

Leader's Guide

Perfection *Collides* With Free Will

What Genesis, Jesus & his apostles teach about being male & female in a troubled world

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This discussion leader-teacher guide:

1. **Encourages participants** to look closely at the first three chapters of the Bible. These chapters provide a foundation for understanding what the Bible has to say about creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration.
2. **Introduces what God, Jesus, and his apostles said and demonstrated** concerning God's design for the roles of men and women.
3. **Serves as a model for how to do a verse by verse scripture study.** Genesis packs a tremendous amount of information into its first chapters. This study slows the pace so readers can get a good look at the rich content. We'll learn about God's perfect design for creation; how corruption entered the world; and why Jesus was needed to begin the process of reconciling – putting back together – all the relationships that were torn apart when the first humans refused to listen to their Creator.

Preparing to lead

It is important to prepare before leading a small-group discussion. When the leader is not well prepared, groups often miss key points, jump from topic to topic randomly, or discuss what they think the text is saying before carefully considering both content and context. The following are two approaches you can use to keep a discussion on topic while still promoting lively conversations:

Good

1. Read the relevant Bible verses using your favorite translation.
2. Read *Perfection Collides With Free Will*.
3. Read the key points listed at the end of the chapter being studied.
4. Plan how much scripture you can cover in the time available. Prepare to discuss more than you think will be needed, just in case.
5. Read the Leader's Guide questions and select those your group will mostly likely have time to consider. If desired, modify the questions or write your own to suit your group.

Best

1. Begin by reading the Book of Genesis all the way through using your favorite Bible translation.
2. Read Genesis 1-3 in one or two other translations (**Not** commentaries or study Bibles). Also read the relevant New Testament Scriptures. The goal is to become familiar with the text, **before** your thoughts are influenced by how others explain what you've just read. Translations are available on line for free if you don't have them at home.
3. Spend time thinking and praying about the verses you plan to discuss with your group. Force yourself to slow down and read carefully.
4. Look up words that are hard to understand, seem significant, are translated differently in various Bibles, or that have multiple meanings. Keep *Strong's* or another Hebrew-Greek Dictionary handy, or use the dictionaries available on-line for free. Preparing to lead well takes time, but the benefits are worth it.
5. Now that you've formed your own impression of what is being said, read through *Perfection Collides With Free Will* and other commentaries and consider the perspectives they present.
6. Read the key points at the end of the chapter being studied in this book.
7. Plan out how much scripture you can cover in the time available.
8. Prepare enough questions for each discussion, plus some extras. Use those suggested in this guide or write your own to suit your group.

The following questions are offered to help a leader keep discussions focused on key points, but they are **merely suggestions**. Which you choose, or which you develop on your own, should depend on the make-up of your group (Where they are in their faith walk, their age, work situations, etc.).

Introducing Genesis 1-3

Teaching a class and leading a small-group discussion require different skills. If the latter, your job is encourage others to do most of the talking and keep the conversation on topic so that key points are not skipped. You also provide insights that may be new to the group or that they may have overlooked.

Below each question, in italics, are some ideas to help you provide those insights as your group discusses Genesis 1-3 and male-female roles.

A. Leader's first question to the group

Q – Do you believe the creation account in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 is meant to be historically accurate? Or is it a made-up story that is intended to teach us about God and our humanity; a metaphor about life?

(You will probably hear differing opinions. That's fine. Don't debate them or try to influence anyone. But do let the group know that over the course of the next several discussions, they may find reasons to rethink the view they hold. Let the mystery of your intent be the lead-in to the study.)

B. Leader's introduction to Genesis

Assume that everyone has **not** read the Introduction to *Perfection Collides With Free Will*. Before you begin to discuss Genesis 1, use material from the book's Introduction and Appendix I to present a **brief** background that includes who wrote Genesis, when it was written, and why readers can trust that the book is what it claims to be.

C. Questions to discuss before you begin Chapter 1

Q – What evidence do we have that Moses wrote Genesis?

(The books of the Pentateuch – the five books of the OT attributed to Moses – are mentioned in numerous Old and New Testament scriptures, some of which cite Moses as the author: Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:1–2; Deuteronomy 31:9–11, Joshua 1:8; 8:31–32; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11–13; Malachi 4:4, Matthew 19:8; John 5:45–47; 7:19; Acts 3:22; Romans 10:5; Mark 12:26.)

Q—What reasons does the New Testament give to trust the accuracy of Genesis? *(Verses where Christ and his apostles testify as to the accuracy of Genesis include: Matthew 19:3-5, Mark 10: 6-8, 1 Timothy 2:13-14, Romans 5:12-14, 1 Corinthians 15:45, Luke 2:23-28, Hebrews Chapters 3, 4 & 11.)*

Q— Do you think early humans had as much intelligence (ability to acquire and apply knowledge) as we do today? Why or why not? (Does having more knowledge equal having more wisdom about how to use that knowledge?)

Q— Would you say that people today are more or less likely to believe in fables and fairy tales than those who lived 3,400 years ago?
(Ask people to Google: real ghosts, real witches, real vampires, real supernatural happenings, new age spirituality, or celebrities who are into tarot and palm readings. Share what they find. They will see that little has changed over the centuries. People still look everywhere except to God for answers about life; we still want to do things our own way.)

Q— Is it possible that the fables and fairy tales read to us as children, plus books, video games, and Hollywood versions of the supernatural (superman, vampires, ghost stories), affect the way we now perceive what we read in the Bible?

Q—What do you know about Moses, the man who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament?
(Much of his history is contained in Exodus. More can be found elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments, including: Deuteronomy 34:5-8, Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, Acts 3:22 & 7:22, Hebrews 11. Jewish and Christian traditions say that all but a few verses of Genesis were written by Moses about 3,400 years ago. Moses was educated in the household of the Emperor of Egypt and received the very best education available.)

Q— Which do you believe is more likely: (a) A being with personality created the heavens, Earth, and humans or (b) Impersonal matter created itself out of nothing, then over time and by accident formed consistent, unchanging “natural” laws and humans with personality? Why do you believe what you do?

Q— If someone asks whether you take the Book of Genesis literally, how do you respond?
(The first step is to clarify the question. Are they asking about a specific Scripture or all of Genesis? It is important to explain that the Bible uses many literary constructs; it is

historical, poetic, metaphorical, and more. We have to know the context to answer the question. We also need to make clear that “literally” means: Taking the words in their usual or most basic sense, without metaphor or allegory, while reading the exact words of the original text. Most of us can’t read the original Hebrew, so we read translations that are extremely accurate as to meaning, but not perfectly literal.)

Q – Older adults are often considered “old school” and their thoughts irrelevant, because the culture and technology they grew up with has been replaced. Does this tendency to marginalize older adults affect how much weight you give to the words of Moses, a man who many in our age think of as not just “old school”, but primitive?

(If the wisdom of older generations is considered obsolete and no longer of practical value by each new generation, how can we learn from history? Why do we assume that youth and access to the latest technology are related to wisdom (how we use what we know)? There’s a danger in assuming that the farther back in history we go the less intelligent people were. When we fail to take advantage of the collected wisdom of the ages and each generation seeks to develop its own “truths,” we tend to repeat the same mistakes over and over. In a culture like that of today, where it is acceptable for truth to vary depending on the situation, the word “truth” loses all meaning. Included in the old and no longer practical category is the Word of God, which many see as an interesting relic, though not a guide that is appropriate for our current “enlightened” society. Because our God is timeless and eternal, however, the reality is that His truth has no expiration date; it is always current and relevant. We will see examples of the timeless nature of God’s Word in the continuity of message that spans the roughly 1,400 years from when Moses wrote his books until Jesus lived on Earth. The very first book in the Bible hints at Jesus. Other books describe his coming in more detail and the New Testament authors confirm the reality of his life.)

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Chapter 1

READ

1. Ask for a volunteer, or volunteers, to read the entire first chapter of Genesis. Do **NOT** assume everyone wants to read.
2. Now bring the focus back to verse 1: ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth.***

Q – What can we know about **creation** from this one verse? **Keep the discussion specific to creation itself.**

(“God created.” These are two of the most important words ever written. The very first sentence in the very first book of the Bible tells us that our universe is not an accident. “God created” tells us that He was already living in His realm when he created ours. If there was a big bang, God lit the fuse.)

Q – What can you know about your Creator from this one verse?

(He existed before there was a universe; before there were humans. He has personality: He is creative; He is not content to simply exist; He is complex, He likes order; He likes beauty; He is a planner and a producer. He existed in His own world before He created ours.)

Q – Can we trust any of the Bible if the first verse of the first book is not true?

(No and that’s exactly why it is so important to think about this verse and to be able to justify to yourself and others why you believe it to be true. If you do.)

Q – What can we know about ourselves from verse 1?

(We are not accidents; we were created and because our Creator makes Himself known, it is possible to learn about Him and why He created us. Someone much bigger, smarter and more capable existed before we did.)

Q – Verse 1 says God created the heavens and Earth. What is the meaning of “heavens” in this verse?

(The word can mean God’s space, where He dwells, or it can mean our sky or outer space. The Bible’s authors use it both ways. Here it is referring to our space. See book page 16.)

Q – What incontrovertible proof (proof that can’t be disputed) have scientists found to indicate that God does or doesn’t exist?

Alternate Q – Evolutionary scientists are adamant that we live in a closed universe (no outside higher intelligence) and our lives are the result of millions of years of chance happenings. What proof do these scientists have that God does not exist and did not – at the very least – start the ball rolling?

(There is none. The spirit world that God lives in is not subject to scientific testing.

Because scientists cannot test supernatural events, many reject the possibility of God's reality, and the reality of the supernatural. This view is faith based, just as our Christian view is faith based. The irony is that the consistent nature of our universe is what allows scientists to perform scientific experiments. If we lived in a random universe, as many claim, everything would always be changing – including how the chemical elements react with one another – and we could not test anything reliably.)

Q – Have you ever experienced an event that appeared to be “supernatural” in origin, one for which you could find no reasonable explanation?

(This author knows a number of credible witnesses to events that appear to demonstrate the supernatural hand of God reaching from His world into ours. The New Testament is filled with such examples involving Jesus and his followers. Likewise, the Old Testament contains numerous examples of God and other supernatural beings entering into our human world.)

Q – When you think of living in heaven, or of going to heaven when you die, what does that mean to you? Do you have a picture in mind? Does N.T. Wright's description of heaven affect how you see God's space?

(Book pages 16-17.)

Q – Explain in your own words how heaven and Earth relate to one another.

(Two spheres that overlap, God living in a limitless eternity and us living in a space-time world with boundaries and limits. See book pages 16-plus. The Jews saw the Temple in Jerusalem as where heaven and Earth met, Psalm 132: 13-14.)

Q – We no longer have a Temple in which to meet God. Where does a Christian go now to meet Him?

(We go to Jesus. To a Christ follower of today, heaven and Earth meet in Jesus, not in a building. Read John 2:19. Understanding that we meet God in Jesus – he is our Temple – is hugely important. Be sure to include the content of book pages 16 and 17 in your discussion. Hebrews 1-4 explain why Jesus the man is more important than Moses, angels and everyone except God the Father.)

READ**Gen 1:2**

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Q – In your own words, what do you think is happening in verse 2?

(The Earth is not formed yet and there is darkness over a surging mass of water that exists in space – the “surface of the deep”. This verse is speaking of an as yet undefined creation, one in which water and, probably, other matter is swirling and surging. There is no light anywhere. But the Spirit of God is moving within this chaos and beginning to bring order.)

Q – What does this verse tell us about God’s character that we didn’t find in v1?

(The Spirit of God moving over the surface of the waters gives a first hint of the Trinity. So before there were humans, God was not alone. God was intimately involved in creation.)

Q – Can you name a New Testament scripture that indicates who else was with God at the time of creation?

(Read John 1:1, which says the Word was with God and the Word was God – the Word being Jesus. Read Colossians 1:15-17, which tell us Jesus existed before our universe and that God created “all things” through him. The mystery of the triune God is difficult to understand, yet Scripture makes it clear that all three existed at the time of creation, all are always in perfect harmony and all three equal One God – Deuteronomy 6:4.)

Q – If human love developed out of a need to survive, as many propose, why will one stranger put his or her life in jeopardy to protect another, as fire fighters, police officers, soldiers and others do? Why is it thought necessary to protect the life of a murderer who, if left to his or her own devices, would likely kill again?

(A Christ-follower can answer that our respect for life exists because we are made in the image of our Creator and, whether someone recognizes it or not, he or she is born to mirror God’s character. It is God’s love that affects notions of right and wrong, justice and mercy, not an animal instinct to survive at any cost.)

READ**Gen 1:3-8**

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And

there was evening and there was morning—the first day. 6 And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening and there was morning—the second day.

Q – After creating matter, God began to shape and organize the universe. What word is used over and over to introduce what is being divided and separated? (*“Let” introduces several specific steps in the creation process. Watch for “let” as we continue through Chapter 1. The first “let,” in verse 3, separates light and darkness. The light referred to here is the first in the entire universe; Earth is not yet formed. See v14.*)

Q – What is the second use of “let” introducing? (*Verse 6, “Let there be an expanse [firmament] in the midst of the waters . . .” Reading these verses casually, one might think Moses is writing about God creating land to separate the oceans on Earth, but that’s not at all the case. Earth hasn’t been formed yet. Here’s what I believe is happening: Expanse, or firmament, can be where the moon and stars are or where birds fly. The expanse Moses is describing in verse 6 is outer space. This verse used to be a point of criticism by scholars, because there was no proof that massive amounts of water exist in space. Now we know that Moses, a man educated in 1400 B.C. Egypt, was correct all along. For more, see book pages 25-plus.)*

Q – How could Moses know about massive amounts of water in outer space more than 30 **centuries** before scientists were able to confirm it and then only with high technology instruments?

(To me, verse 6 is one more proof among many that the Genesis account could not have been written without God’s help. As noted on page 26, finding water in space is still a big deal for scientists, who were only able to prove it hundreds of years after Moses, as you can find on the websites of NASA and The Smithsonian. How else could the Bible be so far ahead of modern science, unless the Creator was involved in the writing of the book?)

***** A key point in discussions regarding the Bible and science: The Bible is not a science book, but when it discusses matters of science it is accurate and often demonstrates remarkable fore-knowledge, as noted above. Many scientific facts mentioned in the Bible were not understood by scientists until centuries after the Bible was written. More examples can be found in an excellent essay here: <http://www.bibleevidences.com/scientif.htm> *****

Q – When is the first day of creation mentioned and why is the Hebrew word for “day” significant?

*(The first day is mentioned in verse 5. The word for “day” is “yom” and an explanation is found on book pages 24-plus. “Yom” means 24 hours, sunrise to sunset, an age, or even an unspecified length of time. We don’t know what Moses intended, so we can’t say for sure how long the first day was. That’s not the main point anyway. What matters is that **God created**. Keep in mind that days one and two are over before there is an Earth. Until the atomic clock was invented in modern times, the 24-hour day was based on the rotation of the Earth around the Sun. If there is no Earth, there is no 24-hour day. If we can’t possibly verify how long creation took at this point, why continue to debate the point?)*

READ

Genesis 1: 9-13

And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning—the third day.

Q – What does God separate out or create with this third use of “let”?

(Dry land and the seas on the newly created “Earth.” Verses 9-10.)

Q – What is the fourth creative step and what’s important to understand about it?

(Verse 11 – The first life on Earth was plant life. Plants yielding seed and trees bearing fruit with seed in them. Plant life is new but the major distinction is this: things that are alive are not the same as things that are not, nor are plants the same as other life that God creates next. Pantheists believe God is in everything and everything is God. Genesis is a game changer for pantheistic beliefs.)

READ**Genesis 1:14-19**

And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning—the fourth day.

Q—What is separated out or created in step five?

(Let there be lights that shine on Earth to give us day and night and to be signs for seasons, days and years. See book pages 28-plus. Notice how the order of creation compares with what scientists believe to be true. The only difference between Genesis and science at this point in creation is that many scientists believe all the intricate design and order is a random event, with no outside personal force involved. Oddly, those with this view typically speak of “nature” as if nature has personality and is guiding our universe in a personal way.)

Q—Verse 14 appears to be restating what we already read about light and dark in verses 1:3-5, but it is not. What is different?

(Verse 14 comes after Earth has been created. Moses is now writing about lights in the heavens as they affect the Earth. God makes the sun [greater light] and moon [lesser light] and the stars, too. The Hebrew word used in verses 3-8 for “light” is “or,” from a root meaning illumination. Here in verse 14-19 the word for light is “maor,” from a root meaning luminous body. So first we get light, then luminous bodies that direct light to Earth.)

READ**Genesis 1: 20-23**

And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds and every

winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas and let the birds increase on the earth.” 23 And there was evening and there was morning—the fifth day.

Q—What is the sixth distinctive step in God’s creation process?

(Let there be living creatures and birds. This is the creation of the first conscious life. Conscious life is different than unconscious life. Birds and sea creatures are very much aware of their surroundings and react to them. Vegetation is affected by its surroundings, but has no sense of awareness. Plants don’t know when to be afraid and they can’t think. Again, this is bad news for pantheists. The Hebrew word “bara” is used in verse 21 and highlights the difference between the two forms of life, conscious and unconscious.)

Q—What do verses 20-23 tell us about the process God used for creating sea life and birds?

(Almost nothing. We just know that He created. Again, the Bible introduces us to God and his world, but it is not intended to be a detailed science book. Some questions won’t be answered until we can ask Him face to face.)

READ

Genesis Verses 24-25:

And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Q—What is the seventh distinction?

(Let the Earth bring forth living creatures: cattle, creeping things and beasts of the Earth. Here’s the creation of another type of conscious life, animal life. Note that animal life does not include humans. According to Genesis, animals and humans are different. This might seem obvious to some of us, but not everyone agrees.)

Q—The New International Version of the Bible translates verse 24 as “Let the land produce living creatures according to their **kinds** . . .” Does this language suggest anything about the process to you?

(To some Christ followers it suggests that God set in motion a process for the development of at least some non-human living creatures, perhaps in stages that are like what is claimed of evolution.)

Q – What are some of the consequences of accepting the idea that humans are basically the same as all other animals, born of random chance and not made in the image of God?

(If Genesis is a myth or metaphor, the rest of the Bible is a book of stories that can't be trusted. Without a Creator, we have no standard for what is good and what isn't. Truth becomes whatever people want to believe it is. Furthermore, we have to start with a foundational standard in order to strive for improvement. If there is no grand design – no standard – we have nothing to measure improvement against and humanity can't possibly be evolving toward something better. Also, a growing number of people believe that humans are just like "any other" animal, even while insisting that humans have a "right" to education, food, housing, health care and other things they consider essential. This brings up the logical inconsistency between what we expect from – and for – dogs and cats versus what we expect from humans. Deep down inside, we seem to recognize that humans are different from animals. We don't, for instance, jail a dog for stealing food from another dog, nor do our civil authorities imprison a cat for murdering a bird.)

READ

Genesis 1: 26-28

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Read pages 32-plus in preparation for this discussion. Use the following questions to bring out each major point of emphasis:

Q – What is God's eighth and final distinctive step in the creation process?

*(Let us make [bara] man [humanity] in **Our** image. There is a lot to talk about here. This is where the Genesis creation account departs from what many scientists believe.)*

Q— Why are verses 26-28 so important?

(God is telling us His plan for humanity – women and men – and His declarations in verse 26 are repeated in verses 27-28. The repetition emphasizes the importance of these verses.)

Q— Why are “Let Us” and “in Our image” significant?

(These are additional affirmations of God’s triune nature. They tell us that He lived in community in His own realm before the universe existed and before there were humans. We did not think Him up; He created us.)

Q— What is the meaning of “in Our image . . . in Our likeness . . . in the image of God He created . . .”

(If God is spirit, it doesn’t mean we look like Him; it means our spirit and character are designed to be like His. God is both eternal and personal. So are we. The question isn’t whether or not we will experience eternity; it is whether we will experience eternity in the presence of God’s love or an eternity that is completely devoid of love. The choice is ours as long as it is “today.” Read Hebrews 3 and 4)

Q— Why is it important to know that we are created in God’s image?

***(The more we know about God, the more we know about ourselves.** God creates, names, rules, speaks and rests. He loves beauty, justice and relationships. This is the image we carry. Because of this verse we can answer who we are and why we’re here. We aren’t cosmic accidents. We know we are loved by our Creator. We know we are designed to be in relationships. We know we are designed to love and communicate, as does the Trinity. We know we are designed to represent God on Earth.)*

Q— Why are we told three times in three verses that God created men and women in His image?

(The repetition indicates how important it is that we understand who we are in relation to God. We are created in His image and designed to be in a personal relationship with Him. We are not pets or curiosities. We were created to be companions of the Living God. Discuss how it affects your life to know that God wants you as His companion. Read Exodus 33:11 – This can be us, just as it was for Moses.)

Q— Does “man” in verse 27 refer only to males? How do we know for sure?

(The Hebrew word used here is “adam,” meaning “humanity, both male and female.” Verse 27 clearly defines “man” as male and female, both created in God’s image. It is important to think of the words “human” or “humanity” when you read “man” in this chapter.)

Reading the word as if it only refers to males, as often happens, incorrectly changes the meaning of the text. In Chapter 2, we'll discuss the meaning of "humanity" in more detail.)

Q – “Let Us make man . . . let them rule.” Rule what, each other?

(No, humans rule over fish, birds and animal life. God is specific about this. He says nothing in this chapter about a hierarchy involving humans ruling over other humans.)

Q – What does it mean that humans are to “rule” over the Earth and “subdue” non-human, created life?

(We are to be God's representatives, guarding and guiding the Earth that He created and loves. We're to put the Earth under our protection. Have humans done this? No, and Christians have exploited creation like everyone else, much to our shame.)

Q – What other living creatures does Genesis tell us are created in God's image? Why is this important if we are to understand the role God designed for us in this world?

(Humans are not high functioning animals. Only humans are said to be created in the image of God. This makes us unique. And only humans are given authority to rule over the Earth and “every living thing that moves on the Earth.” We are designed to serve God's purpose and He gives us the tools we need to do the job. We are image-of-God men and women, put on Earth to love God, love one another and to take care of God's creation.

These are sacred responsibilities.)

Q – What does the triune nature of God tell us about humans and how we are designed?

(The Trinity speaks of God's relational nature. There has always been love and communication within His triune being. If He is relational and we are made in His image, we know we are designed to be in relationship with others also. Built into us are both the desire to love and the ability to communicate. We are not animals who live and act on instinct. The Earth is not our creator or our mother. G. K. Chesterton points out, if anything, the Earth is our sibling; both we and the Earth were created by God.

Q – Does knowing what God wants of you affect the way you think about environmental issues and how you live? Close your eyes and repeat this to yourself: “I have been commissioned by God Himself to guide and protect the Earth and all the animal, bird and sea life on it.” Pause. What am I doing to fulfill my sacred responsibilities? Discuss.

Q— What “first” is found in verse 28?

(God communicates directly to “them,” Adam and Eve. The Creator actually talked to Adam and Eve. God speaking to humans was normal right from the start.)

Q— To this point in what we’ve read, how are the roles for Adam and Eve different? Who’s in charge?

(Their roles are exactly the same. “They” are in charge. We’ll get into much more detail in Chapter 2.)

READ

Genesis 1: 29-30

Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

Q—Verses 29 & 30 have specific information about food. What do you notice about who is to eat what or what is to eat who?

(Animals and humans are both vegetarians! Humans are to eat seed bearing plants and fruit with seeds, while animals are to eat green plants. No one eats meat. Humans and animals had no reason to fear one another. There’s more about this in Chapter 3.)

Q— Besides revealing Adam and Eve’s diet, what else do these verses tell us?

(Adam and Eve had everything they needed to live peacefully and happily in a garden paradise, where God walked with them and even wild animals were not a danger to them. Then Satan entered the picture. Instead of paying attention to God, Adam and Eve listened to Satan until he talked them into disobeying God. Not listening to God becomes a recurring problem for humans, as we see in Chapter 3 of Genesis and in following books of the Bible.)

Q—Was God at fault for allowing access to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Should He have put up warning signs and an electric fence? Should God make things unattractive when they aren’t good for us, so we won’t want them? Should God have made Satan look evil and scary so Adam and Eve would run from Him?

(What would this world be like if everything that could possibly be bad for us was ugly,

scary, or tasted bad? Too much salt or sugar is bad. Make it taste awful and no one will ever use it. Attractive men and women inspire lust so make everyone ugly. Tall mountains are both beautiful and dangerous, so flatten them all out and cover them with thorns and thistles. No, we wouldn't like such an ugly world. The human answer to making the world a better place is to ignore God's short list of rules and replace them with thousands of rules of our own, all designed to control human behavior by using the threat of increasingly painful consequences. If the first two humans couldn't honor one rule, why do we think even more rules will do the trick? What works is not more rules. What works is changed hearts, living in tune with the God who created each of us.)

READ

Genesis 1: 31

God saw all that he had made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning — the sixth day.

Q – What was God's response to creation at the end of the sixth day?

*(He looked at His creation and saw that it was GOOD. He liked **everything** about it.)*

Q – After reading Chapter 1, do you feel more confident or less so about the origin and purpose of your existence?

(God created. God made us in His image. He gave Adam and Eve a shared purpose that is passed on to each new generation. We are not accidents. Our meaning is found right here in Genesis.)

Q – Has the time just spent in Chapter 1 helped you see anything you hadn't noticed before or, perhaps, that you saw differently? Please share.

(For instance, does it make a difference to know that Jesus and several of his apostles quoted Genesis? If Jesus quoted Genesis as a source of history, either the book is a trustworthy source or Jesus was not trustworthy. See Matthew 19 and Mark 10.)

Q – A common view of the Genesis creation account is that it is a nice story designed to teach about God, but not factual. If that's true, why would Moses, Joshua, Jesus, Luke, Mark and Paul all refer to Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden and other people and places mentioned in Genesis as though they are factual?

(The words of Moses and Joshua at end of their lives, Jesus' references to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 when speaking to the religious leaders of his day about marriage? Matt 19:3-5. Mark also quotes Jesus in a similar vein in Chapter 10:6-8. The genealogy in Luke 3, Paul writing in Romans 5:12-21, references in Hebrews, etc.)

Chapter 2

READ

Genesis 2: 1-3 (NASB translation)

Thus the heavens and the Earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

*** These verses complete Chapter 1. The beginning of Chapter 2 is mid-way through verse 4, which we'll discuss after this section of Scripture. ***

Q – If God lives in heaven, what does verse 2 mean when it says that He has just completed the heavens and Earth?

(God lives outside of our world. “Heavens” here refers to outer space – the universe – which is our world. Verses 1 and 2 mean that God set our universe in motion. Does He remain active in His creation? Yes, we see that throughout the Bible. The Scriptures do not say that nothing will ever change after this point. Something big will change in the very next chapter.)

Q – What does it mean to bless and sanctify a day?

(To set it apart, to show favor or benefit and to make it holy or dedicated to a specific purpose. God is not imposing a burden on men and women; He is speaking something good into being that is designed to benefit us, even on His day off.)

Q – What Godly principle is discussed in Genesis 2:1-3?

(These verses introduce the idea of a rhythm for living that involves work, rest, worship and relationship. This is in conflict with a world that will eventually claim time is money. If God set aside time to experience tranquility and serenity after a period of work, it is prudent to take our cues from Him. Rest stops refresh our bodies and our spirits. After Moses leads the Jews out of Egypt, God will institutionalize the keeping of the Sabbath. A big part of the Sabbath for the Jews was remembering that they had been slaves and that God took them out of captivity because He loved them. It was a way of remembering where they had been. Likewise, we who follow Jesus can use our days of rest to remember that before him we too were held in captivity; we were slaves to sin.)

Alternative Q – Was God’s day of rest a time of lost productivity or did He create even while while resting?

(God used his rest time to create a day of tranquility and serenity that is meant to be enjoyed as part of our rhythm of life. The Jews were the first culture in history – so far as historians know – to develop this principle of rest. The Hebrew word for rest, or resting place, is “menuchah”(men-oo-kaw). It means quiet, still, place of rest. God liberated the Jews from a hostile Egyptian culture that worked them as slaves seven days a week for 400 years! This new Sabbath rest, besides the benefits already noted earlier, is a metaphor for the eternal place of rest. Thus, in ancient times the word “menuchah” became a synonym for eternal life. The author of Hebrews has more to say about this. Chapters 3 and 4 are well worth reading, as they relate directly to this discussion of Genesis. Matthew 12:1-8 is also about the Sabbath.)

Q – What does “all their hosts” mean?

(The universe and all of its “starry host,” and all the types of beings that fill the heavens and Earth, as per Nehemiah 9:6, are now created. God has set in motion all that He plans to set in motion. Will there be changes? Most certainly. but God set it all in motion. In other Scriptures, the word “host” is used to refer to sun, moon and star, as per Deuteronomy 17:3. “Heavenly host” is applied to angels in several places, one being 1 Kings 22:19.)

Q – What is the relationship between hearing God’s Word, acting on what you’ve heard and establishing a rhythm of work and rest in your life?

(All are interrelated. God’s Word calls for His people to live by His example. From the start, God demonstrated that the rhythm of life includes following times of work with times of rest. We can’t hear Him speak to us if we don’t take the time to listen. Likewise, if we don’t take time to rest and refresh ourselves, both physically and spiritually, life can grind us down and pull us farther and farther from Him. Finally, there is no point listening to God’s Word if, like the Jews rescued from Captivity, we don’t actually try to do what He tells us to do.)

Q – What went wrong during the exodus of Jews after they were freed from slavery in Egypt?

(They did not trust God or Moses, the leader He chose for them, so the people of Israel began to complain and openly rebel.)

Q – Does the example of the Jews who did not make it to their place of rest tell you anything about the importance of paying serious attention to what God says to us?

Q – What practices of a healthy Christian can be found in verses 2:1-3?

(Resting physically is important. Spiritual rest and reflection are important. Learning to be quiet and listen to God is important. Reading and meditating on God's Word is absolutely essential. [See Joshua 1:7-9.] In John 6:35, Jesus says he is the "bread of life." Can we be healthy and strong in our faith if we only eat the bread of life at church once a week, because we've never learned to feed ourselves at home?)

Q – What kind of parallel do you see between the Jews being led from slavery into a march toward the Promised Land and what we face when we choose to follow Jesus?

(The Jews were enslaved by their Egyptian rulers. We are enslaved by our own desires – our own choices – when what we want conflicts with God's will for us. Like the Jews, Christians sometimes choose to follow Jesus, then whine and complain when the journey to the Promised Land doesn't go as smoothly or quickly as desired. God's love gives us a lot of room to figure out how to live. That same love also leads Him to intervene at times. Like the people led out of Egypt, though, it is often difficult to hold on to our faith when God's will doesn't seem to line up with our own. For more thoughts, compare the account in Exodus with Hebrews 3 and 4.)

READ

Genesis 2:4

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Verse 2:4 is what scholars call a "toledoth" (to-led-aw) statement and is better translated as "These are the generations of the heavens and the Earth . . ." Several such statements divide the Book of Genesis into sections. The text between verses 2:4 and 5:2 contains a new account in the history of creation. Where Chapter 1 gives an overview, Chapter 2 now focuses on the creation of conscious life and, in particular, human life. From here on, Moses is not looking back to repeat what is in Chapter 1, he is looking forward to what comes next.

Q – What do you notice about the two references to the heavens and Earth in this one verse?

(The first half of the verse refers to heavens and Earth, while the second half refers to Earth and heaven. Some scholars believe that the first half of this verse puts an ending bracket on

Chapter 1, while the second half of the verse is the real beginning of Chapter 2. This makes sense because Chapter 1 focuses on all of creation – the entire universe – while Chapter 2 zeros in on Earth.)

Q – How is the word “day” used differently in verse 4 than in the first chapter’s references to the days of creation?

(The Hebrew word used in both Chapters 1 and 2 is “yom.” In Chapter 1, God made all of creation in six days. Because “yom” can mean a 24-hour day, sun up to sun up, or a non-specific length of time, we can’t know for sure what time-frame Moses means. In Chapter 2, however, the context indicates that “yom” means an age rather than a literal day.)

Q – What does the phrase “This is the account” tell you about the text that follows? (Whether we translate this phrase as “These are the generations” or “This is the account,” Moses is indicating that he is not introducing a fable or an allegory. He is writing about what really happened in history. There is more to say about this in following verses.)

Q – “Lord God” is used for the first time in verse 4. What is the significance of this phrase?

(The Hebrew words naming God are “Jehovah Elohim.” Elohim is used by both Hebrews and Gentiles when referring to Him as the true God among false gods. Elohim is used much as “man” is used to refer to a specific man, but without giving his proper name. Jehovah, on the other hand, is the proper name of God. The word means “self-existent or eternal.” It also carries the connotation of “Savior and Redeemer.” Therefore, Lord God (Jehovah Elohim) can be translated as the Self-Existent Supreme God or the Eternal God who Saves and Redeems. Keep this in mind as you read how God is referred to in following verses.)

READ

Genesis 2:5-7

Now no shrub of the field was yet in the Earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the Earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. But a mist used to rise from the Earth and water the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (NASB translation)

Q – Verses 5-7 appear to be telling us that man was created before plants. Is Moses contradicting his own Chapter 1 creation account?

(No, there is no conflict. Because of the “toledoth” statement, we know these verses are looking forward, to a time after God’s seventh-day rest. It appears that the creation of plant life was a process. The entire Earth was not instantly covered with mature vegetation at God’s command. Here, God is preparing the Earth, and specifically the Garden of Eden, for Adam and Eve. The NASB translation of Genesis 2:5 implies that the vegetation in question existed before being planted [Vegetation “had yet sprouted”]. The KJV translation of verse 5 is more definitive. It says God, “. . . made the Earth and heavens. And every plant of the field before it was in the Earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. . .” The mention in verse 5 that there was not yet anyone to cultivate the ground is significant because it tells us that plants were created before humans, which agrees with the sequence in Chapter 1. Verses 5-6 also tell us that God determined when to send the first rains. The point, it seems, is that God created a wide variety of plants right from the start, but He didn’t put them into the ground and cause them to grow until the Earth was ready for them. The order and beauty of the world is planned. It is not accidental. It is the work of a Botanist and Master Gardener of the highest order.)

Q – When Moses writes that God created Adam is he giving us historical fact or an allegory designed to teach us about ourselves and God?

*(Everything about the Genesis account leads to the conclusion that Adam – and Eve – were real humans who lived in space-time history. The first books of the Bible contain a continuous history of creation and of God’s covenant with Abraham that led to the birth of Israel. Beginning such a history with an allegory disguised as historical fact makes no sense, nor does the language of Genesis indicate that it is an allegory or metaphor. Remember that Moses has just written: “This is the account of . . .” That is the lead-in to a factual account. More importantly, **READ Matt 19: 5-9**. In Matthew, Jesus speaks of the first humans being joined together by God, thus verifying that they were flesh and blood humans, not fictional characters in an allegory. Paul writes in Romans 5:12-14 that through one man (human) sin came into the world and death reigned from Adam until Moses. Romans 5:15 links the first humans with Jesus and all who follow after him. Still not convinced? **READ 1 Corinthians 15:21-22**. These verses speak of Adam, as does **1 Corinthians 15:45**. Luke also links Adam and Christ: **Luke 2:23-38**.)*

Q – Do you believe Moses when he writes that God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed life into his nostrils? Why or why not?

(More than 3,000 years before scientists could prove the possibility of life originating

from dirt, Moses wrote that God formed man of dust from the ground. The Hebrew word for “dust” is “aphar,” which means loose dirt, ground, soil, or clay. In 2013, Biological Engineers from Cornell University’s department for Nanoscale Science in New York were excited to report that clay — which is at its most basic, a combination of minerals in the ground — acts as a breeding laboratory for tiny molecules and chemicals which it “absorbs like a sponge.” As a result, they believe **clay ‘might have been the birthplace of life on Earth’**. The journal *Scientific Reports* says the process takes billions of years, during which the chemicals react to each other to form proteins, DNA and, eventually, living cells. We know that to an eternal God who lives outside of our space-time boundaries, billions of years is a reference that has no meaning. God could easily have created life quickly or slowly. What we know for sure is He created. (Once again, science is finally catching up with Moses 3,400 years after he wrote Genesis.)

Q — Why do you think God did not provide detailed information about His creation process?

(Perhaps God wants us to have the joy of discovery, just as He experienced the joy of creation. Most certainly He wants us to focus on Him rather than on His methods for creating life. God is highly relational and desires our companionship. It’s also true that a book containing all that God knows would be filled with more knowledge than humankind has accumulated since time began. What God already knows, we humans are still discovering.)

Q — If we focus on the spiritual truths that can be gleaned from Genesis, is it important to know whether or not Adam and Eve were real people?

(Truth matters. Genesis forms the foundation for all the truth we know about God, ourselves and our most ancient family history. It’s important to dig into these chapters, talk about them and think and pray about them. If the first book of the Bible is viewed as a cobbled together bunch of recycled myths and fiction, what does that say about the rest of the Bible, including the words of Jesus? Removing the authority of the Bible is exactly the approach used to discredit the Bible by the Jesus Seminar and many others who claim to hold a higher knowledge than the book Christians call “The Word of God.”)

READ

Genesis 2:8-14

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life

and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Q – Many people believe the Garden of Eden never really existed. They say it is an allegory used to describe a future paradise with God (An allegory being a story that conveys a deeper, often hidden, truth). Do you see any evidence in these verses that indicate the Garden was real?

(It's not an either or choice; the Garden is both real and symbolic. Why real? These verses take care to describe where the Garden was located, giving us the names of four rivers. An ancient writer would not have included this detail in an allegory. It is not surprising that we can no longer locate the Garden or all of the rivers mentioned, given that the entire Earth was flooded at one point. This flooding no doubt changed a great deal of geography. Later in Genesis, the Garden is referred to again as a real place, Genesis 13:10 being one such example. The Garden is also mentioned in other Old Testament books. In the New Testament, Jesus and his apostles speak of Adam and Eve as real humans. It would be odd to place real humans in an allegorical Garden, would it not?)

Q – What two trees are specifically mentioned in these verses? Do they make it easier or more difficult to accept that the Garden was a real place, with real plants and real humans? Why?

(The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Both seem like something from a fable, yet the Bible indicates that two real humans got thrown out of a real paradise because they ate from one of the trees and might have tried to eat from the other. Is this story stranger than the evolutionist claim that nothing randomly created something out of nothing and then that something developed personality and consistent “laws of nature?”)

Important science sidebar: *Scientific research includes a huge faith element, despite protests to the contrary. What else is it other than faith that leads a scientist to conclude that the “laws of nature” have always been the same as they are now? Evolutionists who reject God as the Great Designer insist that creation came about as a random event. But if the “laws of nature” have always been the same, this means the big bang – where*

nothing created something out of nothing — had to produce these fully developed laws of nature. In other words, there was no matter and the interdependent “natural laws” that control how matter behaves did not exist. Then, bang! ... In one magical, random instant both matter and the laws controlling matter not only exist, but are fully functional. On the other hand, if the laws of nature developed over time — they evolved — there is no way we can even guess at what happened before these laws morphed into what we have now. It is the consistency of “nature” that forms the foundation for all scientific testing. When a scientist dates a thing or process back 100 million years, it is because she or he trusts that matter and its chemical reactions have been exactly the same from the beginning of time. What a dilemma this creates for those who deny God! Whichever view they choose, it requires the same type of unshakable faith they say should never be mixed with fact-based science.

READ

Genesis 2:15-17

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

Q – Why did God put the man in the Garden?

(God put humans in the Garden to cultivate and keep it and for His own companionship. Chapter 1 tells us that watching over Earth and its inhabitants is the role God gave humans right from the start. Even better, God placed these humans in an environment that was beautiful, peaceful and serene. It was a place where evil did not exist and God Himself came to spend time with them. The work God gave the humans wasn’t difficult or dangerous. In fact, the first humans had absolutely nothing to fear; not even wild animals were a threat. to them By way of contrast, today we live in a world that offers all kinds of dangers and temptations and our hope is to find a place of rest, peace and serenity — just like the Garden. What Adam and Eve had on Earth at the beginning of human history is similar, in many ways, to what we who follow Jesus are now promised.)

Q – How many commands did God give the first man and what were they?

(Only one, don’t eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. See verse 17.)

Q – What can we learn about God and humans from this one section of Scripture?

(God didn’t create humans and then walk away. He remains involved in His creation. His command to the man establishes that God not only created the human, but has full

authority over him. God's authority is backed by the ability to provide consequences for those who fail to listen to Him. Humans are designed to be in relationship with God, but that can't happen when we insist on ignoring His voice. Adam and Eve eventually traded their perfect relationship with God and one another – and their perfect environment – for the right to exercise their free. They used it to challenge God. How well did that work out? To enhance this discussion about listening to God and finding rest, prepare by reading Hebrews Chapters 3 and 4.)

Q – Where was the woman when God told the man to stay away from the tree? *(She was not yet alive. We know this because God had not yet shown the man that he needed a human companion.)*

Q – What does God's command say about the first man's ability to decide his own fate on earth and through eternity?

**** Leader, you may want to skip this question until you get to Chapter 3. ****

(God gave the first man only one command and that was to stay away from one tree. Attached to it was a consequence: death. But God also gave the man freedom to obey or disobey. Obedience to God's commands, like loving Him, is a choice. Just like Adam, Eve could decide for herself. As we know, both Adam and Eve soon made the wrong moral choice and suffered the consequences. Paul wrote in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And today, even though we humans continue to make choices that are contrary to His will, God offers a way back into His loving presence.)

Q – If death is the consequence of eating from the tree, what does this tell you about the intended lifespan of Adam and Eve?

(It appears that these first humans were not intended to die. Otherwise, their eventual death would not be a punishment and God would not have needed to place guards to keep Adam and Eve from eating of the tree of eternal life, as happens in Chapter 3.)

READ

Genesis 2:18-20

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to

every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

Q—Why did God say that it's not good for the man to be alone?

(God lives in a relationship of love and communication within the Trinity. He is a God of relationship. As humans created in "His image," we too are designed to be relational. Companionship with God was wonderful. Companionship with animals was nice. But the first man needed a counterpart to join with him in fulfilling the role God gave humanity — populate the Earth and care for it and serve as God's representatives on Earth.)

Q—What is the main subject of verses 18-20? Is it the order in which God created humans and animals?

(No, this isn't about the order of creation. These verses establish that humans are designed to have their primary relationships with God and other humans.)

Q—What is the significance of the man naming the animals?

(Naming them signifies that humans have been given authority over animals, as per Chapter 1. The first chapter makes it clear that both males and females were given authority over the Earth and all the living creatures on it.)

Q—Do you believe verses 18 and 19 conflict with the order of creation given in Chapter 1? Explain why or why not.

(These verses appear to say that God made man and then created animals. There are at least two good ways to resolve this potential conflict with the Chapter 1 creation order. One is to realize that Chapter 2 is not looking back to the overall creation account — as per the "toledoth" statement discussed earlier. Moses is now looking forward, focusing on Adam and Eve. As noted previously, ancient writers did not always write their accounts in the same linear fashion we use today. The order of the story was not as important as the story itself. Perhaps the better explanation, though, is to use Tyndale's original English language translation from the Hebrew, which says the Lord God "had formed" every beast. For more, see book pages 60-plus.)

Q—Why do you suppose God told the man to name the animals *before* the woman was created?

(So Adam would know that his female companion is special; she does not come from the animal world. She is made from a part taken from his side and will stand at his side. In verse 20, Adam named the animals, but found no "helper suitable" among them.)

Q – Did Adam know he needed a helper? Did he tell God what he needed and volunteer a rib?

(None of the above. Adam may have realized he was going to be lonely by the time he finished the naming of the animals, but we see no indication he knew how to solve that problem.)

Q – Why is “helper suitable for him” so controversial?

(This phrase refers to the woman who God will create in verses 21-23. There is much disagreement over the meaning of “helper.” Please see book pages 60-64 for more. Consider spending more time than usual on this section of the book. Understanding God’s original design for men and women is critical to understanding human relationships.)

Q – What are the Hebrew words for “helper suitable” and what do they mean? (“Ezer kenegdo.” “Ezer” means “help” or “helper”. The root of the word is “azar.” “Azar” indicates what type of helper is being created. This root word means “to surround, protect, or aid.” Nothing in the meaning indicates subservience. “Kenegdo” comes from the root word “neged,” which Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary defines as “an opposite, a counterpart or mate, over against.” The sense of “ezer kenegdo,” then, is “an equal but opposite helper to him.” Man’s helper, according to Moses, does not stand three steps behind man; she stands at his side or facing him. Perhaps this is why Eve was made from a rib that came from Adam’s side. One way to illustrate the term is to say that a left hand is the “ezer kenegdo” to a right hand; both hands are equal and look the same, except they are opposites. Their purpose is to work together. There is absolutely nothing to indicate subservience in this type of helping relationship. In fact, “ezer” is used in Scripture to describe how God helps Israel and it’s used in ancient literature to describe how a strong army helps a weaker army.)

Q – What is the significance of referring to the man as Adam, a proper name, for the first time right here in Genesis 2:20?

(God has established his authority over humans and now a human is establishing authority over the animals by naming them. God separates the man from the animals by personally naming him, showing again that God has authority over man and that man is a different kind of living being than an animal. Adam did not name any specific Lion “Larry” or a specific bird “Tweetie.” Adam named each living creature generically, but God, desiring a personal relationship with Adam, gave him his proper name. And Adam eventually gave Eve a proper name – though perhaps for a different reason – as we’ll discuss in Chapter 3.)

READ**Genesis 2:21-23**

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

Q – Why do you think God chose to use bone and flesh from Adam to create Eve? *(Perhaps He wanted to give them – and us – something to illustrate how important men and women are to one another. One-flesh unity and mutual need are realities built into us by God, not part of a fable written by primitives.)*

Q – Picture Adam in your mind as he wakes and sees Eve for the first time. What do his words in verse 23 convey to you? *(Excitement, pleasure. God was an exceptionally good designer and match maker.)*

Q – Was Adam more important to God than Eve because Adam was made first? Why or why not?

Alternative Q – Was Eve more important to God than Adam because she was created last?

(If the order of creation is important, either dirt is more important than Adam or Eve is more important than Adam. One was created before him and one after. Isn't it more likely that someone had to be first and Adam was it? In Chapter 1, God gives both Adam and Eve the same charge, to be caretakers of Earth and all that is on it. Nothing is said about any hierarchy that elevates Adam over Eve or Eve over Adam.)

Q – Can we know all there is to know about humanity from looking only at men or only at women?

*(Chapters 1 and 2 make it clear that humanity is composed of **both** men and women. Why is this important? Adam and Eve were both created in the image of God, **but they were not created to be exactly the same.** They were not the same physically and I believe it is safe to say they were not exactly alike in other ways, yet the Bible tells us that both were created in the image of God. **If both were made in the image of God and they were not exactly alike, it can only mean that we need both males***

and females standing together to constitute humanity and to represent, or resemble, God's image. Thus, when Eve was created we learned more about God than could be known when only Adam was alive. See book pages 65- 69 for more.)

Q – Is Adam claiming authority over Eve by naming her in verse 23 or is he simply recognizing that he now has a female counterpart to his maleness?
(The latter. “Woman” is a generic label that identifies her as being female. Adam will not give her a proper name until after the Fall, in Chapter 3.)

READ

Genesis 2:24-25

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh. 25 Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.

Q – “Ish” and “ishshah” are the Hebrew words for an individual man and individual woman. Why is it important to understand the definitions of “ish” and “ishah” when reading verse 24?
(Because “ish” is specific to a man or husband and “ishah” specifically refers to a woman or wife. In this chapter, there is no Hebrew word that indicates a husband can be a woman or a wife can be a man. This is something to keep in mind when thinking about God’s design for marriage.)

Q – When considering what a marriage should look like, what difference does it make to know that Jesus referred to Genesis 2:24 as a direct statement of God?
(God had a definite model in mind for what a marriage should look like. Jesus reaffirmed that original model in Matthew 19:4-5.)

Q – How is your view of marriage influenced by your parents, friends, books, movies and cultural notions of what is “correct?” In what way do the words of Genesis influence (guide) your views regarding marriage?
(In preparation, read pages 68-74. The examples of marriage we see around us are hugely influential. Today, couples often do not feel the need to be married, thinking they are ignoring a civil ceremony of little importance. We face a dilemma when we claim to follow Jesus, yet ignore his words about marriage. Genesis tells us that it was not humans who created the first marriage but God Himself. This first marriage was between Adam and Eve; one man and one woman. It is God who says a man will leave his father and mother to marry a woman and the two will “become one flesh.” The Hebrew words tell us that God

was referring to one male and one female. Marriage, therefore, is not a civil ceremony created by and for humans; it has much greater meaning. Besides providing companionship and serving as the foundational structure for raising families, marriage speaks on a broader scale to the unity of humanity. There is symmetry to God's work, just as there is a rhythm to His work week. God created man, the first half of humanity. Next, He took a part from the man to make the first woman. At this point, man and man's new companion were separate beings with the same God-given assignment that neither could accomplish unless the other was there to help. God then rejoined the two into a one-flesh marriage partnership that is designed to populate the Earth as well as guide and protect it. The unity, love and communication God intends for human families is a shadow of the unity, love and communication shared by the Trinity. Because this Biblical view is in conflict with our current culture, will you choose to study and meditate on the relevant sections of Scripture or lean in the direction the cultural winds are blowing?)

Q—Why do you suppose Moses wanted us to know that Adam and Eve were “naked and unashamed?”

(He is illustrating the point that there was no guilt in the world until Adam and Eve ate from the tree. There was no guilt because there was no sin or even any thought given to shades of right and wrong. Adam and Eve had only the one rule to keep and as long as they stayed away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were completely innocent.)

Q—What gives a Christ follower reason to feel justified in insisting that men and women need each other to live and work within God's plan, though not necessarily as marriage partners?

(We know from Genesis that humanity was not complete until Eve was created. If Eve had been first on the scene, humanity would have been incomplete until Adam was created. God made men and women different for a reason. He wants us to recognize that we need one another in order to be complete. None of us can be a complete human entirely on our own. It is only when men and women come together to fulfill our purpose on Earth that we see a complete picture of humanity. This doesn't mean we need to be married, as we learn in the New Testament. It does mean we need one another as friends, companions and co-workers in Christ.)

Q—At this point in their history, how does the account of Adam and Eve help us know who we are and why we're here?

(We've already been told Adam and Eve are God's creations, crafted by Him with a purpose in mind. That purpose includes being God's companions and serving as His representatives to

populate and watch over the Earth. We've also been told that the penalty for disobeying the one command God gave them was death. From this, we know that life to Adam and Eve originally meant eternity in a paradise created for them by God. They lost that gift **by their own choice**, same as happens today. Because of Adam and Eve's bad choice, we don't live in paradise and we can only regain what they lost for us by making a choice of our own, a choice to follow Jesus. For an example of what happened to a later generation that – like Adam and Eve – refused to listen to God, read Hebrews 3 and 4.)

Q – Where in the New Testament does Jesus deal with a “who’s in charge” issue among his apostles and how does he respond?

(Luke 22:24-30, Matthew 20:25-27. Read one or both and discuss what Jesus said about the principle of servant leadership. Read book pages 73-77. **Please note: male-female authority questions are covered in more detail in Chapter 3.**)

Q – When someone tells you that believing the Bible makes you an old-school fool or an arrogant Bible-thumper, how can you respond in a way that encourages friendly discussion?

(See book pages 69-73.)

Q – What is syncretism and why is it important to recognize its existence?

(This is an opportunity to discuss the common – often unrecognized – practice of mixing and matching belief systems. Can world religions that are based on conflicting viewpoints all lead to the same God or is there really such a thing as objective “truth.” See book pages 70-73.)

Chapter 3

READ

Genesis 3:1-4

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” 2The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” 4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.

Q – Who told Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
(There are only two choices, God or Adam, but the Bible simply does not answer that question. If who told her wasn't important enough to mention, is it worth debating now? The detail that matters is that Eve knew to stay away from the tree.)

Q – How did Satan first approach Eve?
(He came as an animal or being of some sort that could talk. This “serpent” began by asking Eve a question that tested her understanding of the one command God had given her and Adam. Some people believe it was Adam’s responsibility to not only inform Eve about the tree, but to keep her from it. I don’t find that in Genesis or anywhere else in the Bible.)

Q – Why did the serpent approach Eve first, instead of Adam?
(Entire doctrines are built from this one question. If we stick to what the Bible tells us, instead of adding our own assumptions, we can only answer that the serpent had two choices and of them he selected Eve. We don’t know why he selected her over Adam, but it appears that Adam was with Eve when the serpent approached. Does it matter who the serpent spoke with first when we know that both Adam and Eve made conscious decisions to disobey God?)

Q – Why is Eve’s response to the serpent surprising?
(God told Adam and Eve they would die if they ate from the tree, but so far as we know, He said nothing about touching it. Eve was not put off by the talking animal, again, so

far as we know. But then she was used to walking with God in the Garden and knew that nothing in the Garden prior to this point had been a threat to her.)

Q – What is the Hebrew word-play regarding the serpent and Adam and Eve? (“Arum” is Hebrew for “crafty,” which is how the serpent is described. “Arom” is Hebrew for “innocent,” which Moses uses to describe Adam and Eve just before they ate from the tree. “Arum” and “arom” are spelled almost identically but have opposite meanings.)

Q – Do you think it affects our ability to accurately understand the Bible when we are used to the way our culture portrays the supernatural in books, TV shows and movies – where we find superheroes, zombies, vampires, Star Wars and ET-like characters and all manner of angels, all with magic powers?

(When we’re accustomed to thinking of the supernatural in terms of pop-culture fantasy depictions, it may well make it difficult to accept the reality of the unseen world that the Bible says is all around us. Do we think of Satan as a funny guy in a red devil suit? Do we see God as George Burns, smoking a cigar and making joking observations about humans? Are angels tiny, winged creatures that sit on our shoulders and tell us what to do or not to do? Movies and literature affect our perceptions more than we realize.)

Alternative Q – Do you find it easy or difficult to accept the idea that Satan is a real being, with a real personality, who moves in and out of our world just as God does? Could it be that a lifetime of cartoony devil characters have made him seem like a villain in a fairy tale?

Q – Does Genesis contain the only account of a talking animal in the Bible? *(No, there’s Balaam’s donkey in Numbers 22:27-29 and 2 Peter 2:16. Ask someone to read both accounts, and then discuss.)*

Q – In 2 Peter, did you see any indication that the apostle knew the difference between an animal speaking and a human speaking? In other words, do you think the author approached the account in Numbers as a modern person would or as one who does not easily distinguish between fable and reality?

(Interestingly, the heading that introduces 2 Peter 2:16 in the NIV translation is, “False Teachers and their Destruction.” Talking donkeys are discussed as a reality in a section of Scripture about false teaching. In verse 16, the author indicates that he knows it is odd that Balaam’s donkey spoke. He writes that an animal without speech spoke with a human voice and “restrained the prophet’s madness.” The people of Moses’ time, and the time of the

apostles, were not simpletons. It is only modern arrogance that causes many to believe that our spiritual ancestors didn't know the difference between fact and fiction.)

Q – Have you or someone you trust ever had an experience that you believe gives credibility to the existence of the spiritual world? We are speaking of personal experiences, not God appearing as a human baby, the miracles he performed, or his resurrection.

(If no one knows of such an experience, you might discuss newer movies with miracles as their main story line. These include: "Miracles from Heaven," "Risen," "Heaven is For Real.")

READ

Genesis 3:5

“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Q – Why do you suppose God put the special tree in the Garden? Did the fruit have magical power or was it the act of disobedience that made the difference?

(I believe the tree was necessary to test Adam and Eve's willingness to trust and obey God. He does not want us to be His puppets. He did not make us robots who have no choice but to love and obey Him. God wants us to choose Him. Without a temptation of some sort to test them, Adam and Eve may as well have been robots programmed by their master.)

Q – What is Satan's main argument to justify eating from the tree?

*(Eve can know what's right and wrong, like God. **She can make her own decisions.**)*

Q – What is Satan's strategy? How is he trying to manipulate Eve?

(He wants her to doubt that God knows what is best for her. Why be limited to what she knows when she can "be like God"? Don't you prefer to decide for yourself what's good and what's evil, what you can do and what you shouldn't do?)

Q – God told Adam and Eve there would be consequences if they ate from that one tree. Satan told them the consequences were less important than the opportunity to decide for themselves what is right and wrong – in effect, to become like God. Why was Satan wrong?

Q – John Steinbeck said he was not a Christian, but his novel, *East of Eden*, takes its theme from Genesis. One word – timshel – stands out as the key to understanding his book. What does timshel mean and how does this word relate

to Eve and Adam? How does timshel relate to your daily walk with Jesus?
 (“*Thou Mayest.*.” See book page 87.)

Q—What role does coveting (wanting what you don’t have or more of what you do have) play in the decisions you make about how to use your time, talents, money and relationships with other people?

Q—Why do you suppose we humans seem to want something the most when we’re told we can’t have it or when we know we should not want it?

READ

Genesis 3:6-7

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Q— Re-read verse 6. What was Eve was thinking at this point? What was motivating her?

(Curiosity, doubt about God’s intent when He said not to eat from the tree, desire to make her own choices about what was right for her and what was not. Or did she simply make an impulsive decision that was not backed by much thought at all?)

Q— How is your decision-making process different from that of Eve? What guides you? What gives you strength to avoid temptations?

Q—Where was Adam when Eve took the fruit and ate it?

*(Pages 90-91. He was **with** her. The Hebrew text gives the sense of standing right beside her; in close proximity to her. It appears that he stood silently next to Eve and listened to her conversation with Satan. Adam’s silence and its results provide a lot to think about concerning when to be silent and when to speak. As the authors share in *The Silence of Adam*, “Speaking is the gateway to relationship. Silence is the gatekeeper. Words usher us out of silence and connect us to God.” Their conclusion is that by being silent when Eve was tempted to give in to Satan, “Adam taught us what not to do.”)*

Q – Why does Moses say the serpent chose to speak directly to Eve rather than Adam?

(Trick question. Moses does not give an explanation, nor is one found elsewhere in scripture. As Moses describes the event, Satan speaks to Eve but Adam is standing right next to her. Satan, therefore, was speaking to both. Many preachers and commentators assume Eve was made weaker than Adam, because she was created to be his “helper.” As we’ve pointed out in the book, the Hebrew word for “helper” that Moses uses does not so much as hint at weakness or subservience. On the contrary, when it is used in literature the word often conveys the meaning of a greater power coming to the aid of a lesser power, as in God coming to the aid of Israel. It is extremely important to do our best to filter out our preconceptions and cultural biases in order to avoid interpretations that are not supported by the text.)

Q – Can you share a time, or times, when you wished someone close to you had spoken up and stopped you from doing something foolish ... or worse?

Q – If both Adam and Eve listened to Satan and both ate from the tree, does it matter who sinned first?

(In my view, it doesn’t. God joined Adam and Eve in a one-flesh marriage. When one sinned it was as if all of humanity sinned – humanity being the two of them at that point.)

Q – Some Bible educators place the full blame for the first sin on Eve and use this to justify a male-based chain of command, claiming that the man is wiser and stronger. Others place the full blame on Adam, saying he was supposed to be the authority over her and failed at his job. Where in Genesis Chapters 1 or 2 can you find a justification for either view?

(Nowhere. Both Adam and Eve were given the same instructions and responsibilities.)

Alternate Q – Up to this point in what we’ve read, has God told Adam that he is Eve’s protector or have they both been given the same instructions?

(There is nothing to indicate Adam has authority over Eve or that he is the wiser because he was made first. Both received the same instructions from God, as per Chapters 1 and 2.)

Q – Given that God made both Adam and Eve in His image, is it fair to say that thinking of Adam as strong and wise and Eve as weak and naive is the same as insulting God?

(If Eve is made in God’s image, how can she be designed to be weak and naive? It is the improper use of our free will that makes a man or woman weak and naive, not a flaw in God’s original design.)

Q – If God knew from the start that Adam and Eve would sin, why would He give them freedom to choose?

(God wants our love. Love must be freely given, so God gives each of us the opportunity to choose to love Him or reject Him. He’s made His preference obvious right from the start, creating Adam and Eve and choosing to spend time with them in the Garden. And it’s not like He hasn’t given us help to make good choices. In our day, we have the example of Jesus, the testimonies of early eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus standing in heaven ready to intercede with God on our behalf, and we have the opportunity to support and encourage one another as followers of Jesus.)

Q – What types of lies are most likely to work with you?

(Those that appeal to ego? Those that appeal to desires for money, sex or power? Those that allow us to fulfill inner desires fed by a culture that tells us that what feels good is good?)

Q – How important is it to make your own decisions about what is right and wrong, versus doing what family, friends, government, or cultural pressures tell you to do?

(We are all different, but when we distill a moral decision down to its essence, we often find that what we want most is to determine for ourselves what is right and wrong. That’s what comes from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We are not God, but we want to make decisions that only God has the wisdom and authority to make.)

Q – The short definition of the Hebrew word that is translated “loin coverings” is “apron.” Why do you suppose Adam and Eve made themselves “aprons?”

(And people think God doesn’t have a sense of humor! Apron is from a word that also means “armor.” They are figuratively hiding behind their armor and literally shielding themselves from the God of all creation with leaves. Clearly, they know they’ve done wrong. And just as clearly, they have yet to realize that no one can hide from God.)

Q – Verse 7 says the eyes of both of them were opened when they ate the fruit, and they knew they were naked. In your words, what does this verse mean?

(They realized their bodies were different and became embarrassed? They immediately recognized the difference between good and evil, and knew they had done wrong? To this point, they’d had a very limited view of morality. God only gave them one command and both knew what it was. A child doesn’t have to know all the physical ramifications of touching a hot stove or running into a busy street. The child only needs to know that it is important to obey his or her parents. Before they ate from the tree, Adam and Eve didn’t have to worry about moral choices any more than a toddler does; they functioned as God

designed them to function. Eating the fruit of the tree gave Adam and Eve an awareness of moral choices they hadn't known even existed. With the new choices came the possibility of choosing poorly and that introduced guilt into the world for the first time. Their awareness of being naked represented that guilt. Now that they understood the difference between good and evil, they would begin to make their own choices regarding what was right and wrong for them. The possibilities for them to disobey God expanded way beyond the one rule He gave them. Still, God did not pile on a longer load of do's and don'ts for living. It is humans who make thousands of rules to try and control one another. When Jesus came, he only gave us two: love God and love one another.)

Q – What can we learn about decision-making from these verses?

(Take your time. Don't let someone sell you; make your decisions based on all the information you have available. Talk to God, as Jesus did, before making decisions. Think beyond the moment. Make sure that what you decide conforms to what you understand of God and His will for you, as found in the Bible. This, of course, means taking personal responsibility for learning what the Bible teaches and how to apply it.)

Q – What can we do to help one another make good decisions?

(We can get to know other believers well enough so that we can encourage one another. It is important to have a few people we can talk with about major decisions, while knowing that what we say will not be judged, shared, or misused. God made us to love one another and to communicate with one another. We are not designed to operate alone, without support from God or other brothers and sisters in Christ.)

A special section on wisdom

You might say that the beginning of wisdom for Adam and Eve was giving in to Satan. That's when they lost their innocence, initiated a whole chain of consequences that would change their lives and caused them to regret their decision to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Q – How do you define wisdom?

(The dictionary definition is, "The quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment; the quality of being wise.")

Q—What does the Bible tell us about wisdom?

(In theory, experience and learning lead to wisdom, but we all know that some people keep repeating the same wrong choices over and over, and a person can hold several advanced degrees and still make one foolish choice after another. Clearly, there's more to wisdom than education and experience. Ask members of your group to read the following verses. When done, discuss what you've just read:

Proverbs 9:10 —“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” Prepare by looking up the Hebrew word for “fear.”

Proverbs 3:7 — “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.”

Proverbs 19:20 — “Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.”

1 Corinthians 1:25 — “For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

Colossians 2:2-3 — “My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

James 1:5 — “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

Proverbs 15:12 — “Mockers resent correction, so they avoid the wise.”

Proverbs 3:13 — “Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding. . . .”

READ

Genesis 3:8-13

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” **10** He answered, “I heard you in the arden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” **11** And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” **12** The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.” **13** Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me and I ate.”

Q – Based on their prior communications with Him, did Adam or Eve have any reason to fear God before they ate from the tree?

(No. It seemed very normal and comfortable for them to talk and be together.)

Q – What is different after Adam and Eve eat the fruit?

(Adam and Eve are hiding, instead of standing comfortably in the presence of the Holy God. Now that they have sinned, they are no longer innocent. Adam says he is afraid because he is naked. His real fear is not the lack of clothing; it's that he knows he has disobeyed his Creator.)

Q – What was the first thing God did after Adam and Eve deliberately chose to sin? Did He turn His back on them or go looking for them?

(He came walking in the Garden, looking for them. He approached them as a parent approaches a deeply loved child. God asked questions designed to get at the truth and to teach them to do better in the future. God's love, however, does not mean there are no consequences to wrong choices.)

Q – What tone of voice do you think God used when talking to Adam? Do you think he sounded sad, frustrated, angry, or ... ?

(I hear sadness and concern in God's voice. He already knows what Adam and Eve did. Because He's a merciful, loving God, He is sad, just as a parent is sad when a child deliberately does something wrong that will end badly. Because God is also true to His word, He has to tell Adam the consequences of his rebellion.)

Q – Can a just God promise a consequence and not deliver it?

(How can there be justice if there is no consequence for wrong doing? Because God is just, He applies consequences to those who disobey Him. Because He is also the God of love, He chose to send Jesus as a one-time repayment for the sins that came before Jesus and would come after his time on Earth. Though disobedience banishes us from God's presence, Jesus can repair the damage we've done to our relationship with Him.)

Q – What happens to Adam's unity with God and his one-flesh marital unity at this point?

(Both are fractured when Adam points to Eve and says the woman God gave him caused him to eat from the forbidden tree. He blames both God and Eve. He does not accept personal responsibility and he does not ask for forgiveness. Discuss the role of blame in our lives. The affects of blame can be worse than the initial event that led to blaming.)

Q – How does Eve respond when God turns to her?

(Eve doesn't accept responsibility for her action or ask for forgiveness either; she blames the serpent. The result is the same as with Adam, she now has damaged her relationship with God and probably doesn't feel too good about the blame Adam laid at her feet.)

Q – Put yourself in the shoes of Adam or Eve. You have just eaten from the tree. Are you feeling enlightened and joyful? Are you experiencing guilt, fear, or some other emotion? To help yourself get into the role, think of a time when you gave way to temptation. How did that work out? How did you feel before, during and after?

Q – Think of a time, or times, when you tried to hide from God and discuss.

(Does it seem logical to hide from God or is that avoiding the inevitable?)

Q – Why do guilt and fear build barriers between men and women, and between humans and God?

Q – God went looking for Adam and Eve after they sinned. What did Jesus do when his hand-picked apostles ran away and hid after he was crucified?

(Have someone read John 20:19-20. The apostles hid themselves in a locked room, fearing they were the next to be crucified. Just as God sought out Adam and Eve, Jesus sought out his apostles and other followers. Discuss his demeanor with them; how he showed love, patience, and understanding and how he encouraged them to continue serving him.

Read Matthew 18:11-12. *This is the God we serve.)*

Q – What does this part of Genesis teach us about the relationship between our personal choices and consequences?

(Every choice has a consequence, which is why it is important to try and stay within God's will. Only He knows what is best for us. Making decisions without prayerfully seeking His guidance may feel empowering, but if we leave God out of the process, what seems like a good choice may turn out to be contrary to God's plan for us.)

Q – Is it possible that the increasing division we find between races, cultures, age groups, religions, nationalities, political parties, sexes, etc. is the result of evolution or could it be that we humans are trying to replace God's wisdom with our own, as Adam and Eve wanted to do?

(Each special interest group tends to look out for its own interests, even at the expense of those not in the group. Each group tends to blame other groups for the problems of its

members. If more of us lived as if we really believe that **every human** is created in the image of God – as Scripture says – would so many people still feel the need to take cover in special interest groups?)

READ

Genesis 3:14-15 (NASB)

The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Q – We think of serpents as snakes. What does “on your belly you will go” tell you about this serpent?

(Traveling on its belly was not a curse unless the serpent had traveled in a different fashion up to this point. This animal may have walked on all fours. It may have walked upright. The Hebrew word for “serpent” has so many meanings we can’t be sure what type of creature it was.)

Q – Why would God curse the serpent if it was unwittingly used by Satan?

(Did the serpent have a choice about whether or not it would allow itself to be used? Did God use this animal as a living reminder of this first sin and how it came about? We don’t really know. This is the type of detail that can sidetrack us if we are not careful. It’s better to focus on the words that came out of the serpent’s mouth and what happened as a result.)

Q – Restate the metaphor used in Genesis 3:15 in your own words and describe what it means to you.

(From this point on, there will be hostility/hatred between the serpent and the woman. This was probably true in a literal sense, in that the woman blamed the serpent for causing her to sin. It was also figuratively true. There would be hostility between humans and Satan from this point on; people would quickly learn that Satan does not have our best interests at heart. The metaphorical part becomes more apparent with mention of the serpent’s seed and Eve’s seed. The serpent’s seed – sin, rebellion and his spiritual followers who promote both on behalf of Satan – will be put to death by Jesus, who will be born miraculously of a woman, without the seed of a man. Adam and Eve couldn’t have known God was speaking about Jesus. Later, the Jews would know that this referred to the coming of their Messiah.)

Q— What does it tell you about God to learn in Genesis Chapter 3 that immediately after Adam and Eve sin, God is already looking to the future, when Jesus will repair the relationships just shattered?

READ

Genesis 3:16

To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.”

Q— What does the first half of this verse tell you about God’s original design for childbirth?

(It was not originally intended to be so hard, so painful, or lead to so much sorrow. After the first sin, parenting would bring many sorrows. Not only would the pain of childbirth greatly increase, but each child will come into a world knowing how to sin. The first example comes up in Genesis 4, when Cain kills Able. Could it be that God is allowing us to feel the same type of pain He feels when our family members suffer illness, injury, or other unhappy life circumstances; or when they rebel against our warnings and do things we know will not turn out well for them?)

Q— Why is “Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” such a game changer?

(Because of the first sin, relationships between men and women have changed drastically. That excited “she is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” unity has been replaced by blame and tension. Whether by God’s punishment or God’s prophesy, women are going to desire men while men will want to rule over them. This will bring more problems as men and women struggle for power in their relationships instead of loving one another as our servant-Christ loves the church. Also see the discussion for verse 3:20.)

Q— Genesis only hints at the reconciliation Jesus will bring. How will the resurrection change the prescription and/or prophetic description of male-female relationships in verse 3:16?

(Read Colossians 1:19-20 and discuss whether reconciliation must wait for the second coming of Jesus or whether we should already be reconciling relationships that were broken by the Fall? Also read Luke 10:38-42, John 4:5-42 and John 20.)

Q – If Jesus came to reconcile all things – put them back to their original design – is there anything we men and women can learn from how he treats women during his time on Earth?

(Despite the culture of his day, Jesus welcomed women into his presence and into his ministry. And Jesus chose women to represent him to both men and women. One example: Choosing Mary to carry his message to the apostles is the act of someone who is deliberately resetting male-female relationships back to God’s original design, as they were before the Fall. This should not surprise us. Jesus came to restore all creation to its original design, and male-female relationships are a high priority in the restoration process, as Jesus demonstrates.)

READ

Genesis 3:17-19

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Q – Is God blaming Eve for Adam’s sin when He says “*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,*” or is He pointing out that Adam listened to her rather than Him, and it is God who has authority over both Adam and Eve?

(Keep in mind that God told Adam not to eat from the one tree, yet when Eve offered, Adam ate. We don’t know if God later told Eve to stay away from the tree or if Adam passed along that knowledge. It appears that Adam was standing next to Eve when the serpent was tempting her. If so, he was tempted at the same time she was and he has no excuse for ignoring God’s command.)

Q – What is so significant about God cursing the ground?

(Now thorns and thistles will grow “for you.” Instead of enjoying the food God provided for them in the Garden, now Adam and Eve will have to fight weeds to grow the food they will eat. Furthermore, instead of living forever in paradise, Adam learns he will eventually die and return to the ground he was taken from.)

Q – What are the best ways you’ve found to listen to God?

(Is it in church, reading and meditating on Bible verses at home, any time you pray, when hiking in the mountains, talking about your faith with other Christian friends, or . . .?)

Q – How important is it to you to listen to God versus sending Him prayers? What form does His response take for you when you take time to listen?

Q – What can we learn about marriage from verse 17?

(Adam listened to his wife. This was a fine trait in most situations. An exception was when she suggested something both Adam and Eve knew was contrary to God’s will. One lesson in verse 17, I think, is that there are times to listen and follow, and times to listen and respond by speaking out in light of what we understand about God’s will for our lives. Some men and women feel they don’t need to listen to their spouses at all. From Genesis, we learn that marriage is a long-term partnership. But it’s more than that for spouses who see God as their senior partner.)

Q – Why do you think even Christians place less importance on marriage than in years past?

Q – What does it tell you about the trustworthiness of Genesis when you read that biologists now acknowledge that “male-female bonding in lasting pairs was the critical step in human evolution and is built into us by nature”?

(Moses was right 3,400 years ago when he wrote about the significance of marriage. Biologists are recognizing that nature – God – knew what He was doing when he created humans. See book pages 109-110.)

Q – Why does using the word “nature” imply that there is planning behind it?

(If God is not behind creation, what is this impersonal force that is thought to have moved our universe from chaos to its amazingly complex and perfectly integrated structure? Nature is also said to be responsible for maintaining the consistency of the universe which makes scientific experimentation possible. How can impersonal randomness develop such a complex, stable structure and then maintain it?)

Q – Modern progressive thought says that “nature” is causing humanity to progress toward some undefined future perfection. How does this view fit with what you read in Scripture and see taking place in the world?

(How can an impersonal nature move the universe toward a higher standard of perfection? How can something get “better” when there is no standard for good and bad to begin with? See Chesterton’s words on pages 80-81.)

Q – Discuss G.K. Chesterton’s statement that, “Nature is not our mother; nature is our sister. We can be proud of her beauty, since we have the same father, but she has no authority over us; we have to admire, but not to imitate. . . .”

(Why is nature our sister? Because nature is created by God, just as we are; therefore, it is appropriate to think of nature and humans as siblings, but not as parent and child. Does Chesterton’s statement give you ideas for how to talk with those who use the word “nature” in place of God or with those who revere the Earth, but not the One who made it?)

Q – Our culture teaches us that it is important to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong (as long as we do not step outside the boundaries of what is politically correct). What can we learn about our own lives from observing what happened to Adam and Eve?

Q – What role does coveting (wanting what we don’t have or more of what we do have) play in the decisions you make about how to use your time, talents, money and relationships with other people?

READ

Genesis 3:20

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

Also read the NASB translation: Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

Q – What does Eve’s name mean in Hebrew?

(“Life.” Does the second half of verse 20 answer why Adam chose Eve as her name? If we believe that death came to humans as a result of Eve’s sin, Adam’s choice of this name seems odd. Could Eve have been a prophetic name, because Adam knew he would stay with her and they would give life to new humans? Did Adam know that one of their descendants would give birth to someone who would crush Satan and do away with the effects of the first sin? Was he being sarcastic because “her” sin took their life away? What do you think?)

Q— Does it strike you as odd that Adam chooses to name Eve right after God told the two that the world as they knew it had just changed dramatically for the worse? Why was Adam choosing this moment to name her?

(To name someone was to claim authority over that person. Adam chose to name Eve immediately after God demonstrated his authority over Adam and Eve. God had also just told Eve that Adam would rule over her. While we can't say for sure if this was God prophesying about the future or declaring His intention, it appears that Adam decided to name Eve on his own without instruction from God, possibly as a way of regaining some of the personal sense of power just lost when God punished him for his rebellion. What we can be sure about is that all of Adam and Eve's relationships started to fall apart from the moment they sinned and began looking around for someone to blame. For more, see book pages 112-plus.)

Q—What aspects of this Genesis account cause many preachers and commentators to conclude that men are meant to have authority over their wives in marriage? What does Genesis tell you?

*(Adam was the first human. They say Eve was taken from Adam, therefore Adam was her source. Adam named Eve. Eve was made for Adam because he was lonely and needed a helper to caretake the world. Arguments against the above include: The order of creation is irrelevant; humanity was incomplete until there were both male and female, each needing the other; Adam was made from the dust of the ground, yet we don't conclude that the material he was made of was his source. Adam's source was God, just as God was Eve's source. Both Adam and Eve were made in the image of God and given the exact same responsibilities. Adam did not name Eve until **after** the Fall, when relationships were broken and sin had entered into the world. It does not appear that God told him he could name her; he just did it. A close look at the Hebrew words for "helper suitable" reveals that God created a helper for Adam who stood next to him or right beside him. There is not a hint of subservience in "ezer kenegdo" and, in fact, "ezer" is used to describe God Himself coming to assist His people. Put this typical use of "ezer" with the idea that God created life in ascending order of importance, and it's possible to make a case that God saved his best and most powerful creation for last. That's not what I'm saying, but it makes as much sense as arguing that men are superior to women because God made men first. The truth, which is evident throughout Chapters 1 and 2, is that God created men and women to be in relationship with Him and with one another. The source of men and women is God and the authority over men and women is God. We humans are meant to love one another as Christ loves the Church. That means we are to be loving servants to one another, not rulers over one another. Coverage of this material begins on page 115 of the book.)*

Q – The Bible teaches that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. What can we learn from how he used his Godly power while on Earth?

(He was a servant leader. He did not seek to rule over anyone. He did seek to present a living example of how to be loving and encouraging. Sinners could tell he loved them, so he could be very direct without making them feel condemned. He chose both women and men to do his work, despite the cultural biases against involving women.)

Q – We’ve seen what happened to the serpent, the Earth and Eve and Adam as a result of the first sin. What do you say is the main lesson we can learn from their sin?

(There are always consequences to rebelling against God. Relationships broken by sin lead to power struggles and a lot of other unhappy outcomes. When we sin, God does not move away from us; He comes toward us and offers a way back.)

READ

Genesis 3:21

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Q – What is the significance of God using the skin of animals to make garments for Adam and Eve?

(The clothing symbolizes the reality that there is now distance and shame between Adam, Eve and God, where once there was a close relationship. Some see the clothing as symbolizing the shedding of blood that will eventually remove our shame and bring us back into a full, holy relationship with God. It is also significant that this is the first death of anything in the Garden and the first death of an animal to benefit a human. Until now, humans and animals lived in peace and ate plants, not each other.)

READ

Genesis 3:22-24

And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.” 23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Q—Why is God only now deciding to keep the humans from eating from the tree of life?

(Adam and Eve were designed to live forever, in perfect harmony with God and one another. It did not matter if they ate of the tree of life before the Fall, because the gift of eternal life with God was already theirs. Their punishment for sinning included death and the possibility of eternity outside of God's love. After the Fall, God couldn't allow Adam and Eve to undo their punishment by simply grabbing fruit from the tree of life. Notice also how the death sentence that Adam and Eve brought on themselves also affected the Earth and animals.)

Q—**READ Genesis 25:34.** Esau sells his birthright to his younger brother for a meal. What similarities do you see between what Adam and Eve did and what Esau did?

(Both made bad choices involving food that ended up costing them for the rest of their lives. Their choices also cost all their descendants, not just those alive at the time. Some bad choices end up being minor; some are catastrophic. We never know what the consequences of sin will lead to, but there's a good chance we won't be the only ones affected.)

Q—Do you find it difficult to accept the historical accuracy of Genesis when you realize it indicates that Adam and Eve could have lived forever if they had not sinned? If so, why do you suppose that is?

(The lifespan of humans has always varied due to many factors, but the Bible tells us that some of our most ancient ancestors lived hundreds of years. In Genesis 6:3, God limited lifespans and humans became used to life within those limits. The Bible tells us that all who follow Jesus are gifted with eternal life in God's presence, as per His original design for humanity. Why is it so difficult to believe that there was a time when death was not a factor for humans?)

Q—What do Genesis 3:23-24 tell us about God's state of mind at this point of the story?

(God is obviously angry. "He drove the man out" carries the connotation of divorce. He sends Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he was formed. Adam and Eve were going to rule the Earth. Now Adam is going to fight weeds and work the soil to grow food. In other words, his sin took him from ruling the soil to having to rely on the soil to keep him alive.)

Q – Is there anything in Genesis 3:22-24 that tells us God punishes rebellion, yet still loves the rebels?

(Genesis 3:22 uses “Lord God,” which reminds us that our Creator is one who loves and redeems; He always gives us a path back to His loving presence. See book pages 120-122.)

Q – Do you see evidence that humans are evolving toward some higher standard of behavior toward one another?

(No, we continue to make the same mistakes the ancients made. We try to be God; insist on deciding for ourselves what is right and wrong; worship false gods; treat one another badly; and the more laws we write, the more laws we break. If anything, humans appear to be moving into a time of great chaos and destruction.)

Q – Would you have found it hard stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil if you’d been placed in the Garden with Adam and Eve? Do you have something or someone like this tree that tempts you now?

Q – What examples from the life of Jesus show us how to begin the work of reconciling ourselves to God and to spouses, friends, family members, work associates and other people we see in the course of our days?

Q – If life is eternity in the presence of the source of all love and death is eternity where there is no love, why do so many of us find it difficult to choose which path to take?

Chapter 4

Q – Which major religions practiced an equality of men and women before Jesus walked the Earth?

(None. They were all pretty much the same; women were under the control of fathers, husbands and sons. Jesus' acceptance of women into his band of followers and workers was a huge change from existing religious and cultural practices.)

Q – When did the apparently universal rule of men over women begin?

(After the Fall, when Adam took it upon himself to name Eve. This claim of authority over her was the beginning of male dominion over women. It comes from the rebellion that broke all of God's perfect relationships, including the one between the first two humans.)

Q – Jesus willingly chose to step down from his place of honor in God's world in order to enter our world as a servant. How does what he did affect male-female relationships today?

(Jesus taught and demonstrated principles that allow humans to overcome our failures, reconcile with one another and begin to live according to God's original design. It is important to pay close attention to how Jesus treated men and women. When he flipped cultural expectations upside down, it was not for a lark. He was reestablishing God's original plan for humanity. One of the most important principles Jesus taught was that God values a willingness to serve over the ability to accumulate power and wealth.)

Q – Name four basic principles that Jesus taught his followers.

(Love God, love your neighbors, unite around your love of Jesus and his Father, and serve one another as Jesus served his universal church family. The principle of love inspired servant leadership modeled by Jesus is meant to guide all Christ-centered relationships.)

Q – In what ways do hierarchies lead to power struggles?

(Most of us like to control our own lives. When we perceive that someone wants to take away our ability to guide our own lives, we often fight back, either openly or by resisting in quiet ways [passively]. As we see in the political arena, the person or group that wins the struggle for power usually feels entitled to control those who did not win. It is not unusual for those in control to feel they are smarter and more capable of making decisions than those under their authority. This creates a structure in which those who lack power feel insulted,

angry and compelled to fight for both power and respect. Gaining power and respect is such an issue in some communities that a wayward glance can be seen as disrespect and lead to violence. In work settings, politics, and even in families, those who are out of power commonly use every means possible to drag down their opponents. Those in power counter by using every means possible to stay on top. This results in division and discord. Acquiring power for personal gain or to force one's views on others provides a clear contrast to Jesus' model of putting others ahead of self. Jesus taught us how to return to the type of loving relationships Adam and Eve enjoyed before they chose to ignore God. **Though the world was created through him** [think about that for a minute or two!], Jesus never sought to force his authority on anyone. He led by example. He was willing to lower himself to the level of the humans he created — become one of us — and then humble himself even more by serving us. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples to show us how he wants us to serve one another. Because Christ freely gave up his overwhelming power without giving up his place at the right hand of God, we need not worry that serving others will somehow make us inferior to those who acquire power and authority in our world. On the contrary, Jesus has already told us that in his eternal home the power seekers will never rule over those who give up self in order to serve.)

Q – How did the coming of Jesus affect the existing power structure that recognized men as the authorities over women?

(Jesus flipped culture and religious tradition on its head. His actions proved that the Good News he and his followers taught is about way more than simply offering men and women equal access to salvation. He demonstrated with words and behavior that both men and women are called to follow him and serve one another as side-by-side companions, united under his leadership. John 17: 22-23 offers an example of how Jesus prayed that both men and women would be unified in faith and service.)

Q – Discuss the parable of the sheep and goats found in Matthew 25. What does this parable mean to you personally? Does it say anything different to men than it says to women? What does this parable tell us about when and how God approaches each of us? What does this parable teach us about love?

(See pages 134-135.)

Q – The mother of Apostles James and John went to Jesus and asked that her sons be honored in God's kingdom. How did the other apostles react and what did Jesus tell all of them?

(See pages 135-136.)

Q – How did the things said by Jesus in John 17, Matthew 20 and Matthew 25 prepare his followers for when he returned to the heavenly realm?

(In each of those chapters, Jesus taught that serving others rather than being served is the principle intended to guide all who follow him. The world view is that power and wealth are the ultimate goals for all who seek to lead and to leave a “legacy.”)

Q – John 4:39 describes how Jesus deliberately broke cultural and religious tradition by speaking with a Samaritan woman. What resulted?

(See page 136.)

Q – Who was the first post-resurrection evangelist to testify on behalf of Jesus and who sent this person out to testify? Should this example inform the way women serve God in our culture? Discuss.

(See page 136.)

Q – In the Luke 10 account of Mary and Martha, what tells you that Jesus saw the roles of women differently than others in his day?

(See page 136.)

Q – What do Matthew 19 and 22 teach us about marriage? Is what these verses tell us the same as what our culture tells us?

(Read the verses and page 137 of the book. Jesus refers to Adam and Eve as real humans and confirms that God created the first marriage. These verses show us that God brought one male and one female together, thus uniting the two complementary humans he created at the beginning of human history. Can a practice begun by God become outmoded because humans say so? Could this current view be part of an on-going rebellion against God?)

Q – When Peter spoke about the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), did he say anything that conflicted with Jewish tradition?

(Peter tells the crowd that women and men will both receive these gifts; that’s a major change from religious and cultural beliefs of his day. He says, “Even on my servants, both men and women . . .” God was not going to confer his gifts only on the men, on the rich and powerful, or on those who were free to choose their employers. God’s Holy Spirit was to be granted based on faith in Jesus, not gender, social standing, education, or race.)

Q – What is unique about the four unmarried daughters of Philip the evangelist?

(See page 138.)

Q – What was Paul’s social and religious standing before he encountered Christ? *(He was the first-century equivalent of a Harvard educated, elite member of the ruling class. He was a Roman citizen and a leader of the Jews, a man willing to kill others to defend the truth as he understood it. Those who disagreed with his religious views were jailed, beaten and even murdered. Isn’t it amazing that God chose a man like this to become his most prolific New Testament author? Paul’s experience should give all of us hope that we too can be used to do good works for God, no matter how bad our histories.)*

Q – Does the account of Paul and Lydia in Acts 16 provide any clues to how Paul changed after meeting Jesus? How does what happened to Paul suggest the best ways to deal with the ultra right or ultra left while attempting to live for Jesus in an often hostile culture?

(Read Acts 16 and pages 139-plus of the book. Paul the Pharisee disappeared. The new Paul of the Gospel fought hate and intolerance with love. He also completely revised his view of the roles of men and women, as evidenced by what happened when he met Lydia and the other women who were seeking God in Philippi.)

Q – 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 says woman was created “for man.” Explain in your own words what Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in these two verses. *(This is a good time to ask someone to look up “dia” in a Greek dictionary. It’s the word Paul used to indicate “for.” Dia means “on account of,” which is not the same as being created “for the use of.” Paul is saying woman was created because humanity was incomplete before Eve. If the woman had been created first, humanity would have been complete only when the man was created. Humanity is both male and female. Ideally, we work in unity to serve God and to guide and protect the environment He gave us. Women are not created to be the servants of men. Women and men are created on account of each other; to help one another.)*

Q – What makes 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 so important to both men and women? Read the verses and discuss.

(See pages 141-142.)

Q – What does Galatians 3:27-28 tell us about uniting in Christ? *(Once again, Paul affirms that in the kingdom of Christ there is no hierarchy and no line of division that separates men and women, slaves and their masters, or Jews and Greeks. All are equal followers – and servants – of Christ. How Paul handled the problem between a runaway Christian slave and his Christian master in Philemon makes a good side study of this subject. Like Jesus, Paul did not seek to legislate new behavior; he sought to change behavior by changing hearts.)*

Q— Is Paul doing away with gender distinctions when he writes that in Christ we are all the same? (Galatians 3:28)

(Yes and no. Paul is saying that gender does not matter when it comes to salvation or spiritual gifts. He isn't saying resurrected bodies will be without gender. Jesus said in Matthew 22:30: "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage ..." Other verses that shed light on the subject include: Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 and John 20:26-27. There's a lot we won't know until we get there.)

Q— Imagine yourself as a brand new first-century Christ follower. You're talking to your husband or wife about what your new faith means, especially in regard to the roles each of you have in your marriage. What changes might you make as a result of following Jesus?

(Chapter 4 has plenty of food for thought.)

Q— Paul gave the women and men of Corinth guidelines for how to pray in church. Read 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 and discuss. Compare the situation in Corinth with your current church community. What would Paul say to your church?

Q— Paul speaks of a church in which all are united and everyone is both indispensable and gifted to serve. Read 1 Corinthians 12 and discuss.

Q— What does Philippians 2:1-8 tell us about how we are to serve one another? Read the verses and discuss.

Q— What is significant about Paul's instructions to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:8-11, regarding women participating in church gatherings?

*(In a break from his culture and former beliefs as a Pharisee, Paul explains to Timothy how women are to conduct themselves when they pray in church gatherings. Acknowledging that they are expected to learn about their faith with the men is also a break from their culture. **Please note that Chapter 5 covers 1 Timothy 2 in detail.**)*

Q— In Romans 16, Paul refers to Phoebe. Why are Paul's words about Phoebe significant?

(He calls her his "sister" in the faith. He says she holds the position of "diakonos," or deacon. When he wrote his letter, the word was not gender specific. She was a deacon in the same way men were deacons. Paul is affirming Phoebe's role as a leader in the church, an astonishing revelation in his time. He acknowledges that Phoebe's ministry is as important as those of other male leaders. See Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 1:7 and 1 Timothy 4:6.)

Q – Still in Romans 16, what does Paul mean about Phoebe’s role in the church when he writes that she is a helper or leader of many?

(When Paul uses the Greek word “prostatis” to refer to Phoebe as a helper or leader of many, it carries the sense of a woman set over others. Most translators refer to her as a helper rather than a leader, just as they choose to see her as something other than a full deacon in her church. Paul may have used Phoebe to carry his letter to the Romans. Could it be that he was building her up in his letter so it was more likely that she would be accepted by those who found it difficult to welcome women into the church as leaders and equals when it came to spiritual gifts?)

Q – What is significant about Priscilla and Aquila in Romans 16:3?

(Priscilla is listed before her husband, a big change for Paul, the former Pharisee, and something not done in their culture. Acts 18:26 indicates that Priscilla took the lead to further the theological education of Apollos, a highly educated man and government leader. Paul refers to both Priscilla and her husband as his “co-laborers.”)

Q – Who is Junia, mentioned in Romans 16:7 and why is this person important?

(Junia is most likely the wife of Andronicus. Paul says the two were outstanding missionaries [apostles; those sent out]. Some propose that Paul merely said they were “well known to” the apostles or “of note” among the apostles. In any event, these are Christ followers being mentioned for their outstanding service. Paul is commending yet another woman whose work has value to the church.)

Q – Read 1 Corinthians 1:10 and Ephesians 4:11-13. When Paul calls on believers to use their gifts to build up the body of Christ, how does he distinguish between what men are to do and what women are to do?

(Trick question! Paul makes no distinctions. Both men and women receive gifts from God to build up the Body. One person, or one gift, is not more important than another. And the Bible does not indicate that only men or only women will receive certain gifts but not others. A well-trained Pharisee could not write what Paul does without being re-trained by Jesus into a new way of thinking.)

Q – If there is no male-female hierarchy in Paul’s expression of Christianity, why does he appear to reinforce that structure in 1 Corinthians 11 and Galatians 5?

(These verses are often misunderstood and debated. Much of the trouble comes from the need to translate Greek into English. Please read the book’s discussion of this that begins on pages 152 and extends to the end of Chapter 4 before tackling this question.)

Q—When New Testament authors speak of “the church,” what are they referring to, the building or the people?

(The church always means the community of believers, not a building or gathering place. This is an important distinction to remember when discussing who can speak in “church” and who can’t; who can lead in “church” and who can’t.)

Q— What issues are being dealt with by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14?

(Men and women are having trouble learning how to meet together for the first time. Jesus did not leave them a copy of “Roberts Rules Of Order” to guide their meetings. They are inventing church as they go along and it is a messy learning process. Paul encourages men and women to try and excel in the use of spiritual gifts that build up “the church.” He then gives them guidelines designed to bring about order. In so doing, he makes it clear that he expects women to participate with the men.)

Q— Is Paul contradicting himself in 1 Corinthians 14:34-40 when he tells women to be silent “in the churches”?

(See pages 149-plus. Look up the Greek word Paul uses for “speak” in verses 34 and 35. It is “laleo,” a word that indicates extended speech, long rant, or “chatter.” In other words, Paul is telling the women not to monopolize their church gatherings by sharing too much or asking too many questions. He tells them that some of what they want to know can be learned at home. This is a good place to read verses 33-40 from “The Message,” by Eugene Peterson.)

Q— What does 1 Corinthians 7 tell us about Paul’s view of male-female relationships in marriage?

(Dr. S. Scott Bartchy points out that Paul describes a mutuality in sexual relationships and teaches that men and women are complete persons in Christ, regardless of marital status or whether they do or don’t have children. This does not seem Earth-shaking today, but was in Paul’s day. Also note that addressing women without reference to their husbands’ authority and Christian slaves without reference to their owners was radical behavior in a culture that did not place a high value on either women or slaves. For more, see pages 151-plus.)

Q— How can men be the authorities over women when both are equal?

(The common answer is that God makes all followers of Jesus equal, but we have different roles. In this case, some say, the role of women is to be under the authority of a man, as Christ is under the authority of God. In other words, men and women are equal, women just aren’t as equal as the males who have authority over them. This answer falls apart when we see that God’s original design for men and women places the first man and woman side by side, united in a one-flesh partnership. Both receive the same instructions: love God,

love one another and love and care for the world God created for them. God was the source of both humans. God gave both the same assignment and God told both to keep the one command He gave them. Their sin changed all relationships for the worse. Jesus' coming to Earth began a reconciliation process that can be seen in how Jesus and his apostles spoke and acted. Part of the reconciliation process was to restore women as side by side partners of men, just like they were in God's original design.)

Q – What is the Greek word Paul chose to use for “authority” in 1 Corinthians 7:4-5 and why is it significant in this context?

*(The word is “exousia” and it means “authority that is freely given.” A wife freely yields to her husband; in the same way, a husband freely yields to his wife. When both give away their power, as Paul instructs, **neither can be said to have authority over the other.**)*

Q – In 1 Corinthians 11:3, when Paul writes that “*the head of the woman is man,*” he uses the Greek word “kephalé” for head. Given Paul’s behavior toward women and everything else he wrote about male-female relationships, do you think “kephalé” should be translated “authority over” or “beginning or source of”? *(See pages 152-plus.)*

Q – When Paul writes “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*” in Ephesians 5:21, is he speaking only to the women?

(No, he is writing to both men and women members of the Ephesian church. His statement thus becomes an overarching principle that applies to the verses that follow.)

Q – What Greek word does Paul use for “submit” in Ephesians 5:21, in verse 22, and by implication in verse 24?

(The word is “hupotasso,” which means “to yield out of love for someone else.” By choosing this word, Paul is showing us that the obedience he is referring to is not the type owed to someone in a position of authority. Read pages 154-plus and be prepared to explain the meanings of “hupotasso” and “hupakouó,” words Paul uses to distinguish between different types of submission.)

Q – Verse 24 reads: “*Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*” How does the church submit to Christ? Do we submit because the power and authority of Christ forces us to or do we submit willingly out of love? Which is it, “hupotasso” or “hupakouó”?

(Jesus never forces us to submit; he allows us the choice to follow him or not. It is our voluntary choice to submit to his leadership that demonstrates our love of, and trust in, him.)

One of my favorite Bible references is Joshua 1:7-9, where God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous because as long as he leans into God, the Father will be there for him. This theme is repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments. When we choose God, He never leaves our side. But we must continue to choose God. He won't force Himself on us.)

Q – The controversial word “kephalé” comes up again in Ephesians 5:22-23. Paul tells every Christ follower to freely submit to one another – instead of maneuvering for positions of authority as humans generally do and as Zebedee’s sons did. Paul then writes that wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the “head” of the wife. Given everything else we’ve discussed to this point, how do you explain these verses?

(Review pages 152-160. If “kephale” makes the most sense to you as “authority over” read the verse that way and explain how it fits with voluntary submission and everything else Paul has done to revise the roles of women in the new church. If “kephalé” makes the most sense to you as “source of” or “beginning of,” explain how that translation fits with Paul’s words and actions.)

Q – In a one-flesh marriage partnership, is it necessary for one person to be given tie-breaker authority in case of disagreement?

(Jesus holds absolute authority over humans because he created us and has been granted dominion over us. Paul held authority over the new Christ followers because he was appointed by Jesus to teach the Gospel. Neither forced themselves on anyone. Because Paul did not force his authority on the church, gatherings got messy. Still, consider how much personal and corporate growth the early church experienced as people worked out how to be inclusive, how to willingly submit to one another (even those they formerly considered less than equals) and how to live in harmony. In a very short time, the church became hugely influential throughout Asia and Europe. I was once an elder on a large church’s large governing Board that decided we would not force our decisions with majority votes. If one Board member was resistant to a proposal, we continued to discuss, pray and wait without taking a formal vote. If over time we could not agree, that was our answer and we moved on. If we did all reach agreement, we knew that our decision was built on a foundation of unity that had developed without hurrying or coercing anyone. This slowed down the decision-making process, something a business person like me found hard to deal with, but the wisdom of our process soon became evident. So my personal answer to the question above is that marriage partners do not need one person to rule over the other. Long before I served on our church Board, my wife and I worked out a similar process of waiting for unity if we were

dealing with a “split decision.” After nearly 50 years of marriage, we still use the same informal process. If we can’t act together, we don’t act; we wait for a different answer or a change of heart.)

Q – Read the page 156 quote from *Celebration of Discipline* and compare Richard Foster’s words with those of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19. In what ways do we show we value other people when we submit to one another? How is political discourse like (or unlike) the values taught by Paul and reinforced by Foster? *(Submission that is voluntary and mutual eliminates competition for power and authority, and allows people to come together in unity to work toward common goals. Submission does not turn us into lemmings who follow the loudest or strongest voices; it turns us into people who are willing to listen and speak to one another calmly and respectfully, agreeing to disagree without rejecting one as members of the family of Christ. One-sided submission creates a conformity that is not based on shared beliefs, but on shared “must do’s.” This type of submission, when modeled in a husband-wife relationship, often produces rebellious children and children who struggle to mature into full adulthood. Those who live in, or grow up in, rigid authority structures learn to get along by using whatever works, such as giving the appearance of accepting authority while seeking to manipulate the “authority figure.” This is why men who espouse “male headship” will often admit that their wives are good at getting “their way.” Is this what God desires of us? Are we to become a people who seek either to be in control or to manipulate the controllers? Real leaders – such as Jesus and Paul – counted others better than themselves. They never worked to exalt themselves at the expense of others [Philippians 2:3-4]. When we share “the mind of Christ” [Philippians 2:5], and try to outdo one another in showing honor to each other [Romans 12:10], we are led away from destructive power struggles and into unified relationships. These unified relationships are more likely to encourage a climate of acceptance, honesty and caring than relationships based on power and authority. Dr. Bartchy writes that, “Submission must come from God, be sustained by Him, and be open to change by Him. Human beings want to control relationships; God wants to free them to develop and grow in love and mutual support.”)*

Q – Is it possible to “revere” Christ, as Paul writes in Ephesians 5:21 – hold him in honor and respect – without actually doing our best to imitate his behavior? *(John 14:15 quotes Jesus as saying, “If you love me, keep my commands.” Consider again how Jesus demonstrated his love and apply that to father-daughter and husband-wife relationships. What do you believe this type of love should look like to a Christ follower?)*

Chapter 5

READ: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 — Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. ⁹ I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. ¹¹ A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Q—Who is 1 Timothy written to and what does Paul say is his reason for writing? *(1 Tim 1:1-7 and 1 Tim 3:14-15 - Paul is writing directly to Timothy and, indirectly, to the Ephesian church that Timothy leads. Paul is explaining how the people are to “conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church...” The problems were many, but included false doctrines – some of which mixed former religious practices with their new Christian faith. They were also learning how to include women in gatherings with men and to function as a community of faith, despite the many and varied people who attended.)*

Q—Describe the City of Ephesus in Paul’s day. Why was that city important and what made its citizens so prosperous? *(Ephesus was a Roman capital city. It was also a center of Artemis worship and home to the Temple of Artemis, one of the architectural wonders of the world. Artemis was a goddess, who had been worshiped for hundreds of years before 1 Timothy was written. Artemis was important to Ephesus because the huge influx of worshippers and tourists attracted by the temple supported the economy and because the citizens of Ephesus believed Artemis was personally responsible for each individual’s safety and success.)*

Q—How long did the Ephesian church struggle with discord and chaos before Paul wrote to Timothy? *(False doctrines and chaos in church gatherings were problems when Paul first wrote about*

Ephesus in 1 Corinthians 15, in 54 A.D. When he wrote 1 Timothy about 10 years later he spoke to the same problems.)

Q – Describe the cultural and religious backgrounds of people you would see if you attended a church gathering in Ephesus.

(Men and women, Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles), slaves and free, rich and poor — a varied mix of people who normally would not associate with one another. No wonder it got messy.)

Q – How would a visitor describe the cultural and religious diversity of your church? What can you do to ensure that a visitor's first impressions are positive? *(Be friendly and welcoming. Seek out those who look out of place or you don't yet know and introduce yourself. Ask non-intrusive questions, like how did they hear about the church or what attracted them to it. Be a good listener. See each person as if he or she is Christ in disguise, visiting to see how you accept strangers into your midst. Focus on your unity in Christ rather than on the things that tend to divide. Invite people to meet you for coffee or lunch or invite them to your home. Don't wait for a church program to build bridges between church members, be a bridge builder yourself.)*

Q – The Ephesian church was greatly affected by the cultural diversity of its members. Describe our current culture. Does our culture affect our worship? What can we learn from Paul's instructions to the Ephesians?

Q – What can we do as individuals to encourage both greater unity and greater diversity in our churches? Do we really want both unity and diversity?

Q – In verse 8, who is Paul talking to and what does he tell them?

(He is talking to Christian men who are argumentative and angry with one another as they try to worship God together. See pages 176-plus.)

Q – In verses 9 and 10, who is Paul talking to and what does he tell them?

(Paul is directing his comments to the women in church gatherings who are not approaching worship and prayer properly.)

Q – Assume that you are a man or woman in the early Ephesian church who understands that Paul's words are directed to you. Would his words cause you to rethink how you approach a time of community worship? What are the principles regarding behavior in worship that translate into the 21st-century church?

Q – Verses 11 and 12 are thought by many church leaders to exclude women from teaching men and even, by some, to exclude women from speaking in church gatherings. Ask someone to read an NIV or other translation of verses 11-12 and then read the same verses from the Message: “I don’t let women take over and tell the men what to do. They should study to be quiet and obedient along with everyone else.” Compare and discuss the applications that can be taken from both translations.

(Pages 176-plus cover these verses in detail)

Q – Read Romans 16:1-2, Romans 16:3 and Acts 16:13-15. When Paul was a Pharisee, he would not have spoken to a woman directly, would not have allowed a woman to teach a man and would not have allowed the women to meet with the men in a church gathering. What indications do you see in 1 Timothy 2:8-12 that Paul’s views have changed?

(He is instructing women how to behave when they participate in church gatherings with men. For more, see pages 176-plus.)

Q – Why does Paul commend strong women such as Phoebe, Priscilla and Lydia if he means in 1 Timothy 2:8 that all women everywhere and for all time are not to teach men and are to be silent in church gatherings?

(1 Timothy 2:8 appears to indicate that what Paul is writing applies more generally than just to the Ephesian church – “I want the men everywhere to pray...”. Romans 16 commends a number of women who were important to the success of the early church.

1 Corinthians 11:2-6 tells women how to pray and prophesy in their community worship services. Colossians 3:16 addresses the conduct of men and women during times of worship together. It is unlikely that Jesus personally selected a double-minded, thoroughly confused man to represent him. What is more likely is that we have not dug deeply enough into Paul’s words and the context of his letter to understand his intent.)

Q – What examples in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus do you find that elevate the status of women?

(See pages 178-plus.)

Q – According to Strong’s Concordance, the Greek word for “quietness” is “hesuchia.” It is the word Paul uses in verse 11 to tell women to learn in “quietness.” What does “hesuchia” mean? What is Paul telling women when he uses this word?

(It refers to a God-produced calm which includes an inner tranquility that supports

appropriate action. This term does not mean speechlessness, which is more directly indicated by the Greek word 'sige.'" In other Scriptures, "hesuchia" is used to mean a calm or quiet and peaceful state. Pages 180-181.)

Q – Verse 11 also says women should learn in “submission.” What is the meaning of the Greek word Paul chose for submission (hupotage) and how is he applying that word to the conduct of women? Does what Paul wrote reinforce the cultural norm of his day or rewrite it?

(Pages 154-157 and pages 181-plus. In short, the word chose for submission means to “willingly submit.” 1 Timothy 2:11 continues Paul’s teaching about how to behave in a gathering of the church family. His use of “hupotage” reinforces the idea that Paul wanted the women of Ephesus who were unqualified as teachers to willingly submit to both God and those who were qualified to teach them.)

Q – Some argue that Jesus never selected any women as apostles, therefore, women should never be apostles (sent out to teach the Gospel). What do you say? *(This is not a valid argument on at least two counts. First, Jesus did select Mary to tell the male apostles who were in hiding that he was alive, thus making her the first post-resurrection person sent out as an apostle to proclaim the good news of the risen Christ. Second, keep in mind that Jesus never selected any Gentiles to join his group of 12 apostles, but the Bible contains many examples of Gentiles in leadership positions in the early church. It would be foolish to suggest that Gentiles should be prohibited from teaching because Jesus never named any as apostles. That would also mean ripping the Gospel of Luke out of our Bibles; that book was written by a Gentile.)*

Q – In the first part of verse 12, Paul writes: “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.*” Does Paul’s use of “*I do not permit*” (which can also be translated, “*I am not allowing*” or “*I am not now permitting*”) mean he is giving an instruction that applies to all churches for all time? If so, is he contradicting his other letters, such as when he commended Priscilla for teaching Apollos and Phoebe for serving as a leader in her church?

(The word for “teach” in verse 12 is “didaskain.” According to Strong’s, it “nearly always refers to teaching the Scriptures.” If Paul meant to institute a lifelong universal ban on women teaching biblical truth to men or serving as leaders within church communities, he contradicted himself every time he publicly commended them for teaching and leading. It is more likely that this instruction was written for Paul’s time, when it was revolutionary for a woman to meet with men, let alone speak up or take the floor and teach. See pages 183-plus.)

Q—What is the Greek word Paul uses in verse 12 to state that he does not allow women to “assume authority” over a man and why is his choice of words important?

(The word is “authentain” and it doesn’t appear anywhere else in the Bible. The word is used in Greek literature to emphasize an assumed authority or one that dominates. It appears Paul is talking about women who assume an authority that is not theirs to take. Our job is to figure out how – or if – Paul’s words apply today. See pages 184-plus for this discussion.)

Q—What do Acts, Corinthians and Ephesians tell us that help to explain about the false doctrines mentioned in 1 Timothy?

(See pages 168-174. For example, consider how Paul counters the influence of Artemis worship and Gnosticism in his Ephesians letter. This is seen in his speaking of the importance of Christ over and over and writing several times about the “mystery” of Christ being revealed. Paul tells the Ephesians that the revelation of Christ is freely revealed and supersedes all previous mysteries, obviously including those of Artemis, the occult and various forms of Gnosticism. Christ’s kingdom, Paul writes, is “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:21). And he warns the Ephesians about mixing the Gospel with “empty words” and “fruitless deeds of darkness.” (Ephesians 5:6-11). It is only about three years after the Ephesian letter that Paul writes to Timothy and a church still wrestling with false doctrines. In 1 Timothy 2:5, he says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.” He is making the point that neither Artemis nor any other old beliefs and practices should stand between them and Jesus. They have been given the gift of direct access to God through Christ.)

Q— Read verses 13 and 14. Is Paul dealing with a false doctrine in the Ephesian church or is he, as some believe, writing that Adam was designed to lead Eve because he was created first and, unlike Eve, was not deceived by Satan?

(I believe it is the former, as stated on pages 187-191. If Adam wasn’t deceived, he sinned deliberately. This doesn’t make him a natural leader; it depicts a weak-minded follower who stood silently next to Eve, watched her sin and then did the same as she did. Besides, as we’ve discussed elsewhere, there is nothing in Scripture to reinforce the idea that being the first human conveyed any sort of preeminence over Eve. Just as Adam was incomplete without Eve, Eve would have been incomplete without Adam. They needed each other to be all that God intended for humanity to be.

Q – What was Paul’s reason for bringing Adam and Eve into his discussion of false teachings in verses 13 and 14? Compare/contrast the Gospel with what was believed by Ephesians who were mixing Artemis and Adam and Eve into their new Christian faith.

(Given Paul’s choice of words in his Ephesian letter and in 1 Timothy, it is evident that worshipers of Artemis – and other false gods and goddesses – were coming to Christ and bringing past beliefs and practices with them. They were customizing Christ to suit Ephesus, just as they had created their own version of Artemis. I believe one reason Paul mentions Adam and Eve is because at least some Ephesians found it difficult to give up the power and prestige of their female goddess for the perceived weakness of a crucified male savior. Paul reminds the Ephesians that God is their creator. He first formed Adam and then created Eve. All other humans came from this beginning. Artemis didn’t create anyone. If the Ephesians were, in effect, creating a new goddess by transferring the power and prestige of Artemis to Eve, then verses 13-15 bring them back to reality. Eve could not have been an Artemis-style giver of life to Adam because, as Paul reminds them, Eve was formed after him. Not only that, she was the first to sin.)

Q – How does 1 Corinthians 15:22-27 help to explain why Paul mentioned the first humans in 1 Timothy 2:13-14?

(The Corinthians, like the Ephesians, also struggled with false doctrines. In his Corinthian letter, written about 10 years before the one to Timothy, Paul refers to the first Adam as an “earthly man,” contrasting him with Christ, who is “of heaven.” In 1 Corinthians 15:22, Paul writes: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” When he writes that God has put everything “under Christ” [verse 27], Paul is emphasizing the clear distinction between the “earthly” first Adam who brought death to the Earth and the risen Christ who brings life. To make sure the Corinthians don’t miss his point, Paul adds, in verses 45-47: “So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being;’ the last Adam [Christ], a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.” By contrasting the “natural” Adam who rebelled against God with the “spiritual” Adam who came to set things right, Paul not only clarifies the role of Christ but rules out any confusion over whether or not Adam – or anyone other than Christ – was to be worshiped.)

Q – Read 1 Timothy 2:15: “But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” What are your first thoughts when you think of this verse as an instruction to Christians then and now? Does the meaning of the verse seem at all different from your first

impression of it, after you learn who Paul was writing to, what was going on in Ephesus and what Paul's letter gives as his reasons for writing?

(In typical blunt fashion, Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:7 that there are false teachers in Ephesus who “do not know what they are talking about.” Eugene Peterson’s translation of 1 Timothy 2:13-15 in The Message helps to clarify his intent: “Adam was made first, then Eve; woman was deceived first — our pioneer in sin! — with Adam right on her heels. On the other hand, her childbearing brought about salvation, reversing Eve. But this salvation only comes to those who continue in faith, love, and holiness, gathering it all into maturity. You can depend on this.” Verse 15 tells us, in effect, that salvation comes through Eve because her descendant, Mary, gave birth to Jesus. By this, Eve reverses her sin and brings salvation to those who remain faithful to Christ. The worship of false gods and goddesses is a barrier to salvation, not a pathway.)

Q – Two common translations of 1 Timothy 2:15 are: “But women will be saved through childbearing” (NIV) and “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing” (KJV). What’s a third way to read this verse?

(“But women will be saved (kept safe) through (during) childbearing.” See the explanation on pages 193-plus, “Dia” is the preposition translated as “through” or “in.” As discussed in Chapter 4 of this book, “dia” can assign cause or reason, or indicate the channel of an act (as per The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon). In Chapter 4, we saw that examples of cause or reason include 1 Corinthians 11: 8-9 (Woman was created “for man”) and 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 (“man is born of” woman). In these verses, Paul explains that God created mutual dependency between men and women. We are created for each other. To the people of Paul’s day, this was a new idea. If “dia” means “during” in 1 Timothy 2:15, the verse says that it is Jehovah, not another god or goddess, who keeps women safe during childbirth, “if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” What the verse does not explain is why women who follow the one true God still die in childbirth, as did those who prayed to Artemis. That would require a discussion of two different concepts: “safe” in our world and “safe” in God’s world. The first is temporary; we’re all going to die to this life at some point. The second refers to our choice as to whether we spend eternity with our loving Heavenly Father or outside the circle of His love. It is my belief that Paul was cleaning up specific false doctrines that plagued Ephesus. He was not answering all of the theological questions that might occur to the Ephesian Christians.)

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