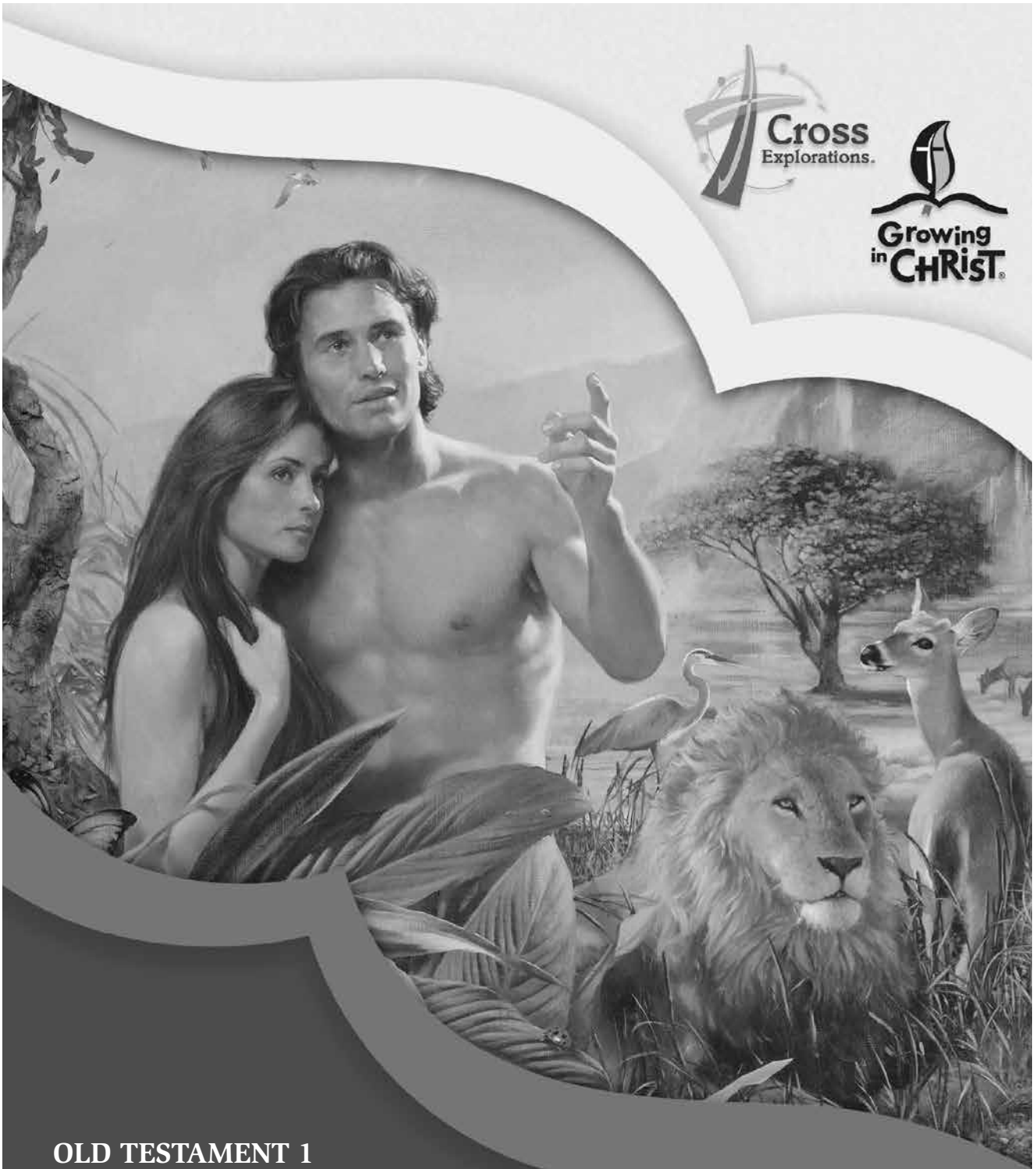




OLD TESTAMENT 1

Adult Bible Study

God Creates a World and a People

REPRODUCIBLE STUDY PAGES



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Introduction

God promises to strengthen our life in Christ as we study His Word. This Adult Bible Study series provides resources to help you do just that, giving you an opportunity to study some familiar, and possibly some not-so-familiar, biblical accounts in depth.

Each of the Bible study books has thirteen sessions that are divided into four easy-to-use sections.

Start—Section 1 of each session invites discussion and thinking to draw participants into the study.

Study—Section 2 of each session explores a portion of Scripture through the use of a brief commentary and questions that help the participants study the text.

Share—Section 3 of each session helps the participants apply to their lives both God's Law and His Gospel, as revealed in the scriptural account.

Send—Section 4 of each session provides the participants with practical suggestions for taking the theme of the lesson out of the classroom and into the world.

This study is designed to assist both novice and expert Bible students in their study of Holy Scripture. It offers resources that will enable them to grow in their understanding of God's Word while strengthening their life in Christ.

As an added benefit, the sessions in this Adult Bible Study series follow the Scripture lessons taught in both the Growing in Christ and the Cross Explorations Sunday School series. Parents will enjoy studying the Bible stories their children are studying in Sunday School. This will provide parents and children additional opportunities to

- explore God's Word together;
- extend lesson applications to everyday situations;
- pray together; and
- engage in family activities that grow out of lesson truths.

How to Use This Bible Study

This leader guide gives you all the material you need to teach the thirteen Bible stories for this quarter. The material is designed to be used in an adult Bible study while children are participating in Sunday School. Shorten or lengthen the suggested section times to fit your time frame.

Each lesson includes a brief Bible commentary with the key point, Law/Gospel statements, discussion questions with leader notes, and a front-and-back Reproducible Student Page at the end of the lesson. Make copies of the Student Page to distribute to class members. This new format allows for the frequent fluctuation in class size that is common to adult study groups. You will also save money by ordering one leader guide, rather than individual student books.

We encourage you to order the Bible Posters for this quarter. These large works of art will provide your class with memorable visuals of the texts they are studying. (To order, call 1-800-325-3040; ask for CPH stock number 44-4108.)

World History	Dates	Biblical Events
Indus Valley Civilization	2600 BC	Creation, fall, flood, Babel
Egyptian 4th–8th Dynasties	2575 BC	
	2500 BC	
Akkadian, Sargon I	2340 BC	
	2250 BC	Patriarchs
	2166 BC	Abram born
Egyptian 9th–11th Dynasties	2125 BC	
Chinese Xia Dynasty/ Third Sumerian Dynasty of Ur	2100 BC	
	2091 BC	Abram moves to Canaan
	2080 BC	Ishmael born
	2066 BC	Isaac born
	2050 BC	Abraham offers Isaac
	2006 BC	Jacob and Esau born
	1991 BC	Abraham dies
	1929 BC	Jacob flees to Haran
	1915 BC	Joseph born

Preparing the Lesson

God Creates the World

Genesis 1:1–2:3

Key Point

God made the world in six days by the power of His Word. All creation is God's blessing to us.

Law/Gospel

God requires that I believe that He is the only true God, the Creator and Sustainer of the world.

God gives me faith to believe that He created the earth and heavens, and He continues to provide me with all that I need to sustain this body and life, including forgiveness for my sins, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Context

Genesis is a family history about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (called Israel), chosen by God. The creation account and other material in Genesis 1–11 serves as foundation for the family history that follows in Genesis 12–50.

Moses is the authority behind the first five books of the Bible, called the Torah (Law). Some material was revealed directly to Moses; other material was known to generations before Moses and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was set down by him or immediate successors.

The Genesis accounts of creation, the preflood world, the flood, and the immediate resettlement after the flood have parallels in ancient writings that predate Moses, particularly in Mesopotamia.

Commentary

The Spirit of God hovering over the waters of the formless void shows that the Spirit brings order out of chaos. This image recurs in the Baptism of Christ (Mark 1:10), where it reminds us that in Christ we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), with the Spirit bringing order out of our chaos. The Hebrew word translated "Spirit" in Genesis 1:2 also means "wind" or "breath."

Words are formed from breath. As God proceeds to speak creation into being, the Genesis account establishes a unity between God the speaker, the Word by which He created the world, and the Spirit.

This Word became flesh in Christ Jesus, as proclaimed in John 1:1–14. The words of Psalm 104:30 also portray the Spirit as an agent of creation. God's Word does what it says ("Let there be . . . and there was"). What God declares is true; God's Word is truth (John 17:17).

God begins His creation by creating light on the first day. God is the real source of light. Each day, God adds dramatically to the world that He calls "good"—heaven; earth and seas; plants; sun, moon, and stars; creatures that swim and fly; creatures that walk and crawl on the ground; and finally, man, both male and female. Some mistakenly worship the sun or other elements of creation that merely do what God assigns to them. However, they were not made to be worshiped but to be used.

The creation of people on the sixth day serves as the climax of creation. God creates both male and female in His image. Our image is not physical likeness but spiritual likeness, or righteousness. Note that man's rule over all other creatures and marriage/procreation are part of the sinless creation, which God declares "very good." God gives plants as food; death for humans and animals is not part of this perfect creation. Everything is intended to work for good.

Because God rested on the seventh day (our Saturday), the Sabbath ("rest") day was set apart ("made holy"). The ceremonial laws regarding the Sabbath have their fulfillment in Christ, who, having finished His work on Good Friday (John 19:30), rested in the tomb on the Sabbath. Christians from the earliest times met on Sundays to celebrate His resurrection. The commandment concerning the Sabbath no longer pertains to a particular day of the week but rather to setting aside time so that God might re-create us through His Word. Creation's patterns give us a sense of how things "ought to be."

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 1

God Creates the World

Genesis 1:1–2:3

1 Start (10 minutes)

Pray Lord God, heavenly Father, You made the world in six days by the power of Your Word, and You have given us all of creation as a blessing. We thank and praise You for so wonderfully creating and redeeming us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. For His sake, forgive us for the times when we doubt that You have created us and still preserve us. Grant us Your Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament to strengthen our faith in You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Say 1. "I just can't believe that God could create the world in six twenty-four-hour days! How could that be possible? The Genesis story simply couldn't be true." How would you respond to a friend who said that?

Various answers are possible. The most obvious answer is that God is almighty—He is able to do whatever He wants, no matter how implausible it sounds to us. But a more compelling way of answering is to appeal to the words of Jesus. In Matthew 19:4–5, Jesus cites Genesis 1:27 in response to the Pharisees' question about divorce. Jesus clearly accepts that Moses' words about God's creation of mankind are accurate and literal. Jesus would tell your friend that the words recorded in Genesis are God's Word. Therefore, they are absolutely true and reliable. God wonderfully created the world in six days by the power of His Word!

2 Study (15 minutes)

Say 2. Compare Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1–4. Was "the Word" in existence at the time of creation? Who is "the Word" that John refers to (see John 1:14)? In Genesis 1:3, we learn that God said, "Let there be light," and there was. Who spoke those words? Read John 8:12. What kind of light was given through Him (see John 1:4)?

John 1:1 uses the same Greek words for "in the beginning" that the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) uses in Genesis 1:1. John does this intentionally to make his readers recall the creation account. Yet, instead of saying "in the beginning God created the Word," John writes, "In the beginning was the Word" (emphasis added). The Word was already in existence at the time of the creation of the world. In fact, the Word was God and was the Creator of all things. The Word is clearly the eternal Son of God, begotten (not created!) of the Father from eternity, who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

We can never understand how God the Father begot His Son, nor can we understand how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, but this is how God has revealed Himself to us. He is the triune God, or the Trinity. God is three persons but one God. When God said, "Let there be light," it was the Word, the eternal Son of God, who spoke. Not only was He the speaker, but He is also the true "light of the world" who came to give His followers the "light of life" (John 8:12); that is, eternal life through faith in Him.

Say 3. In Genesis 2:2–3, we learn that God rested from His work, setting apart the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath, a day of rest. Read John 5:17–18. In what ways does God continue to work in the creation to this very day? How could Jesus violate the Sabbath requirements without breaking God's Law?

God not only creates the world but also sustains it. If the sun comes up tomorrow, it is because God wills it. As Genesis 2:3 indicates, on the seventh day God rested from His work of creating new things—but not from His preservation of the world. Jesus indicates this in John 5:17, where He includes Himself in God's work. By saying this, He claimed that He is the Son of God, indeed, equal to God. That is, He is God Himself.

As institutor of the Sabbath, Jesus is not subject to its requirements, as Mark 2:28 says, "The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." Jesus often worked on the Sabbath to restore His creation, giving new life to the sick and dying, such as the man with a shriveled hand in Mark 3:1–6.

Say 4. In Genesis 1:29–30, God gives seed-bearing plants and fruit to humans to eat, and He gives every green plant to the animals to eat. What clearly was not to be eaten? Why not? When did God give permission for mankind to change their diet? See Genesis 9:3.

God did not intend death for His creation, but life. He gave plants and fruit to mankind and the animals to eat. They could not (nor did they need to) eat meat obtained by killing other animals. Plants and fruit are not "alive" in the same sense that humans and animals are. The spilling of blood would have introduced death into the creation, which God did not want. In Genesis 9:3, after the flood, God gave Noah permission to eat the flesh of animals. Therefore, Christians can, in good conscience, eat meat in addition to fruits and vegetables.

Say 5. Moses tells us five times that what God made was "good." In Genesis 1:31, the whole creation is described as "very good." What must life in the unspoiled creation have been like? Read Revelation 21:1–5. When will Christians be restored to the "very good" life?

In Genesis 1, "good" means the same thing as "perfect." Once God's work on the sixth day was finished, the Creation was perfectly complete. Everything worked together in harmony. Everyone was happy. There was no pain or sorrow or tears. In a word, there was no sin. We know that we can't go back, but God promises Christians something even better than the original Paradise.

Revelation 21:1–5 describes the resurrection life we will share with God in the new heavens and new earth. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, He is "making all things new."

3 Share (10 minutes)

The Book of Genesis sets the stage for the rest of the Bible. God created us out of nothing, a pattern He carries throughout His entire revelation to the world. Genesis establishes that God is the giver; we are merely receivers. We were spoken into existence by the power of God's Word. Today, we are declared righteous through God's mighty forgiving Word, even though we have not a shred of righteousness or worthiness in ourselves.

It is both humbling and encouraging that God is the only source of life. If we reflect on the vastness of the universe and the billions of people on our planet, we are overwhelmed. Yet, what are they but creatures, things that God has made and still preserves? How small is the creature that stands before the Creator of the universe!

As Christians, though, we can take courage. The God who created us is the One who redeemed us. The only One who could destroy death is the One who is life Himself, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. His sinless life, atoning death, and justifying resurrection have earned salvation for us. By water and His creative Word, we are united with Him. In His Word of Absolution, He declares us righteous. His creative Word causes bread to be His own body given for you and wine to be His very blood shed for you. The forgiveness, life, and salvation He gives us in the Means of Grace are His greatest gifts to us.

God is the giver, and He always wants to give us more than we need. The Creator continues to provide for us today. Martin Luther gives a wonderful description of the ways that God provides for us in his explanation of the First Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism. In summary, God "richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life." Think about the depth and breadth of what the Lord gives us—"all that I need." There is no part of your life that is not touched by God's generosity. He is all in all!

Answer the following questions as you discuss how God's creation affects your life:

Say 6. The Hebrew word used in Genesis for "create" is used only when referring to God. It means "to make out of nothing." What is the difference between mankind's creativity and God's? Read Romans 4:17. How does God express His creativity to us?

Human creativity is totally dependent on God, who made us, gave us our intellects, and gives us the materials with which to be creative. God expresses His creativity by speaking His Word, which makes things out of nothing. Whenever He speaks, whatever He says happens. God's creativity is essential to who He is—the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Romans 4:17). God's speaking calls things into existence and speaks the dead back to life. In creation, we see the power of God's Word to do what it says.

Say 7. Luther says in the Small Catechism that God “richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.” How, then, do we account for the times in our lives when it doesn’t feel like we have everything that we need? Read Matthew 6:8.

The key word in Luther’s explanation is “need.” Jesus says in Matthew 6:8, “Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” No matter how badly things may go in Christians’ lives, they can be assured that God knows exactly what they need. He has promised in Baptism to save them, and He will see them through. But remember that we must always pray, “Thy will be done.” Because of our sinful nature, what we think we need is not always what God knows we need. Therefore, we must simply trust that the Lord will take care of us, even (especially!) when we face death.

4 Send (5 minutes)

Give participants the text for next week, and encourage them to read it ahead of time in preparation for next week’s discussion.

For the **Family Connections** section, encourage the class to study the Small Catechism at home regularly, especially if they have children. Children are able to memorize well, and the catechism will be a great asset for them throughout their lives. If students in the class do not have catechisms for themselves and their children, see if the church has copies available for distribution. Encourage families to read the First Article and its meaning.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, remind the group of Jesus’ words in Mark 10:15, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” Little children are completely dependent on their parents for food, clothing, and care. This is a picture of our relationship with our heavenly Father. Review Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Creed from your catechism.

Lesson 1 Student Page

God Creates the World Genesis 1:1–2:3

- ① “I just can’t believe that God could create the world in six twenty-four-hour days! How could that be possible? The Genesis story simply couldn’t be true.” How would you respond to a friend who said that?
- ② Compare Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1–4. Was “the Word” in existence at the time of creation? Who is “the Word” that John refers to (see John 1:14)? In Genesis 1:3, we learn that God said, “Let there be light,” and there was. Who spoke those words? Read John 8:12. What kind of light was given through Him (see John 1:4)?
- ③ In Genesis 2:2–3, we learn that God rested from His work, setting apart the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath, a day of rest. Read John 5:17–18. In what ways does God continue to work in the creation to this very day? How could Jesus violate the Sabbath requirements without breaking God’s Law?
- ④ In Genesis 1:29–30, God gives seed-bearing plants and fruit to humans to eat, and He gives every green plant to the animals to eat. What clearly was not to be eaten? Why not? When did God give permission for mankind to change their diet? See Genesis 9:3.
- ⑤ Moses tells us five times that what God made was “good.” In Genesis 1:31, the whole creation is described as “very good.” What must life in the unspoiled creation have been like? Read Revelation 21:1–5. When will Christians be restored to the “very good” life?
- ⑥ The Hebrew word used in Genesis for “create” is used only when referring to God. It means “to make out of nothing.” What is the difference between mankind’s creativity and God’s? Read Romans 4:17. How does God express His creativity to us?
- ⑦ Luther says in the Small Catechism that God “richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.” How, then, do we account for the times in our lives when it doesn’t feel like we have everything that we need? Read Matthew 6:8.

Lesson 1 Student Page

Through the Week

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over each child's leaflet together, sharing what you learned about today's Bible story.

One of the best things you can do for your family is to work on memorizing Luther's Small Catechism together. The study of Genesis 1–2 draws us into reflection on the First Article of the Apostles' Creed; "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

This week, say the Creed with your family every day, and work on memorizing Luther's explanation of the First Article: "What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true."

In one episode of *The Simpsons*, Bart prayed before dinner, "Dear God, we paid for all this food ourselves, so thanks for nothing." This is the attitude of many people today. At dinnertime for the next week, consider following the suggested mealtime prayer at mealtimes in Luther's Small Catechism.

Personal Reflection

Studying the creation account helps us to understand our absolute dependence on God for everything. As adults, we delude ourselves into thinking that we are independent, that we can control what goes on in our lives. We forget how little control we actually have. When we find things that we can't control, we worry about them. Worry is one of our greatest sins. "What do you mean?" you might ask. "Worry is a sin?" Absolutely! Read Matthew 6:25–34. Think about what Jesus is telling you about worry in this passage.

This week, reflect on how complete God's fatherly care for you is—He has created you, saved you from your sins, and still takes care of your day-to-day life! Could you ask for anything more

Preparing the Lesson

God Creates Adam and Eve

Genesis 1:26–2:25

Key Point

God has made us in His image, provides all things for our good, and makes us rulers over the earth and everything in it.

Law/Gospel

God appoints me as a caretaker of His creation and expects me to take care of it for His glory and the good of others. **God provides me with all good things for this life and forgives me for Jesus' sake when I put myself above Him and His creation or when I misuse or neglect my vocation to rule the earth properly.**

Context

Some have argued that Genesis 2 is a second account of creation. But Genesis 2 presupposes the five preceding days of creation. This chapter reviews in more detail the creation of mankind in Adam and Eve.

Commentary

The name *Adam* means “earth” and points to humanity’s material aspect. But the “breath,” or “spirit,” of God makes Adam a living being and gives him fellowship with God. God is the source of life—turning away from that source leads to death. Having God’s Spirit in Genesis 2 corresponds to being made in the image of God in Genesis 1. The earthly blessings that follow express the love God has for Adam.

Eden is sometimes called “Paradise” (garden). The tree of life within Eden may have been planted near running or “living” water—as in Psalm 1:3. Note that the tree of life and living water are linked again in Revelation 22:1–2.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is sometimes identified as an apple tree because the Latin words for *evil* and *apple* share the same root,

mal. Jewish tradition pictures the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a citron tree or a grapevine. But the actual fruit is never identified in Scripture.

Four rivers flow from around Eden, including two that were the mainstay of Mesopotamian life and civilization: the Tigris and the Euphrates. The locations of the other two rivers have not been identified, perhaps due to changes to the earth’s surface during the worldwide flood later in Genesis.

Man is given the task of working the garden. To this day, work, or vocation, remains one of our innate needs. Adam’s naming of the animals shows mastery as well as intelligence.

Note the underlying pattern, hierarchy, and priority. There are things above and below; all things are good, but some are better—or could be better. Adam in Paradise needs a “suitable helper.” The woman is created from his flesh so that he will care for her as for himself. Moses issues a command: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). The marriage relationship has priority even over parental obligations.

The man and woman were naked and without shame. They were open and trusting, with nothing to hide. A child with beautiful freckles may be made ashamed due to hurtful comments and insults and then may internalize that shame. Shame arises from evil without as well as from evil within; Paradise was free of both. Living according to God’s Law brings earthly blessing. The man Adam foreshadows Christ, the new Adam (Romans 5:12–21), who brings believers into eternal paradise (Luke 23:43).

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 2

God Creates Adam and Eve

Genesis 1:26–2:25

1 Start (10 minutes)

Pray Lord God, heavenly Father, You have made us in Your image, provided all things for our good, and made us rulers over the earth and everything in it. We thank and praise You for so wonderfully creating and redeeming us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. For His sake, forgive us for the times when we fail to believe Your Word and rule over Your creation justly. Grant us Your Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament to strengthen our faith in You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Ask 1. Of your many earthly gifts from God, which are the most important to you? How does the creation account demonstrate which of His creatures should be most important?

Various answers are possible, but people will most likely say that other people—family and friends—are the most important gifts God has given them. The creation account suggests the same thing, because humans are created in the image and likeness of God, with the breath of life, which sets them apart with a dignity greater than all other creatures. Humans are the crown of God's creation.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Genesis 1:26–2:25 teaches us that mankind, both male and female, was created in the image and likeness of God. These discussion questions will discuss various aspects of the image of God.

Say 2. One aspect of the image of God is righteousness; that is, being without sin. Just as God is without sin, so mankind was created sinless and righteous. When Adam and Eve sinned, however, they completely lost the righteousness that they originally had from being created in the image of God. Instead of original righteousness, what is each of us born with? How does God restore us to righteousness and His image? See Colossians 1:15–20 and 1 Corinthians 1:30.

In the fall, mankind completely lost its original righteousness, and now every human is born with original sin. Being born in this sinful condition, we are inherently guilty and without righteousness. Jesus Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). God sent His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary and to live the perfectly righteous life that we could not. He died to atone for the guilt of human sin. He has become our “righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

God restores us to righteousness and His image by baptizing us into His Son. Because we are in Christ, when God looks at us, He does not see our sin but He sees the righteousness of Christ. We have the image of God restored to us through faith in Christ.

Say 3. A second aspect of the image of God is dominion; that is, control and rule or lordship. Read Genesis 1:26 carefully. What is the connection between mankind being created in God's image and God's command for us to rule over the world? How does a good ruler or lord treat his subjects? How, then, should people rule over the world? How has the fall affected our understanding of dominion? How does our Lord Jesus Christ rule us? See Matthew 20:25–28.

God has dominion over His entire creation. As an image of God's dominion, people are given dominion over the world. A good ruler or lord (like God!) has the best interests of his subjects in mind and is kind, fair, and merciful to them. Think of all the ways that God serves us with His gifts. In ruling the world, then, we should treat the world well, just as God treats us. We are God's stewards of the rest of the world.

However, since the fall, we interpret dominion to be *domination*; that is, bringing things into slavery for our own sinful purposes. Jesus Christ forgives us for our sins of dominating the world. Glory be to the Lord, who did not come to lord His authority over us, "but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Say 4. A third aspect of the image of God is that we have the breath of life from God. We confess in the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit is "the Lord and giver of life." Read Genesis 2:7. How does the Spirit give us life? What does the word *inspiration* mean in Christian theology? Read John 6:63. Whose words are inspired? Read John 20:19–23. How does God breathe new life into people who are dead in sin?

The word *spirit* can mean "wind" or "breath." The breath of life is given to the lump of dirt, and a man is formed. When the Spirit breathes, He gives life. In Christian theology, *inspiration* means "Spirit-breathed." Because the Holy Spirit guided the writers of the Bible, the Scriptures are inspired by God the Holy Spirit. Jesus identifies His own words as inspired in John 6:63, wherein He says that they are "spirit and life." Jesus' words actually give life because they bear the Holy Spirit, who is the Lord and giver of life.

In John 20:19–23, Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples and gives them the authority to forgive sins. When our sins are forgiven, we are no longer dead, because "where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation" from the Holy Spirit (Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar). *Note:* If anyone asks what the "breath of life" in Genesis 1:30 means, it refers to the physical life that animals have, not the spiritual life given by the Holy Spirit.

Say 5. Another aspect of the image of God is community. Read Genesis 2:18. Why was it not good for Adam to be alone? Why did he need a suitable helper? How does God dispel loneliness and provide community through the institution of marriage? Read Ephesians 5:22–33. How does Christian marriage provide a picture of Christ's love for His Church and of the Church's love for Christ?

It says in 1 John 4:16 that “God is love.” The three persons of the Trinity are present in Genesis and united in perfect love. The triune God created the world (Genesis 1:1). God the Father spoke creation into existence (“Let there be . . .”). Christ is God’s Word from eternity; He is the agent of creation and the source of life and light (John 1:1–5). The Holy Spirit hovered over the waters at creation (Genesis 1:2). The triune God spoke in the plural when He created man: “Let Us make man in Our image” (Genesis 1:26).

The nature of love is to go outside itself and give to others. God created man in His image to share in a perfect relationship of love, but if man were alone, he would have no one to love. God was with the first man He created, but God also wanted him to have another person to love. The first man would show that he was created in God’s image to love others. God created the first woman, Eve, as the perfect companion for Adam, the first man. They complemented each other perfectly.

3 Share (10 minutes)

Say 6. **As Christians, we believe that Genesis 1–2 describes God’s intentional and loving creation of mankind. How does what we believe about creation affect our view of the dignity of every living person? How does what we believe about Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice affect our view of one another? See John 3:16.**

Every person we encounter in our lives was created in God’s image and has dignity because of that. Jesus died for every person in the world (John 3:16), even though some reject His forgiveness. Since everyone we meet is created by God and redeemed by the Son’s perfect sacrifice, everyone from the greatest to the least is entitled to our highest respect and love. As Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:19). How often we fail to do this! Jesus forgives us for our sins against one another, and through His Spirit we are given strength to love and serve one another. We should seek ways to help those who are least able to help themselves, particularly unborn babies, the invalid, and the elderly.

Say 7. **Read Genesis 2:15. Was the need to work part of God’s perfect creation or the result of sin? Why is work sometimes such a difficult and joyless thing? Why would a life of idleness not be God-pleasing? How does our work serve God?**

Work itself is not the result of sin. God’s work was good, and so mankind’s original work was good. Under sin, our work now becomes toil, because the earth works *against* us. Yet all work, even that done by unbelievers, is the proper vocation of mankind. All of us should be encouraged to continue in our vocations. We were not created for idleness. To shirk doing our vocations is to abandon God by not doing His will and to abandon our neighbor by not serving him. We can take comfort in knowing that God is still working to preserve the world and that He works forgiveness of sins in the Church through His Means of Grace.

4 Send (5 minutes)

Give participants the text for next week, and encourage them to read it ahead of time in preparation for next week's discussion.

For the **Family Connections** section, encourage the class to study the Small Catechism at home regularly, especially if they have children. Children are able to memorize well, and the Catechism will be a great asset for them throughout their lives. If participants in the class do not have catechisms for themselves and their children, see if the church has copies available for distribution. Continue to work on memorizing the First Article.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, remind the group of Jesus' words in John 3:5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." In Baptism, the Word of God and the water combine to forgive our sins and give us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is not merely a one-time event, but it stays with us every day and is a personal "mighty fortress" against doubt and despair. Demonstrate how to begin the day with God's holy name by making the sign of the cross to remember one's Baptism.

Lesson 2 Student Page

God Creates Adam and Eve Genesis 1:26–2:25

- ① Of your many earthly gifts from God, which are the most important to you? How does the creation account demonstrate which of His creatures should be most important?
- ② One aspect of the image of God is righteousness; that is, being without sin. Just as God is without sin, so mankind was created sinless and righteous. When Adam and Eve sinned, however, they completely lost the righteousness that they originally had from being created in the image of God. Instead of original righteousness, what is each of us born with? How does God restore us to righteousness and His image? See Colossians 1:15–20 and 1 Corinthians 1:30.
- ③ A second aspect of the image of God is dominion; that is, control and rule or lordship. Read Genesis 1:26 carefully. What is the connection between mankind being created in God's image and God's command for us to rule over the world? How does a good ruler or lord treat his subjects? How, then, should people rule over the world? How has the fall affected our understanding of dominion? How does our Lord Jesus Christ rule us? See Matthew 20:25–28.
- ④ A third aspect of the image of God is that we have the breath of life from God. We confess in the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit is "the Lord and giver of life." Read Genesis 2:7. How does the Spirit give us life? What does the word *inspiration* mean in Christian theology? Read John 6:63. Whose words are inspired? Read John 20:19–23. How does God breathe new life into people who are dead in sin?
- ⑤ Another aspect of the image of God is community. Read Genesis 2:18. Why was it not good for Adam to be alone? Why did he need a suitable helper? How does God dispel loneliness and provide community through the institution of marriage? Read Ephesians 5:22–33. How does Christian marriage provide a picture of Christ's love for His Church and of the Church's love for Christ?
- ⑥ As Christians, we believe that Genesis 1–2 describes God's intentional and loving creation of mankind. How does what we believe about creation affect our view of the dignity of every living person? How does what we believe about Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice affect our view of one another? See John 3:16.
- ⑦ Read Genesis 2:15. Was the need to work part of God's perfect creation or the result of sin? Why is work sometimes such a difficult and joyless thing? Why would a life of idleness not be God-pleasing? How does our work serve God?

Lesson 2 Student Page

Through the Week

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over each child's leaflet together, sharing what you learned about today's Bible story.

Luther's Small Catechism provides an excellent summary of our Christian faith. Luther himself often said that he studied the catechism daily and never was able to exhaust its meaning. This week, continue to work on memorizing Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Creed with your family. In addition, learn the First Commandment with its explanation: "You shall have no other gods. *What does this mean?* We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." Here, we see that the God who created us wants us to look to Him for everything we need, both physical and spiritual blessings.

If you have children, teach them about the blessings of marriage. Study Ephesians 5:22–33 together, and discuss how marriage is a reflection of the marriage of Christ and His Bride, the Church. Help them to see the self-giving, sacrificial nature of Christian marriage. If television shows or movies that you watch together depict marriage as trivial or not worthwhile, take that as an opportunity to contrast the world's view of marriage with the Christian understanding of it.

Personal Reflection

As you go about the work of your vocations, keep in mind that for Christians, God is always pleased with the work that is done for Christ's sake. Whether you work as a stay-at-home mom, teacher, doctor, executive, or in any other job, the work you do in your vocation in faith is seen as a good work by God. Pray daily for strength to do your vocation well. And when you neglect your duties, turn to the Lord in repentance, and God

will graciously forgive the sins you commit in your vocations too!

When Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63), He was referring not only to the words He spoke as He walked the earth but also to the words He continues to speak through Holy Scripture and the preaching of the Word today. Jesus' words are creative, powerful, and life-giving. Through His Word, the Holy Spirit continually forgives our sin and strengthens our faith.

This week, start each day with these words of the Lord: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" as you make the sign of the cross. These are the words and the sign that were placed upon you in Baptism, when the Holy Spirit breathed new life into a spiritually dead person. When you speak those words in faith, they not only remind you of your Baptism, but they also start your day off with the name of God on your lips, the God who created, redeemed, and sanctifies you.