

Session 1

HOW OUR STEWARDSHIP SUPPORTS THE VISION

Genesis 2:8-17

Memory Verse

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.

– GENESIS 2:15, CSB

How Our Stewardship Supports the Vision

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Genesis 2 explains the appropriate and fitting relationship between God and humanity. Adam was a steward. That is, he was given authority and responsibility under God's authority to care for God's creation.

? Do you have a favorite sports team that you follow? Who is it? What made you first start being a fan?

? Have you ever been guilty of coaching through the TV screen or from the stands? Why is this fruitless, even if the players can hear you from the stands?

Anyone who is invested in a sports team has been guilty at one time or another of armchair coaching. We love our teams too much to let them keep making the same mistake over and over, and we often believe we see things they may be overlooking.

The problem is our coaching doesn't do any good. It falls on deaf ears. Why? We don't have any authority. We may rant and rave, whoop and holler until we're blue in the face, but we'd be better off relaxing a bit and just enjoying the game.

There is someone, however, who does yell and direct with great effect and results. There is someone whose responsibility it is to oversee the team; that person just isn't

us. The only person who has the authority to command, correct, and chastise the players on the team is the coach. The coach has actual authority.

We process lots of competing messages in our lives, don't we? Many people would like to set themselves up as our ultimate authority. We hear counsel, direction, and correction from myriad sources. But who is our coach? Who really has the authority to direct us? To whom should we be paying attention? In our lesson today, we will consider the biblical blueprint for mankind's relationship to God. Namely, that we are meant to be stewards under His ultimate authority.

Session Summary

Genesis 2 is a foundational portion of Scripture for Christians. In it they find answers to their origin and purpose. Further, Genesis 2 provides a clear vision for how mankind is to interact with the one true and living God. The position in which Genesis 2 casts man is bound to be unpopular in our culture today because it goes against several sacred assumptions about humanity, not the least of which being that human beings are accountable to God for their words, thoughts, and actions. This presupposes that there is a universal moral standard by which all people should be held. Christians, of course, believe this to be the Scriptures—the Old and New Testaments. Unfortunately, few beliefs are as offensive to current mainstream Western culture as the belief in the authority of Scripture.

Our passage for today is all about the activity of God. Make no mistake; the canon of Scripture is, through and through, a book about God. But this is especially true about the text we are studying today. We tend to move the point of emphasis from Him to us when we read the Bible, but this is a grave mistake and a misrepresentation of the text.

To get a big picture of what took place in Genesis 2, we could cut the description into three main movements:

- God planted a garden.
- God provided water for His garden.
- God installed a servant to care for the garden.

Viewed this way, it is clear that this is God's story and not humanity's.

That being said, it is right for us to pay close attention to the section in which we find the first human present, for in it we gain clarity on who we are in relation to our Creator. In this passage we can see that God is Adam's authority, God determined Adam's job description, God provided for Adam's needs, and God gave Adam his limitations.

1. Under Authority (Gen. 2:8-15a)

Stewards are under authority. They have some authority, but it is only viable so long as the one who has given it to them continues to allow them to exercise it. After the description of the garden, notice the language in Genesis 2:15a: "The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden." God is pictured as sovereign, powerful, and in complete control. He is the ultimate authority over His creation, which included Adam.



Why do Christians need an authority in their lives? Should we view this authority as positive or negative? Explain.


It is a great mercy and kindness to find that God is the authority over one's life. If left to themselves, people make a great mess of many things. This is true of Christians and non-Christians alike, but the difference is that Christians have the opportunity to walk in obedience to God's Word having been made alive by His Spirit.

Christians still make a mess of things because the shadow of their old selves casts a long shadow. They still fight the old sin nature. They don't have the power, wisdom, or ability to live according to God's will on their own. This spiritual disability is prevalent and pervasive. That's why God's authority in the lives of people is a wonderful, merciful, needful thing. It's far from oppressive or constrictive.

What would be the result if people didn't have God's authority to rest in and submit to?


When people have no authority to rest in and submit to, then they will do what is right in their own eyes. They will follow their own desires, make decisions based on their emotions, and give way to their deceptive hearts. Christians are to submit to God the Father and their Lord Jesus Christ in every area of their lives. They fail at this, of course, but in Christ they find forgiveness and grace to redouble their meager efforts. Indeed, those who properly see the mercies and kindnesses of their good and gracious God can think of little more than pleasing Him.

Adam loved God, no doubt. Nothing could have been more comforting to this newly formed creature than to be taken by God and placed by God. Surely his heart cried out, "Do with me what you will, O great Creator!" And so it is with those who have found themselves the recipients of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

 **Application:** Do you rejoice that you are a creature under authority? Do you submit to and rest in the authority of God? Why or why not? What needs to change in your view of God's authority over your life?

2. The Job Description (Gen. 2:15b)

God's authority over Adam's life in Genesis 2 wasn't figurative. God placed Adam in the garden and wrote his job description: "to work it and watch over it." Adam was not free to do as he pleased. He wasn't told to discover his passion or pursue his dreams. Rather, Adam was bound to obey God's orders to the letter. God was, after all, his authority.

 What role did God give Adam in the garden? What does this teach us about stewardship?

 Why is submission to God's authority in our lives always the best way to live?

It is important to understand the dynamics of stewardship. Remember, God planted this garden. He provided constant water for it. Then, He delegated the care of it to Adam.

This is an important passage for Christians because it provides the framework for how they are to understand their labor in this world. First, let's review the foundation laid out in the creation account.

- God has authority over all His creation, which included everything.
- God entrusts parts of His creation to people.
- People are to carry out their duties as stewards of God's creation according to the will of God.

For example, if you have children, then God has entrusted you with their care. In effect, you are a steward of those creations of God. How are you to steward your role as a parent well? The Bible gives clear and plentiful instruction about how parents are to raise their children.

This is also true of resources. Whatever you have in your possession is actually the Lord's. You have been entrusted with it for God's glory, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the good of your neighbor. The Scriptures are clear about how those who fear the Lord should steward resources. One of the hardest lessons for Christians to learn is that the things that they have cherished, stored up, and depended upon for comfort don't ultimately belong to them, but to God.

? Application: Adam was entrusted with the garden. What has God given you to steward? Have you been faithful? What are some steps that you need to take this week in order to be a faithful steward of what God has given you?

3. Provision and Limitation (Gen. 2:16-17)

God is kind and compassionate to all of His creation. His common grace is extended to all humans on earth, causing His sun to rise on both the evil and the good (Matt. 5:45).

? What are some ways God has provided for all people whether they recognize it or not?

It's true that it's entirely within God's ability and power to cause food to appear at a family's doorstep day by day, but this isn't the order that God has ordained for His creation. Rather, people are to eat from the fruit of their labors (Ps. 128:2). God told Adam to eat from the trees of the garden. The very garden with which Adam had been entrusted would be the source of his daily bread.

God's good plan for all people on earth is to work diligently in the field to which they are assigned and to partake of the fruits of their labor for their sustenance. This is why Paul commanded, "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). Faithful stewards receive rewards and share their master's joy, while unfaithful stewards face the displeasure of their master (Matt. 25:14-30).

Stewards are under authority. The Christian is a steward under the authority of God, whose resources they steward. God's authority over His stewards manifests itself in both positive commands and negative. God commanded Adam to care for His garden (positive). In verse 17, we see God's command to Adam to refrain from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (negative).

? Why did God have the right to limit Adam? Why couldn't Adam have decided for himself the best way to live his own life?

All of God's commands, both negative and positive, are good and beneficial to mankind. The prohibitions, however, can seem restrictive to us. This is especially true in a culture that celebrates individual autonomy and independence. God's prohibitions are cast as the intolerant and backward laws of an irrelevant religion.

Christians, on the other hand, see God's prohibitions in a completely different light. They have abandoned the world's delusion of self-generated inner-peace and fulfillment through self-realization. Christians have tasted and seen that the Lord is good and all of His laws are life giving for those who have been raised to new life with Christ. Christians receive the prohibitions of God with a sigh of relief because they know them to be protection for their souls and signs of love from a good Father who loves His children enough to give them His Word and to shepherd their souls.

God's prohibition to Adam is a reminder to us that our relationship with God isn't one of employer and employee, but father and son. When the employee gets off of work and cashes his paycheck, he is unfettered by the expectations and wishes of his employer. The son, on the other hand, always lives under the gaze of the father. The father's will extends to all aspects of the son's life.


As stewards of their heavenly Father, Christians don't restrict their obedience to God to their vocation only, but allow God's Word to inform every area of their lives. Faithful stewards are faithful in all areas of their lives.

? **Application:** Are you a diligent worker who faithfully discharges the duties with which you have been entrusted? Why or why not? Are you cognizant of the fact that the provision that comes to you through your hard work actually proceeds from the hand of God? Do you thank Him for it or do you take credit yourself?

Conclusion

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and has the right to exercise authority over everything. God's authority extends to the lives of every person on earth, though many choose to defy Him. Those who fear the Lord and seek to walk in obedience to His Word recognize that they aren't owners, but stewards. They recognize that everything with which they have been entrusted belongs to their Creator, and they have been given the task to steward them according to the Creator's instructions found in His Word.

 What does it mean to be a steward? What are you stewarding? What are the things we have been called to steward as a church?

 Have you been acting as an owner or a steward? What is the difference between the two? What needs to change in your life?

 How does living as faithful stewards set us up for gospel conversations with those who don't yet believe?

CHRIST CONNECTION: The foundational truths that are unearthed in Genesis are held together by the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that Christ is the Lamb who was to be slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). In other words, Christ's work on behalf of sinners was planned before the first sin was ever committed.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Christians are a people on mission, but they are not free to choose what mission they will abide by. Rather, Christians are a people under authority. They are stewards with a charge.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Stewardship of Self

Main Passages

- Daniel 1:8-16

Session Outline

1. Pressure to Compromise (Dan. 1:8-10)
2. Simple Obedience (Dan. 1:11-14)
3. God's Faithfulness (Dan. 1:15-16)

Memorize

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.

- Genesis 2:15, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Genesis 1:26-31
- Tuesday - Genesis 2:8-17
- Wednesday - Matthew 25:14-30
- Thursday - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4
- Friday - 1 Peter 4:10-11
- Saturday - 1 Corinthians 10:31