

SUMMER 2024

YOU

**PROMISES WE
CAN COUNT ON**

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**MORE THAN
A SIDEKICK:
SERVING ALONGSIDE
OTHERS**



A STUDY ABOUT THE PROMISES OF GOD

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Throughout our lifetime we will likely experience broken promises from parents, family, friends, employers, politicians, and within intimate relationships. Fess up. Along the way, we all have likely broken a promise or two ourselves, whether intentional or not. In the process, we let someone down. The truth is, there is One who does keep promises. Through this study, we will see that God makes and keeps His promises. He established covenants in various ways with His people. God's covenants date back to the beginning of time as noted in the book of Genesis. They impact all of us even today through the promise and fulfillment of the "New Covenant" through Jesus Christ.

God not only makes and keeps the promises to His creation that extend generation to generation, but in His faithfulness, He desires a personal relationship with each of us.

Biblical characters such as Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses, Abraham and Sarah, David, Jeremiah, and yes—Jesus—all have something in common. Spoiler alert: they all have a covenant relationship with God. Throughout this study, dare to lay aside any preconceptions about promises. Remember, "God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man, that he might change his mind" (Num. 23:19). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, (*which are often questionable and unreliable*) and your ways are not my ways" (Isa. 55:8, *emphasis added*).

As we walk through the six covenants God established, we can simultaneously see God's ongoing relationship with us and the common thread that runs through the Bible of His plan for us. Throughout Scripture, God promises fruitfulness, preservation, blessing, and the establishment of a Holy Nation, a King, and a New Covenant. God's promises stand.

SESSION 1

GOD'S PROMISE OF FRUITFULNESS

Leader Pages on pp. 102-105

THE POINT:
GOD CALLED
HUMANITY TO RULE
OVER HIS CREATION.

GENESIS 1:26-30, 2:16-17, 3:16-19

MEMORY VERSE

^{1:26} Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

²⁷ **So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.**

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."

²⁹ God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you,

³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

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^{2:16} 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."

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^{3:16} He said to the woman: "I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you."

¹⁷ And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life.¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust."

KEYWORDS

Let us . . . in . . . according to our (v. 26)—The doctrine of the triune nature of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is not explicitly developed in the Old Testament. However, aspects of the cooperation between the members of the Trinity in creation can be seen.

I have given you (v. 29)—God is the all-sufficient Provider. God blessed humanity with His image; He blessed them with purpose; and now He blessed them with provision.

All the days of your life (v. 17)—The damage done by sin would follow Adam for the rest of his life, and affect his descendants.

HOW DO WE LIVE IN GOD'S PROMISE OF FRUITFULNESS?

God created you on purpose for a purpose. Think for a few moments about the implications of that statement. What if life does have purpose? What if I have a purpose, a specific purpose? What if there truly is a God who has created me to fulfill His purpose, and if so, what is that purpose? People have responded to questions like these in various ways:

- "Life has no lasting purpose, so I'm just doing me."
- "I'm going to devote myself to a particular purpose to make the world a better place."
- "My purpose is my ministry. It is a calling from God, and I find joy in doing His will."

I once heard someone say, "Many people spend more time planning their vacations than they spend planning their lives." Indeed, some individuals arrive at the end of life disappointed they didn't live more purposeful lives. They regret missed opportunities.

In the book of Genesis, we read the biblical perspective on God's purpose for humanity. God created us in His image and gave us dominion over all the earth and everything in it. Although sin has marred God's image in us, His purpose for us remains. Oh, what a blessing it is that we can represent God and His purposes on Earth!

Enjoy and Steward His Creation

// Genesis 1:26-30

Genesis 1 describes how God created everything through His spoken word. He created the world from nothing—a concept theologians call creation *ex nihilo*. Everything exists because God determined it would (Rev. 4:11). The lyrics of *Awesome God* by Helen Baylor make this point, "When the sky was starless in the void of the night . . . He spoke into the darkness and created the light." God created the world, and God sustains the world (Col. 1:16). Our God is indeed an awesome God!

The first twenty-five verses of Genesis describe the unfolding of God's creative plan:

- Light and darkness (vv. 3-5)
- The sky (vv. 6-8)
- The seas, the dry land, and vegetation (vv. 9-13)
- The heavenly luminaries: sun, moon, and stars (vv. 14-19)
- Water creatures and birds (vv. 20-23)
- Land animals (vv. 24-25)



THE POINT: GOD CALLED HUMANITY TO RULE OVER HIS CREATION.

All creation was wonderful and good, but God wasn't finished yet. His highest creative purpose remained: the creation of humanity. Verse 26 begins, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.'" Some might wonder how we could possibly be made in God's image when He's so majestic and powerful and we're not! However, God has in fact made us in His image and that image includes four aspects:

- **Intellect.** God has created us as rational beings. We have minds that can reason and draw conclusions.
- **Emotion.** People are capable of emotional responses such as happiness, sorrow, anger, and more. So is God.
- **Volition.** God has created us with a will, and we are able to make choices and choose the paths we take.
- **Dominion.** The second half of verse 26 clarifies this point: "They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

As children of God, we are earthly representatives over His creation. As quoted from the Spider-Man franchise, "With great power comes great responsibility." We have been given this authority and are responsible for being good stewards. As God's image-bearers, we are to reflect His characteristics as we walk in our God-given authority managing those things that God has created and blessed us with.

WHAT ARE SOME ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS OF A GOOD STEWARD?

The text described how humanity was to have dominion over the rest of creation—fish, birds, livestock, everything. God had put everything in our care. God initially gave seed-bearing plants and fruit trees as food sources not only for people but for animals and birds. This arrangement allowed all creation to live in harmony.

Sin's entry into the world changed the relationship of humanity with the animal kingdom (Gen. 9:2-3). The animals now would fear people, and people were free to eat the animals as they chose. Even so, God provided stipulations on the preparation of that food (Gen. 9:4). This protocol again emphasized the people submitting to God's plan of stewardship. Meaning, we could not just live any old kind of way.

God valued all His creation and had expectations for us on how to conduct our lives and operate in His will. The prophet Isaiah pointed to God's coming kingdom as he announced a day when peace in nature again would prevail (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25).



DIGGING DEEPER FASHIONED BY GOD

The creation of humanity is the crowning event of Genesis 1. In Genesis 2:7, the Hebrew verb translated as "formed" is used elsewhere in the Bible to describe the potter's profession (Jer. 18:4; Zech. 11:13); God acts as the divine potter, skillfully fashioning **man out of the dust from the ground**. But the Bible makes it clear that people are more than just material beings. It was only when God **breathed** into the man's **nostrils the breath of life** that Adam became alive.¹ God is Spirit (John 4:24); thus, when God breathed into him, Adam and all later humans became a mix of the physical and the spiritual. The Hebrew phrase translated as "living being" is used elsewhere in Genesis to describe other types of living beings (1:20, 24,30; 9:12,15-16). Nevertheless, humans are considered in a class by themselves since they alone are made in God's image.

What does it mean to you, knowing you are formed in the image of the Almighty God?

Listen to His Voice // Genesis 2:16-17

God expects obedience and loyalty. Sometimes Christians get confused over the concept of obedience because they have learned that they become Christians by grace through faith alone, apart from any works they do (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation is a gift from God, and we can do nothing to earn it.

At the same time, God has created us to do good works (Eph. 2:10). Our obedience testifies to our relationship with Him and shows the world the life God calls us to live. We don't obey God to earn "kingdom points," we obey God because we love Him and want to please Him! Doing things God's way yields the best possible results in our lives.

God created man and placed him in a garden He had created—the garden of Eden, a delightful place with every kind of fruit tree. God gave man the task of tending the garden (Gen. 2:8,15). Work provided Adam (the first man) the opportunity to steward a portion of God's creation.

Two other trees also stood in the garden—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). God told Adam he was free to eat from any tree in the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he ate of this tree, he would die. God gave Adam only this one prohibition; beyond that, he had freedom to manage God's Garden. After God created Eve as Adam's partner (Gen. 2:18-23), earth's first couple shared the responsibility of living by God's command together in the garden.

This one command—not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—tested Adam and Eve's trust, obedience, and loyalty.

IN WHAT WAY DO OUR REACTIONS TO GOD'S RULES REVEAL OUR HEART TOWARD GOD?

Sometimes Christians believe salvation by grace means they are free to explore the limits of their liberty. Some excuse their behavior by saying, "I can go this far and still be a Christian," or "I'll ask forgiveness later." Such thinking misrepresents grace and is self-deception. Understand, grace sets us free to serve God, not to serve ourselves. The apostle Paul challenged the idea that since we're saved by grace through faith, it doesn't matter how much we sin (Rom. 6:1-2).



We have died with respect to our old way of life; why would we want to continue to live that way?

Indeed, our call to steward God's creation is not without limits. There is a familiar saying, "stay in your lane." In this case, however, we stay in God's lane. Our responsibility comes with God-established parameters, and we are free to manage within those parameters. But going outside those "lanes" brings sin and failure.

Keep His Commands //

Genesis 3:16-19

Sin is a serious matter. Many people rationalize their sin by saying, "I'm better than most people," or perhaps they excuse sin by claiming, "Everyone does that. It's no big deal." Some people even rank sin by saying, "I may do this, but I don't do that." What they may fail to realize or accept is that sin is sin, and it hinders our relationship with God and our ability to fully thrive as God intends.

When Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God's command (Gen. 3:1-6), several things happened:

- They immediately felt shame (Gen. 3:7).
- They hid from God (Gen. 3:8-10).
- They blamed others for their sin (Gen. 3:12-13); Adam blamed Eve and God, and Eve blamed the serpent.

Adam and Eve's sin had serious consequences. First, however, God provided a word of hope and grace in Genesis 3:15. One day, the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. Many

THE POINT: GOD CALLED HUMANITY TO RULE OVER HIS CREATION.

scholars see God's words as predicting the coming of Jesus. By His death and resurrection, Jesus would strike the serpent's head—that is, He would destroy Satan and his evil works once and for all.

God's plan for us to serve as stewards over His creation has not changed. However, our ability to fulfill that plan is more difficult due to sin.

Another way sin made stewarding God's creation more difficult related to the earth itself. Sin brought a curse on the ground, which would produce thorns and thistles alongside the nourishing plants being cultivated. Humanity would have to work harder for its food. If we look at the state of our world, we see land that is not producing crops and nations where the people are starving. The effects of sin in the Garden of Eden are still impacting us collectively today. The Hebrew word for "ground" (v. 19) is *adamah*, a play on words related to Adam's name. God created Adam from the ground (Gen. 2:7), and Adam would return one day to the ground in death.

Within the story of Adam and Eve, clearly there are lessons to be learned about how poor stewardship and disobedience led to sin and the consequences for humankind.

HOW HAVE YOU SEEN UNRESOLVED SIN IN THIS WORLD CAUSE TREMENDOUS PAIN FOR OTHERS?

DID YOU KNOW?

In Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermon *Man's Sin and God's grace*, he points out what he terms "the gone-wrongness of human nature." He writes, "There is something wrong with human nature, something basically and fundamentally wrong. A recognition of this fact stands as one of the basic assumptions of our Christian faith."² Dr. King references the fall of man starting with the disobedience of Adam to Judas selling out for a few silver coins. The sermon eloquently details our sin nature and the grace we can experience through Jesus Christ. Dr. King quotes *Amazing Grace* emphasizing how grace keeps us safe through the dangers of this world and will guide us to our eternal home in heaven. The grace of God is our covering. "Oh God, our gracious heavenly Father, help us to see the meaning of this grace, and help us to realize that in our sinful lives there is some hope, there is a way out through Thy powerful and ever-flowing grace."³

Biblical Truth: God's grace is sufficient to meet our every need.

How can you demonstrate a proper response to God's grace in the way you live?

LIVE IT

How can we be the fruitful stewards God called us to be?

Adam and Eve were given instructions by God but chose to do their own thing. Their story unfolds much like the plots on the reality shows and drama series on TV. The lies, deception, and the fall all because they failed to live in obedience to God's direction. As a result, sin entered in the world and is something that we still contend with today. Reflect on the differences between good and bad stewardship and the impact of sin. Then consider the following action steps:

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- **Exercise your God-given stewardship.** God gave us the responsibility to steward His creation. How does your life display that stewardship?
- **Demonstrate obedience and loyalty to God.** How does your level of obedience demonstrate your loyalty to God? Identify an area of your life where you need God's help to be more faithful.
- **Repent of sin in your life.** Ask God to reveal any sin in your life. Confess the sin(s) and ask for forgiveness. Do this regularly so that your relationship with God is not hindered.

DAILY READINGS

1. THE ULTIMATE CREATOR // GENESIS 1:1

Humans create things. We make, build, and create daily. We even have a patent system to trademark original creations and reserve rights for a set time. Man's creativity can lead to a false sense of our rights and ownership of ideas and things. Genesis 1 reminds us that God is the original creator. We and everything in the world are His creation. Take a moment and list things you have created or own. Then, remember that God is the original creator of it all. Reflecting on God's creation keeps us from pride and leads us to worship the one true creator.

Remember that the most significant inventions and creations of man are nothing compared to God's creation.

2. LOOK BEFORE YOU FALL // GENESIS 1:29-30

In Genesis 1:29, God speaks to Adam and Eve and commands them to "look." He directs them to look at all that He has given to them. He points out His gifts of seed-bearing plants, trees, and wildlife. God did not give them a plot of land. He gave them "every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth." How can we choose sin when such great blessings from God surround us? Yet, many choose to live contrary to God's Word. Before we walk into sin, it would benefit us to remember God's words to Adam and Eve. We should look at everything around us that God created. Then, thank God for the general blessings given to mankind and the specific gifts God has placed in our lives.

May we stand in awe of God's creation and draw our hearts to him.

3. GIFTS WITH RESTRICTIONS // GENESIS 2:16-17

What would you think of someone who gave you a gift but then put restrictions on how you could use it? We operate from a general understanding that when someone gives us a gift, we are free to use it as we please. Ownership passes from the gift giver to the gift receiver. We don't expect restrictions on how we can use it. In Genesis 2:16-17 God names

the gift of freedom that he has given mankind. Before he tells man of His freedom, He begins the conversation with a command not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. God's restrictions are not like ours. He gave them rules to serve as boundaries so they could truly enjoy their freedoms.

When we live within God's boundaries, we experience true freedom.

4. PRESERVATION COMES IN STRANGE WAYS // GENESIS 47:5-6

Have you ever refused to believe something you did not like? In Genesis 37, Joseph's brothers are angry at the idea that they would have to bow down to their brother and plot to get rid of him. Years later, Joseph's position in Egypt preserves Jacob, his sons, and their families. In Genesis 47, Pharaoh invites Joseph's family to have the best parts of the land. The family had no idea that God's plan to save them would require them to bow down to Joseph. The brothers were blinded by jealousy and sinned against their brother. Life will not always be fair. We must trust God's plan and refrain from taking things into our own hands.

Put away fear, anger, and pride to trust that God will keep you.

5. THE PLAN REMAINS THE SAME // GENESIS 9:1

Adam and Eve sin against God and lose the gift/privilege of living in the garden. While God removed them from the garden and issued consequences, He did not change His mind about the purpose of mankind. In Genesis 9:1, again, God tells man to be fruitful and multiply. Furthermore, He lists the gifts He has given man and provides a boundary. He tells them not to eat meat "with its lifeblood in it." After the flood, Noah and his family were starting over. God lets them know they are not starting over again alone. He is still with them and providing them. This is a great demonstration that God's plan for humanity remains true even after the penalty of sin.

God will not abandon us. When He forgives, He restores.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Get The Word In

As a committed instructor, you are familiar with the book of Genesis. However, take a few days to challenge yourself beyond what you know. Begin in prayer and ask God to reveal a fresh anointing as you instruct. Read the lesson as a worship unto God versus a lesson to teach. If you do, you will experience an awakening in your spirit that will lead you to be an "instructor of life" for your students.

Get The Word Out

Communicate To your students the excitement of the text. Send out an enthusiastic email, building great anticipation for the upcoming lesson. Instruct your students to ask three kids (ages 5-7) about their definition of a promise. Then, have your students email you those answers before the start of class. Post the funniest replies on your social media account, promoting the upcoming class.

LOOK BACK

Before beginning the new study, remind the group that last week's lesson emphasized the joy of giving. Ask volunteers to briefly share one principle about being a cheerful giver. Encourage learners of the promises about giving from Luke 6:38.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

DO: Begin this series by asking the learners (by a show of hands) if they have ever broken any promises. Allow them to share a few thoughts about why they broke promises and observe their answers. Afterward, ask them if anyone has ever broken any promises to them. Again, ask them how they felt and allow time for learners to share their experience.

TRANSITION: Read the question, "How do we live in God's promise of fruitfulness?" and **The Point: God called humanity to rule over His creation.**

PACK ITEM: Focus attention on **Pack Item 1 "Promises We Can Count On"** poster to point out the promises in this study. Display **Pack Item 2: "The Covenants"** poster, to highlight the covenants we will be studying.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Enjoy and Steward His Creation // Genesis 1:26-30

READ: Enlist two volunteers to read Genesis 1:26-30. Highlight the purpose of humanity to be both a ruler and producer.

ASK: "How does God's purpose for humanity align with the desire for leisure and entertainment?"

EXPLAIN: God's very nature is to be creative and produce. In reading the Bible, we are not only to understand what it says but also what it means. In our lives, God set an expectation of production. If it is true that we are made in God's image, then we are to do what God does: produce. While we are unable to put stars in the sky, God has placed within us something we can offer the world. Overcoming fears of inadequacies, self-doubt, and incompetency is essential for walking in faith and freedom.

DIGGING DEEPER: To gain a better understanding of being created in God's image, ask a volunteer to read "Digging Deeper" (p. 13). Lead a discussion on the question that follows.

READ: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins "All creation . . ." (p. 13) and discuss the four aspects of man being created in God's image.

- Intellect
- Emotion
- Volition
- Dominion

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 104) to further explain verses 26-30. Explain why it is essential

THE POINT: GOD CALLED HUMANITY TO RULE OVER HIS CREATION.

for believers to see fruitfulness beyond financial gain or fame. Fruitfulness can be an extension of God's mercy, grace, forgiveness, and love.

DO: Invite learners to rate their fruitfulness. Ask, "On a scale of 1 -10, how fruitful are you against God's expectations for humanity? Ten, is *I am entirely fruitful*, one being *I am not fruitful at all*. Allow learners to process their number, but make everyone answer the question. Just go around the room and get a number from everyone. All you want is a number. Do not permit further comments at this time. You allow people to talk comfortably within the group by enabling everyone to speak.

CHALLENGE: After getting everyone's number, challenge them by asking, "What would it take for your number to go up one notch?" Share your personal challenges with being fruitful and demonstrate ways you have overcome to be the leader God has called you to be.

Listen to His Voice // Genesis 2:16-17

READ: As the leader, read Genesis 2:16-17.

ASK: "If Adam and Eve knew the consequences of their action, do you think they would have still eaten the forbidden fruit?"

EXPLAIN: Use the commentary (p. 105) to explain the Lord's commandment in these verses. Use the learner pages (p. 14) to further describe the scene in the garden.

OBJECT LESSON: Use the object lesson (p. 104) to explore the principles of stewardship, obedience, and repentance.

READ: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins "God expects obedience . . ." (p. 14) and the paragraph that follows. Ask the discussion question in this section.

Genesis 3:16-19 // The Separation

READ: Enlist a learner to read Genesis 3:16-19.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 105) to explain God's judgment to Eve in verse 16 and Adam in verse 17. Discuss that there are always

consequences to disobeying God.

DISCUSS: The intensity of the text changed dramatically when Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. Despite the devil's craftiness and Eve's advice, Adam made the wrong choice. Despite Eve's eternal blame game, the paramount decision for God's wrath lies with Adam's disobedience. The devil will always be cunning, and bad advice will always be given, but the paramount aspect that God will judge is the decision. In this case, although influenced by the devil, Adam's decision to take Eve's counsel placed God's commands in a lower status. As such, Adam chose to obey the creator's creation, causing a seismic shift in the creator-creation relationship.

ASK: "In the case of Adam and Eve, all of humanity suffered. Does anyone have an example of how a wrong decision impacted others? How did you feel? Did you blame someone else?" Provide an example in your life where a choice you made impacted those around you or those you love. Offer any insights on how you rectified the situation to benefit all.

GUIDE: Re-examine the "live it out" section and walk through the three action steps for obedience and redemption.

ASK: "Where do you see God's faithfulness, grace, and mercy in these verses?"

CHALLENGE: Allow learners time to assess their lives, seeking forgiveness or forgiving others who did them wrong. Challenge believers to improve, preventing past mistakes and failures from defining them. Seek God's redemptive power through Jesus Christ for healing and restoration.



PACK ITEM 1



PACK ITEM 2



OBJECT LESSON

DO: Bring in a small box of Legos that makes a simple design.

GUIDE: Show the Lego box and what will be made to the class. Open the box and display the pieces of Legos. However, keep the instructions in your hand.

EXPLAIN: In the “Live it Out” section, three words are highlighted: stewardship, obedience, and repentance. Explain to the class three things: First, being a good (steward) of these Legos means keeping up with each one. Second, to meet the designer’s expectations, it is essential to follow directions. If the builder deviates from the directions (disobey), Lego pieces could be missing or not fit in their proper place. Third, return to the directions (repentance) to get things back on track.

CHALLENGE: Challenge learner to be obedient to God and fruitful stewards of His creation.

CLOSE THE SESSION

SAY: The challenge has been given and continues to be a reminder of the faithfulness of God in our lives. God graciously placed in the hands of humanity something that he created from nothing. The responsibility of managing and multiplying is the sole responsibility of humankind. God promises to bless his people to be fruitful and multiply.

PRAY: Lord, we thank you for the blessings you have given. Please grant us the strength to obey You in all we do. In Jesus’s name, we pray, Amen.

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 1:26-30

Connection to the Point. As God’s image-bearers, we are to reflect Him as we rule over His creation.

Verse 26. The doctrine of the triune nature of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is not explicitly developed in the Old Testament. However, aspects of the cooperation between the members of the Trinity in creation can be seen (Gen. 1:1–2; Job 33:4; see John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:8–9). While two different Hebrew words—*tselem* (image) and *demuth* (likeness)—are used, they are synonymous in meaning. Together, they emphasize God made humanity in His image, making them distinct from all other creation. This understanding is evident from verse 27, where the word image describes God’s creation of man.

Verses 27-28. God created two genders. We can infer the distinction of gender in the creation of other animals, but it is mentioned explicitly with the creation of humanity. Both male and female human beings have a unique status as image-bearers and are of equal worth. There are, however, natural, God-given differences regarding their sexual identities and roles. God’s blessing upon humanity is two-fold. First, they are blessed to be created in God’s image. Secondly, God blessed them by giving them purpose. Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. **Subdue it.** The Hebrew word *kabash* means to have dominion—to subjugate and bring under control. Not only are humans to populate the earth, they are also given authority over all other species. **Rule.** Humanity will rule (*radah*, also used in v. 26) or reign over all the creatures of the earth.

While not all the types of animals are mentioned here, those identified are representative of all creatures that God had created. Humanity was given authority over all the creatures that inhabit the earth.

Verses 29-30. God is the all-sufficient Provider.

God blessed humanity with His image; He blessed them with purpose; and now He blessed them with provision. Both humanity and all other creatures were supplied with food. Neither would have to hunt and kill for food. While the man and woman were given authority over creation, they would also live in harmony with other species.

Various Hebrew terms are translated breath of life. The phrase indicates the capacity of someone or something to be alive. God alone is the source of this "breath of life." He can give life (2:7), preserve it (7:15), and take it away (6:17).

GENESIS 2:16-17

Connection to the Point. Our call to steward creation is not without limits.

Verse 16. The term LORD is a substitution for God's covenant name, *Yahweh*. The substitution follows the practice of the Jews, who substituted the word Adonai (meaning "lord" or "master") for Yahweh because they feared saying God's name lest they mispronounce it. The term emphasizes that Yahweh is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists, and He is independent from His creation and self-sufficient in His Person. He is—He has no beginning and no end. God (Elohim) emphasizes the infinite nature and majesty of God. God is the Lord over all His creation.

Commanded. The word *tsavah* has the meaning of to order, instruct, or give direction to. It stresses that what follows is to be heeded and obeyed. You are free to eat from any tree of the garden. God generously provided for the man's needs by planting a garden in which he was to live and work, as well as trees from which he could eat (vv. 8-9,15). God's command indicates that He made the man free in the sense that he was able to make moral choices. The man was free to either obey or disobey God.

Verse 17. God gave Adam only one prohibition, and this command tested Adam's (and later Eve's) trust, obedience, and loyalty. This prohibition also demonstrated there were limits to Adam's freedom. Adam was to live within the limits God established. You will certainly die. The consequence for disobeying God's command

would be death. God's intent for the man (and the woman) was that they would live forever (2:9; 3:22). But such life was contingent on their obedience to God's command.

GENESIS 3:16-19

Connection to the Point. God's plan for us to be stewards of His creation has not changed, but our ability to fulfill that is much harder as a consequence of sin.

Verses 16-17. God's judgment upon the woman was two-fold. It related to her roles as both a mother and a wife. Intensify your labor pains. The woman's pain of childbirth would be intensified. Whereas she acted independently in eating the fruit, now through God's judgment upon her she would be dependent upon her husband. The man Adam was the last to face God's judgment. Adam's God-given duty was to care for and watch over the garden God had made for and placed him in (2:15). It was Adam who had received directly from God the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vv. 16-17). He should have stopped his wife from eating the forbidden fruit. Instead, he stood silently by Eve's side as the serpent deceived her and then joined her in sin by eating the fruit she gave him (3:6).

Verses 18-19. Thorns and thistles represent all the ways the earth rebels against humanity's efforts to bring forth food. There would be flooding or drought, insects such as locusts would devour crops, and disease would destroy crops in the field. These are just some ways creation was subjected to futility because of Adam's disobedience (Rom. 8:20-22). God had placed man in the garden to care for and cultivate the many things God had caused to grow (2:8-9). Until he sinned, the man's work of tilling and harvesting would have been comparatively easy, rewarding, and fulfilling. Work remained the God-ordained purpose of humanity, but fulfilling that purpose would now entail pain, struggle, and oftentimes frustration.

Note: Additional commentary can be found at you.lifeway.com.