



How Our Stewardship Supports the Vision

Summary and Goal

Humans have been called to be good stewards since creation. Adam was given the garden and told not to eat of the tree. His influence had limits, and he was to manage the garden for the glory of God just as we manage our resources to accomplish the vision of the church. Pre-enlist someone to share their testimony. If your group is over 12 Zoom "squares", consider using breakout rooms to help fight Zoom fatigue.

Main Passages

Genesis 2:8-17

Session Outline

1. Under Authority (Gen. 2:8-15a)
2. The Job Description (Gen. 2:15b)
3. Provision and Limitation (Gen. 2:16-17)

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.

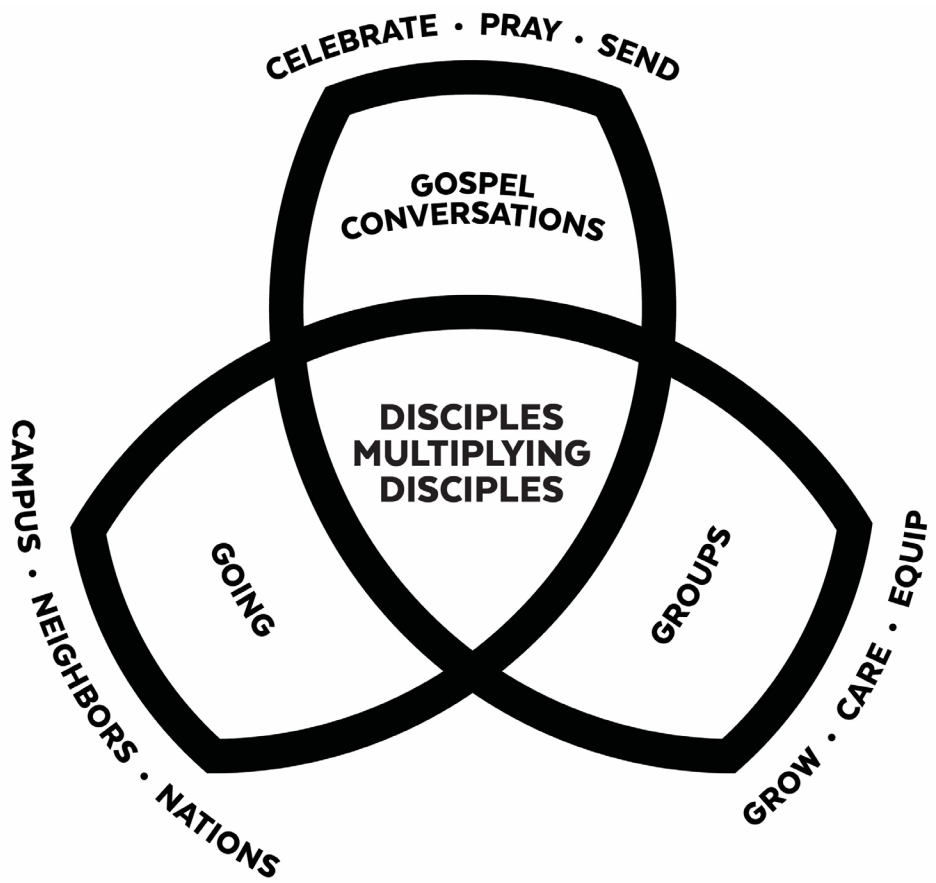
Christ Connection

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.

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



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Session Plan

How Our Stewardship Supports the Vision

Introduction

- ❓ 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?

The problem is our coaching doesn't do any good. It falls on deaf ears. 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.

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



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?



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?



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?

Where are you using your gifts from God to grow, care for and equip others? At church? Neighborhood?

Conclusion



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?



Expanded Session Content

How Our Stewardship Supports the Vision

Introduction

- ❓ 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.

Work and Watch Over

As a being created in God's image, Adam, like God, was to be a worker. Without the taint of sin, work was an undiluted blessing. The verb translated here as "work" literally means "serve." Adam's second task in the garden was to watch over it. The verb is used elsewhere to refer to the action of God toward his people (Ps 121:3-4) or the work of a military guard (Sg 5:7).

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?
Use the Breakout rooms for individuals to pray in groups of three.
- Leave time for group members to write down the person whom they are praying for by name.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer, confessing that all you have is from God, giving Him thanks for giving you the great privilege of stewarding His creation. Pray for wisdom and discernment to recognize sin in your own life especially as it pertains to your responsibility to steward God's belongings. Ask Him to lead you to grow as a steward of all He has given you.

Additional Resources

- *Kingdom Stewardship* by Tony Evans
- *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* by Randy Alcorn
- *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* by R. Kent Hughes

For Next Week

Session Title

- 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

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

Historical Context of Genesis

Purpose

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity. Genesis provides the foundation from which we understand God's covenant with Israel that was established with the giving of the law. For the Israelite community, the stories of the origins of humanity, sin, and the covenant relationship with God helped them understand why God gave them the law.

Author

Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the five books that include the book of Genesis, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author (Jos 8:35; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 8:9; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; Neh 8:1; 9:14; Dn 9:11,13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:19,26; Lk 2:22; 20:28; 24:44; Jn 1:17,45; 7:19; Ac 13:39; 15:21; 28:23; Rm 10:5; 1Co 9:9; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of "Dan" (14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

Setting

The Torah (a Hebrew term for "law" or "instruction") was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (literally, five vessels). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1-11) is a general history commonly called the "primeval history," showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12-50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the "patriarchal history," focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham's descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

Special Features

The book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb *bereshith*, "In Beginning" [based on 1:1]; Gk *Geneseos*, "Of Birth" [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence: the creation of the universe and the planet earth; the origins of plant and animal life; and the origins of human beings, marriage, families, nations, industry, artistic expression, religious ritual, prophecy, sin, law, crime, conflict, punishment, and death.

Extended Commentary

Genesis 2:8-17

2:8. Some of the vegetation created on the third day that would require man's cultivation and care was placed in a specific spot called Eden. This proper name could be related to the Hebrew word for "bliss" or "delight." The Septuagint uses the Greek word that is translated into the English "paradise." It might also come from a Mesopotamian word that means "plain." By announcing it was in the east, the author of Genesis must have been speaking from his perspective of the Sinai area. He will further note in Genesis 2:10-14 that the area was around a river that subsequently divided into four rivers named Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates and that the area contained many valuable things.

2:9. In these verses the author clearly describes that what the Lord God had prepared for man was generous and sufficient for his welfare. It is stated that in the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two trees that would have such subsequent significance are noted early in this creation account. What is meant by both life and knowledge of good and evil will be described in greater detail in Genesis 3.

2:10-14. The river that arose and then flowed through Eden seems to have produced four headwaters that created rivers named Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. These rivers provided irrigation to the region since there was an absence of rain at this time (Gen. 2:5-6). The fact that the names of two of these rivers still exist today in the area of Iraq (the Tigris and Euphrates) has caused many interpreters to suggest that the garden was in what today is southern Iraq. But the rivers of the pre-flood era may not be related to the post-flood rivers of the same name. It is possible that when the 28 survivors of the flood saw some major rivers, they named them after ones they had known in the pre-flood time.

Not only are the rivers named, but the land of these rivers is noted as being an area where gold, aromatic resin (or pearls), and onyx were found. This shows how wonderful and good was the place that God had prepared for man.

2:15-17. As God's supreme creation Adam was given great honor as well as important responsibilities. The concept of placing man in the garden is done with a Hebrew word that is often used to mean "rest." The concept of a Sabbath rest will be developed later in Scripture (see Heb. 3:7-4:11) and is probably to be related back to this presinful world where mankind was placed ("rested") with responsibilities.

The concepts of work it and take care of it involve two Hebrew verbs that are used later in the Pentateuch for spiritual service—for both worshiping and keeping the commandments of God. "Whatever activity the man was to engage in in the garden (and there is no reason to doubt that physical activity was involved), it was described in terms of spiritual service of the Lord" (Ross).

Man was not created to be lazy or to be a workaholic. His work was to involve a fulfillment of God's mandate to him in a place where he could find true rest and accomplishment. Before the female appeared on earth, the male of the human race had been given authority over creation and responsibility toward God.¹

References

1. Gangel, Kenneth O., and Stephen J. Bramer. *Genesis*. Edited by Max E. Anders. Holman Old Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002.

Author Bio

Kenneth Gangel (Genesis)

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel (1935-2009): A prolific author and an experienced leader has been influential in the field of Christian education for over forty years. He's written numerous articles and over 50 books, while pastoring, teaching, raising a family and leading schools. His impact reaches around the world through students, co-authored books, and working with leaders of churches and schools.

Stephen Bramer (Genesis)

Dr. Bramer taught for 16 years at Briercrest Bible College and at Briercrest Biblical Seminary in Saskatchewan, Canada, before joining the faculty of DTS. He also has enjoyed a variety of other ministries such as teaching elder, youth pastor, and pulpit supply throughout Canada and the United States. He serves as an adjunct professor for Word of Life Bible Institute, Hungary; Briercrest Seminary, Canada; as well as at the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS) in Jordan. He is a teaching pastor at Waterbrook Bible Fellowship and travels yearly to Israel and Jordan. Stephen and his wife, Sharon, enjoy visiting their three married children and nine grandchildren who live in three different countries.

Max Anders (Genesis)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling 30 Days to Understanding the Bible, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

Tony Evans (Kingdom Stewardship)

Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, founder and president of The Urban Alternative, former chaplain of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, and present chaplain of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks. His radio broadcast, The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans, can be heard on over 1,200 US radio outlets daily and in more than 130 countries. Dr. Evans launched the Tony Evans Training Center in 2017, an online learning platform providing quality seminary-style courses for a fraction of the cost to any person in any place. The goal is to increase Bible literacy not only in lay people but also in those Christian leaders who cannot afford nor find the time for formal ongoing education. For more information, visit: <http://www.TonyEvans.org>.

Randy Alcorn (Money, Possessions, and Eternity)

Randy Alcorn is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching biblical truth and drawing attention to the needy and how to help them. Alcorn is the author of over 40 books, including Heaven; Money, Possessions and Eternity; Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments; and The Treasure Principle. His novels include Deadline; Dominion; Deception; and Safely Home. Alcorn resides in Oregon with his wife, Nanci.

R. Kent Hughes (Genesis: Beginning and Blessing)

R. Kent Hughes (DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is senior pastor emeritus of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, and former professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hughes is also a founder of the Charles Simeon Trust, which conducts expository preaching conferences throughout North America and worldwide. He serves as the series editor for the Preaching the Word commentary series and is the author or coauthor of many books. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, and have four children and an ever-increasing number of grandchildren.