



## YEAR 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

### Module 1—Genesis Part 1

#### Lesson 2: God Gives People a Purpose—Genesis 1:28—2

### BIBLICAL REFLECTION

*(A theological and biblical reflection on today's Scripture passage.)*

### INTRODUCTION

Depending on the source you choose to determine what it means to be made in the image of God, you'll find a variety of meanings. Some meanings focus on the intellect, emotion, and will of God. Others focus on the representation element of humanity. That is, God created us to represent him to the world around us. Still, others imagine to be created in the image of God is to be put to work and to be held responsible for the earth. In reality, all of these are true. To be created in the image of God, therefore, is to be created with value, duty, and competence. As Christians, our redemption and liberation from being held captive by sin and despair allows us to humbly recognize our value, be more understanding of the duty we have been given, and to trust our competence knowing that God has given everything we need to live into our purpose which is to live wholly.

*Value:* Since all of us have been created in the image of God, we are required to treat other people with dignity and respect. We (all of humanity—oppressor and victim alike) are valuable in God's eyes. This, after all, is why God created humanity—to enjoy relationship with God. Part of what it means to love God back is loving all of God's created order.

This way of life (holding a view that all people matter equally) changes the way we view the world, or at least it should. As Christians, we ought to see the world as something we have the privilege to shape in order to preserve the value of all of life. This means that we are called by God, having been created in God's image, to help defend the rights of those who are being oppressed. Since all are valuable, all should be valued. Christians have both the calling and the privilege to find ways as the people of God, the Church, to bring dignity to all. Although all of society may not declare value with their words and deeds, we must personally and unselfishly value dignity and justice. For this reason, every Christian should participate in the social action and change of this world.

*Duty:* How do we participate in this world? How do we function socially, economically, ecologically, and so on? As creations in the image of God, this is our duty—to take responsibility for the way of this world and seek change and transformation. In seeing this world this way, each of us as Christians professes the obligation to live as a reminder to this world that God has not forgotten us. We will look more at what it means to be responsible for the world in each of the sections below.

*Competence:* We are intelligent beings created with the capacity to perform well. Our performance in this world, however, is not tied to our individual skills to achieve for self but God's overall purpose for this world. Our goals in life should be governed by our craving to be Christlike. In our craving to be godly people we reject the ways of the world and live with an alternative mindset—the Jesus way.

The competence in which we have been created allows us to live out the virtues of the kingdom of God and reject the often tempting and controlling empire of mankind. Our spirituality is tied to a commitment, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to live out the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) and the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

### ***GOD'S STORY***

You can't live into the image of God if you don't understand the purpose of our lives. God's creative and loving act of establishing the image of God into humanity is for the purpose of being in relationship with Him, to enjoy Him, and lead creation in glorifying Him.

Some say that the mission of God to restore the world cannot be an accurate call for Christians to live within since sin and brokenness wasn't God's original intent. Wholeness (completeness), however, has always been God's plan. The fact that we are called to reflect God's image in the world is not a new responsibility given to humankind after the fall of man, but rather an old responsibility deeply embedded into each one of us from the beginning. Therefore, the call of God for humanity (lived out by Christians) is to live in such a way that reflects the wholeness God desires for our entire universe.

### ***OUR STORY***

We've been given two distinct roles, or tasks, as humans. The first of which is to be fruitful and fill the earth while subduing and ruling over it (Genesis 1:28). The second task of humankind is to be stewards of creation (Genesis 2:15).

To be fruitful and multiply is a gift. We often think of procreation as merely a means to make more humans. This, however, is only part of the equation. To create a human being is to create a person made in the image of God. This means we are creating more people to participate with God to act as co-creators of God's purposes. This is where subduing and ruling over the earth comes into the discussion. To subdue is to farm or to cultivate. To rule (as used in Genesis 1:28) is to exercise dominion. This means that we have been delegated by God to make God's territory, as a king in ancient times would do. Kings would mark their territory, placing statues to mark their boundaries. In this sense, humans are markers of God's territory, the whole earth. It is important to note here that we do not hold the authority, we are merely delegated by God to practice the authority and in this sense we are "little kings" on this earth.

### ***OTHERS' STORY***

The second task, to work and keep the earth (Genesis 2:15) means that we are to work hard and in doing so be the "little kings" we were meant to be. We are also meant to keep the earth. This means we were created to protect it and to look after it.

There is much to do these days about the importance of being responsible for the earth. That is, to be environmentally-minded. Unfortunately, I meet many Christians who only see their role as sharing Jesus' saving message with the world. This is for certain one of the aspects of Christlike living. After all, how can we be participating with God to make the world whole if we are not calling people to holy living? However, this is only part of what God requires from Christians. Genesis 2:15 is very clear that we are to keep the earth—we are to protect it. Christians who choose not to take a role in caring for our planet choose to only partially live into the image of God. In what ways are you helping to keep the earth?

### ***THE WORLD'S STORY***

All of creation exists to represent the praise and glory of God, correct? This is not something we humans hold as an exclusive role. All of creation is to praise God. This means that we work with creation to cry out through our words and deeds the glory of God.

It is out of our gratitude that we can earnestly seek to glorify God. Reflect on the words of Michael Northcott, author of *The Environment and Christian Ethics*:

“This response of gratitude is a fundamental feature of creaturely being which is shared by all the creatures of the earth, humans and animals, landscapes, seas and mountains, earth, wind, fire and rain. The Psalmist charges all things with the first moral duty of creation, to worship and praise the creator... In the Hebrew perspective humanity and the cosmos have moral significance, and both are required to make a moral response to the creator, a response to God which reflects his glory and offers the return of gratitude, praise and worship.”

Finish this reflection by reading the following verses from Psalm 150:

Praise the Lord (v. 1)

Praise God in his sanctuary;

Praise him in his mighty heavens (v. 2).

Praise him for his acts of power;

Praise him for his surpassing greatness (v. 3).

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord (v. 6).