

# *Genesis*

*God's Grace*

*from the Beginning*

**Leaders Guide**

# Lesson 1

The “days” of the Creation narrative do not have to refer to a 24-hour period of time. The story is told in a poetic form and the days more likely refer to an indefinite period of time that could be centuries or even eons long. The Genesis account of creation is not intended to be a scientific account. The main point that the author (often assumed to be Moses) intends to communicate is that God is the source of everything seen and unseen, and that his creation was good.

## Question 1

Adam was told to work the garden and take care of it. This means he would have been doing many of the things a farmer would do—planting, pruning, and domesticating animals—but creation would have cooperated with his efforts in a way we can only imagine.

## Question 2

In Genesis, Chapter 1, God commanded man and woman together to fill the earth and subdue it. In Chapter 2, the creation of woman as a “helper” does not imply that man was self-sufficient, capable of fulfilling God’s mandate alone. God had said that it was “not good” for man to be alone.

Nor does it imply that woman was subservient to man. The Hebrew word used for “helper” is the same word used for God about twenty times in the Old Testament to refer to God’s activities to rescue and preserve his people. (*Beyond Sex Roles*, Gilbert Bilezikian, p. 255)

Similarly, being created from Adam’s rib does not imply the woman was somehow secondary or less responsible than the man in

fulfilling God's commands. Bilezikian writes, "...since she was taken from Adam, there was no confusion possible about her full participation in his humanity." (p. 29) Unlike the animals, woman was made from the same material as man. She was created after the man, but this also cannot be used to imply inferiority. After all, in the Genesis 1 account of creation all the animals were created before humankind!

### **Question 3**

The command for humankind to "subdue" the earth has often been interpreted to mean "to conquer and subjugate; put down; vanquish." (*American Heritage Dictionary*) Sadly, this has led to abuse and exploitation of the environment in the name of Christianity. The nuance in Genesis is more likely "to bring under cultivation." Adam and Eve were to manage creation responsibly, in a way that met their needs but did not exploit or destroy their environment.

### **Question 4**

The comments about marriage in verse 24 are not spoken by Adam but by the narrator. In a patriarchal society such as Israel, it is noteworthy that the narrator says a *man* will leave his mother and father. The narrator is emphasizing that the relationship between husband and wife is the foremost human relationship.

It is also interesting to note that the "one flesh" relationship applies only to husband and wife and not to blood relationships such as parents and children. As Bilezikian writes, "...the blood relationship of parent and child is only temporary, but the union of two strangers becomes permanent and it is designated as 'one flesh.'" (p. 35)

### **Question 5**

The serpent brought into question God's truthfulness (vv. 1, 4), God's goodness (v. 5), and God's willingness to provide for Adam and Eve (v. 5). Eve began to doubt that God would give her what she needed, so she took matters into her own hands. These same doubts are often behind our own temptations. For example, we may try to manipulate our children to do what we want rather than committing them to God's care in prayer.

### **Question 6**

Sin and shame became a barrier between Adam and Eve and God. Before they ate the fruit, their relationship with God was a natural and pleasurable interaction; now it had become a guilt-ridden and painful ordeal.

### **Question 7**

Adam and Eve's disobedience has resulted in death, separation from God. They can no longer enjoy the close, personal, and purposeful relationship they had with God.

The relationship between Adam and Eve is also altered. They will no longer work as partners to accomplish God's mandate. Instead, men will be burdened by their work, while women, who were created to enjoy partnership, will focus on their husbands and be dominated by them. Even the environment suffers as a result of sin. God does not curse Adam himself but curses the ground. The purposeful stewardship Adam was intended to exercise now becomes an endless battle between humanity and nature.

### **Question 8**

Verse 15 promises that a child born of a woman will deliver the final, fatal blow to the serpent (Satan). The one who defeats the

serpent will be injured in the conflict, but not killed. Even as Adam and Eve suffer the anguish of separation from God, God holds out the promise that they may still triumph.

### **Question 9**

This passage falls within an extended treatise Paul has written to the church of Rome, a church made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers. In this treatise, Paul lays out the fundamentals of his theology in preparation for a visit he hopes to make in the future.

Verses 13 and 14 are a parenthetical statement in which Paul anticipates a question that could arise for his readers. Jewish readers might say that before the Law was given to Moses, people did not know what constituted sinful behavior; the Law brought awareness of sin and the penalty for sin. But Paul says that the penalty for sin—death—has been there from the fall, whether or not people had a clear understanding of sin. Guilt and rebellion against God have been the experience of every human since Adam.

Paul writes that death brought condemnation for all of humanity; everyone is a sinner and is separated from God. This separation is characterized by the shame, broken relationships, and guilt we saw in the story of Adam and Eve.

### **Question 10**

The life that comes through Christ is available to anyone who chooses to receive it. It is not earned but is given by God's grace. It brings full justification instead of condemnation. Adam and Eve's disobedience brought sin, guilt, and shame. In Christ we are made acceptable to God and can enter into a relationship with God free from guilt and shame. *The New Bible Dictionary* entry on justification reads as follows: "Justification is to Paul God's fundamental act of blessing, for it both saves from the past and secures for the future.

On the one hand, it means pardon, and the end of hostility between God and ourselves. On the other hand, it means acceptance and a title to all blessings promised to the just, a thought which Paul develops by linking justification with adoption and heirship.”

### **Question 11**

Paul contrasts “reigning in life” to the reign of death, which keeps us trapped in our sins and burdened by the guilt and condemnation sin brings. We can reign in life because we have received abundant grace and are made righteous through Jesus Christ. There are many ways this plays out in our daily lives: We can forgive more easily because we have been forgiven. We can stand against temptation because we reign with Christ and are empowered by his Holy Spirit. And we can be freed from past guilt because Christ has released us from condemnation.

### **Question 12**

Just as the death and resurrection of Jesus has restored us to a right relationship with God, we can expect to see evidence of similar restoration by God in our relationships with others and with creation. This restoration will be incomplete until Jesus returns, but we can catch glimpses of it: in healthy Christian marriages and families; in small groups where people can confess to one another and share their hurts, knowing they will be accepted; and in Christian people and churches who live responsibly with nature and our environment.