breakdowns and discussion questions in the Commentary will be the same as in the Personal Study Guide and the Leader Guide. But the bulk of the content is unique, so read through the Commentary to gain additional insight for your group's questions and discussions during the Group Experience.

2) AS A PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE



Your leader and your group may want to use the Commentary as a personal study guide for a more in-depth study of the Scripture passages in the sessions provided. Your group may be more knowledgeable and seasoned and may want to delve deeper into the nuances of Scripture as you explore how Scripture points to Christ throughout the Bible.

Leaders may also choose to use the Commentary as a personal study guide for their group because it is easier to read with a larger font than the Personal Study Guide.

If used in this way, the Commentary is designed to be used before the group time and then during the group time. Read through the session to be prepared for your group time. The context, key concept, and daily readings will give you the background and focus you need to study. The various headings and subheadings give you the bullet points that connect to the key concept. Answer the questions provided to prepare beforehand to discuss during the group time together. The Head, Heart, and Hands questions help you apply what you have learned. Use the margins for whatever notes you might need to jot down.

3) AS A LEADER GUIDE

their fulfilling God's creation order and mandate to multiply and fill the earth. Singleness should not be seen as a lesser form of what God intended. God values the single person pursuing Him as much as the married person pursuing Him.

In Christ, There Is No Shame

To end Genesis 2 and to transition to chapter 3, Moses wrote that at this point, "the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame" (Gen. 2:25). There was an innocence and trust of the Father, like little children, that the man and woman had. In their flesh at this time, no shameful thoughts ran through their minds. Sin had not entered the world, and thus, shame had not entered the world.

This reminds us that shame will one day be no more. Jesus died to save us and forgive us to rid away our guilt and shame. For "there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). For "what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering" (Rom. 8:3). As we will read later, with the fall came sin through the flesh, but with Christ, He "condemned sin in the flesh" therefore, our guilt and shame died with our sin in Christ.

Though we still sin and have guilt and shame in this life, as Christ's return and the resurrection of our bodies, we will find ourselves sinless, guilty, and shamed no more. All because of Jesus. All because of His sacrifice out of His love for us. In studying Genesis then, we find the origin story of our creation and sinfulness. But it sets us up for the hero of the story: Jesus. He is and will always be the hero of the story.

Key Concept God created humanity for relationships.

And though His story has not yet arrived in Genesis, in essence, it already has because He was there as part of the Trinity, in the midst of it all, creating and sustaining. From beginning to end, the story of Scripture, the story of the Bible, is about Jesus and His pursuit of us. To this day, He is still pursuing His creation, His people, because of His love for them.

HEAD

What are some ways your life should change if you believe in the Bible's account of the creation of humanity?

HEART

What in your life leads you to isolation, and how can the community of Jesus in the church help you to assist temptation? To enjoy fellowship?

HANDS

How will you reflect God's image in your work and relationships with others this week?

the Commentary as a leader guide. For the best learning experience, having the Leader Guide along with the Commentary will be beneficial as the Leader Guide has a guided path to lead the group time, a group activity to foster discussion and group interaction, and further details about the Head, Heart, and Hands application section.

But if you choose not to use the Leader Guide, you can use the Commentary as a leader guide by following the pages in order with your group, highlighting important ideas and concepts along with the headings and subheadings to add further insight to the key concept. Ask your group what was interesting to them, and use the questions provided to further your group discussion. And as you wrap up with the Head, Heart, and Hands questions, allow the group to discuss how to apply what they've learned. End with prayer requests and praises that you can jot down in the margins.

If your group chooses to use the Commentary as their personal study guide, then you as the leader can also use

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 01

FOUNDATIONS



GENESIS 1–11



MEMORY VERSE

“Just as in Adam all die,
so also in Christ
all will be made alive.”

–1 Corinthians 15:22



GOD CREATED HUMANITY

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 2:7,15-25

Context: In the beginning, in Genesis 1, God created the heavens and the earth. In six days, God created the domains of sky, sea, and land and filled them with lights and living creatures. But for all the wonder of the created world around us and the universe beyond us, the Lord made human beings as the pinnacle of His creation. We were created, both male and female, uniquely in the image of God. The world was created for humanity and humanity for the world, a realm to steward together in God's name. And God declared it all to be "very good" in His sight. In Genesis 2, the Scripture zooms in on the creation of the man and woman God made in His image.

Key Concept: God created humanity for relationships.

DAILY READINGS

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Day 1: Genesis 1:1-13 | ☐ Day 4: Genesis 2:4-17 |
| ☐ Day 2: Genesis 1:14–2:3 | ☐ Day 5: Genesis 2:18-25 |
| ☐ Day 3: Psalm 8 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 148 |

God created humanity as special and with purpose (Genesis 2:7,15-17).

⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being. . . . ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”

All People Are Valuable, Made in God’s Image

In Genesis 1, in the beginning, there was God. Everlasting, ever-present, ever-powerful, ever-holy, ever-loving. He exists as the triune God, and in the beginning, He created the heavens and the earth. Everything started with Him, and nothing exists except through Him (John 1:3). He continues to sustain all things to this day. We are talking about the triune God as we see that the Word—the Son—was from the beginning (John 1:1) with the Father and with the Spirit.

It’s important to start with God because without a belief in an all-supreme, all-good creator being, there is no foundation or purpose to anything good in this life. Why have morals and virtues? Why see dignity in humankind? Why treat each other with love? Why hate all types of evil? Why care for the earth? Yes, we can come up with tertiary reasons for doing so, but it will ultimately come down to the fact that God designed it all, created us, and gave us a purpose in His world.

So when we come to chapter 2 in Genesis, the creation of humanity (an expansion of Genesis 1:26-30),

CHRIST Connection

First Corinthians 15:45-49 quotes Genesis 2:7 and makes an explicit comparison between “the first man Adam” and “the last Adam,” or Jesus. The former is a man of dust, and we all take after his image, being descendants of Adam by birth. The latter is a man of heaven, and we will bear His perfect image through faith in Jesus crucified for our sins and raised again.

we see God putting value and purpose in His people—men and women—He gave purpose and value to them both.

In verse 7, when God created the first man, Moses wrote that the LORD God “formed the man” and “breathed the breath of life” into him. First, God “formed the man out of the dust of the ground.” Using the Hebrew word play of *adam* for “man” and *adamah* for “dust,” Moses humbles us in reminding us that we are made from dust, and to dust our physical bodies will return (Gen. 3:19). In our material being, we are temporal—here today, gone tomorrow. But God not only formed us from the ground, He “breathed the breath of life into [the man’s] nostrils” (2:7). And with this breath, God formed our spirit, our soul. Imagine breathing into someone else, as with rescue breathing or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation—what an intimate act that involves being extremely close to that person. Even if Moses was using human terms to describe this event, the breathing of life into man’s nostrils conveys a closeness, a bond, and a relationship unique from any other of God’s creations. Humanity is God’s special creation filled with the breath of the living, almighty God, making us into “a living being.”

What are some ways you can use your breath to honor the God who created you in His image?

To make this connection clearer—that God is intimately invested in us—going back to the beginning of this section of Scripture in verse 4, the phrase “LORD God” (*Yahweh Elohim*) is used for the first time. Before this, God was referred to only as “God” (*Elohim*). But in verse 4, the use of the word “Yahweh,” God’s personal name (see Ex. 3:14-15), shows “the personal

covenant name of God who relates to and redeems his people. . . . Beautifully, Yahweh-Elohim combines the Creator and Covenant-Redeemer aspects of God into one magnificent name.”¹

Thus starts the personal relationship that exists between humanity and God. He is our Maker. We are not only His beloved creation, we are part of His beloved family, and God will stop at nothing to keep us in relationship with Him, even at the cost of the crucifixion of His beloved Son. Because we are His special creation and He was intentional in creating us to be in relationship with Him, we find our value and worth in being made in God’s image. We also find value in all people as they too are made in His image. As such, God gives us a foundation for why we are to love all people, treating everyone with respect, care, and honor because they are made in His image. From the unborn child to the broken murderer to the poverty-stricken refugee to the undisciplined orphan—we are called to love, grieve for, care for, and serve them all.

When we demean others, say crude jokes, disrespect God’s image-bearers, or don’t uphold the sanctity of life in others, we are ridiculing God’s workmanship. We dishonor God and His creation when we cannot see the *imago Dei*, the image of God, in every person. Every human being has value and worth, even those who don’t yet know Christ. For God so loved us all that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us and restore our relationship with Him.

All People Have Purpose in Work and Service

Next, the Lord God “placed” man into “the garden of Eden” (Gen. 2:15). Eden was first mentioned in verse 8:

Voices from THE CHURCH

“Human dominion over the rest of creation is to be an exercise of kingship that reflects God’s own kingship. The image of God is not a license for arrogant abuse, but a pattern that commits us to humble reflection of the character of God.”⁴

–Christopher Wright

“the LORD God planted a garden in Eden.” The word “Eden” may be from a Semitic language meaning “a place of abundant waters,” and its common Hebrew meaning is “delight.”² Unknown in location, it was a paradise for God’s creatures. It was luxurious, abundant, and good.

The first man was “to work it and watch over it” (v. 15). Again, God’s intentions are clear. He is to have a relationship with His people, and they will find value in being His, enjoying the work of being the caretakers of the created world as well as partnering with Him in His redemptive mission to the world. “Work” and “watch over” in this context can also mean “serve” and “guard,” respectively.³ We are to serve God and His people and guard and protect all that is His, knowing that it all belongs to God and we are mere stewards.

But in giving us purpose in our work and service, God elevates us, gifting us with responsibility and the privilege to work with Him. Being all-powerful, God could do it all Himself. But God knows we will find joy and value in joining Him in His work. And at this point, before sin entered the world, we see the value of work in glorifying God in taking care of His creation. After sin in the garden, we also see the importance of working alongside God even more, as He allows us, even in our sinful selves, to join Him in being a part of His redemptive plan in bringing people back into relationship with Him through sharing with others about the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross. We all have purpose and value in the work that we do for God and for His glory.

How can our work today reflect our status as stewards under God’s ultimate authority?

Whether you are a teacher, accountant, doctor, personal trainer, plumber, secretary, or pastor, there is value in your work as you do it for God's glory and are intentional about using your influence for kingdom purposes. We are all stewards of God's creation, His world. In doing our work well and seeing it as part of bringing glory to God, we are fulfilling the command to work and watch over God's creation.

All People Have Freedom to Choose

Like any good parent, God then gave instructions—what to do and what not to do. He gave man the freedom to enjoy food from “any tree of the garden” (v. 6) except one. Just one. All the other trees, all the variety, all the abundance, man could have and enjoy. God's generosity and lavishness was immense! God only gave Adam one limit: not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for he would surely die.

God gave humanity free will, the freedom to choose abundant goodness in obedience or death in disobedience. This is the first mention of death in the Bible. Death would be a result of disobedience, of sin, of man's actions to do what God told him not to do. Choosing to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would mean choosing to dictate good and evil for oneself—a common sin for many of us today. We think our wisdom is better than God's; we think we can define what's right and wrong. We want to do things our own way, thinking it's our own life, our own interests, our own money, our own desires. We should be able to decide to do whatever we want. That is the sin that says, “I am my own god; there is no other.” But we are wrong. We are not wiser than God.

We do not know better than Him. We do not have a right to do whatever we want.

We were warned, but we have brought punishment upon ourselves. Yet in God's graciousness and mercy, He provided a way out through Jesus. Because He overcame sin, death, and hell, Jesus made a way for us to be redeemed and restored in our relationship with the Father. For unlike Adam, Jesus, the second Adam, became a life-giving spirit who gives us life forevermore (1 Cor. 15:45). Even though humanity chose disobedience, God showed grace and mercy.

God created human beings to be in community with others (Genesis 2:18-25).

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him."

¹⁹ The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. ²² Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called "woman," for she was taken from man. ²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

Women Are Made Equal in Value with Men

Throughout the creation story up to this passage, everything was seen to be “good,” all of God’s creation and the order of all things. But here in verse 18, God said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Because God made us in His image, the triune God, who eternally exists in a relationship of three Persons, knew that man needed relationships, and He was intentional in making “a helper” for the man.

It is good to note that the word “helper” is not a word for servant or someone subservient. At times the Bible uses this word to describe God, for He is our helper (Deut. 33:26; Pss. 33:20; 124:8). And what is translated “corresponding,” “fit,” “meet,” or “suitable” is actually two prepositions put together, one meaning “like or as” and the other meaning “opposite or against.”⁵ In creating woman, God was making someone “like an opposite” to man, a counterpart of sorts to balance and be of help to him.

What are some ways God’s people should honor God for the good gift of gender as male and female?

When Adam was given the task to name all the animals as God brought them before him, he probably noticed something odd—buck and doe, rooster and hen, boar and sow, yet “no helper was found corresponding to him” (Gen. 2:20). So God made a woman from man’s rib—not from his head to lord over her or from his feet to be beneath him⁶—but from his side, under his arm, to protect, to shelter, to love, to co-rule and co-reign, to complement each other. So as man was made in the image of God, so was woman—both were made in the image of God (1:27). And God “brought her



GOSPEL Connection

The exclusive relationship between husband and wife pictures the plan of God for Christ and the church to be united together as one through the perfect sacrificial death of Jesus to cleanse us of our sins and make us holy (Eph. 5:22-33).

to the man” like a father at the marriage altar presenting his daughter. God presented her to man, and in the first human words mentioned in Scripture, man proclaimed his oneness with her and her equal value in saying, “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (2:23).

Though many still debate the roles of men and women in our society and in our churches, one thing is not debatable: Both men and women have equal value and purpose, made uniquely to complement each other. Both are made in the image of God, and as such, they should be seen as equal in value and honor. There is no room for debate about that factor.

Men and Women Are Uniquely Designed for Marriage

Moses, inspired by God, now inserts a truth about marriage: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.” It was customary for the woman to leave her family to join her husband’s family in ancient times,⁷ but in flipping this idea around, stating how a man leaves his parents, Moses was speaking of a prioritization. The man should leave his parents, who were once his ultimate human priority, and now see his wife as such. And as he leads and loves his wife beyond all others (except for God, of course), the setting is clear for the analogy of the church as the bride of Christ.

The strong bond that a husband has to his wife leads to God’s command for them to “be fruitful and multiply” (1:28). God’s call for a husband and wife to procreate, to multiply on this earth, also reflects our call today to make disciples, to grow God’s family on this earth as the church, His bride. And the stress on oneness and unity in becoming “one flesh” should

also apply to the covenant, both for the husband and the wife and the church and Christ. We cannot have other loyalties, other preferences, and wandering eyes. There should only be one other for us, for in marriage we are now one. We break our covenant when we try to belong to other people or things.

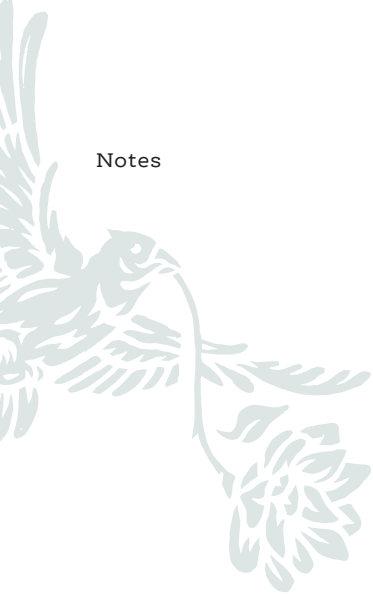
On a side note, our current times see a distorted deviation to God's intended structure and creation. As men and women were made equal to multiply and subdue the earth, because sin has now entered the world, we see gender identities being confused and unnatural promiscuities that dishonor God and that God did not intend. But this is not new to God or to our times as Paul addressed it in Romans 1:24-27. We succumb to our earthly desires in our sin outside of God's will and submit to lesser joys rather than the real joy He has for us in His intended order. Yet also because of the sin and brokenness of this world, we find infertility and divorce and broken families and loneliness. All things that God never intended but occur because sin entered the world. In such matters, we grieve and long for Jesus's return that wholeness may return to our relationships as God had intended all along.

How can your group help others who feel lonely and isolated?

Singleness may be a physical or emotional struggle for some, but for others it can be lifted up and encouraged if devotion and service to God is the motive. A single person devoted to God can do much for God's mission. Jesus was single Himself, of course. A single person in the church can find his or her fulfillment with Christ in devotion and service to Him. They can multiply God's people and kingdom in disciple-making,

THEOLOGY
Connection

MAN: Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation.



thus fulfilling God's creation order and mandate to multiple and fill the earth. Singleness should not be seen as a lesser form of what God intended. God values the single person pursuing Him as much as the married person pursuing Him.

In Christ, There Is No Shame

To end Genesis 2 and to transition to chapter 3, Moses wrote that at this point, "the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame" (Gen. 2:25). There was an innocence and trust of the Father, like little children, that the man and woman had. In their flesh at this time, no demented thoughts ran through their minds. Sin had not entered the world, and thus, shame had not entered the world.

This reminds us that shame will one day be no more. Jesus died to save us and forgive us to take away our guilt and shame. For "there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). For "what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering" (8:3). As we will read later, with the fall came sin through the flesh. But with Christ, He "condemned sin in the flesh"; therefore, our guilt and shame died with our sin in Christ.

Though we still sin and have guilt and shame in this life, at Christ's return and the resurrection of our bodies, we will find ourselves sinful, guilty, and shameful no more. All because of Jesus. All because of His sacrifice out of His love for us. In studying Genesis then, we find the origin story of our creation and sinfulness. But it sets us up for the hero of the story: Jesus. He is and will always be the hero of the story.

And though His story has not yet arrived in Genesis, in essence, it already has because He was there as part of the Trinity, in the midst of it all, creating and sustaining. From beginning to end, the story of Scripture, the story of the Bible, is about Jesus and His pursuit of us. To this day, He is still pursuing His creation, His people, because of His love for them.



HEAD

What are some ways your life should change if you believe in the Bible's account of the creation of humanity?



HEART

What in your life leads you to isolation, and how can the community of Jesus in the church help you to resist temptation? To enjoy fellowship?



HANDS

How will you reflect God's image in your work and relationships with others this week?

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