

Bible Studies for Life: God begins the story

May 17, 2013

• *This Bible Studies for Life lesson for June 2 focuses on Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 2:15-17; 3:6-7, 14-19, 23-24.*

In the beginning, it was good. Genesis provides two accounts of the creation story and allows us to see a more complete picture of the God who put it in place. Genesis 1 follows a pattern depicting God speaking creation into being with only words. "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (v. 3). After each piece of creation, God saw it was good. The first narrative moves from the creation of light and dark to the final crown of it all, humankind. Then God rests on the seventh day.

God is powerful in the act of creation. His simple, spoken words bring about the first day and night as well as the water that fills earth's oceans. He tells the land to produce vegetation, and immediately the earth is covered with seed-bearing plants and trees. His words birth animals of all species and kinds and send them chasing one another throughout the land and sea. God is so powerful, his words bring life to life. This account pictures God outside of his creation, set apart and somewhat distant as he looks down on all and calls it good.

Beginning again

In Genesis 2, beginning in verse 4, the creation story seems to begin again. This time, the creation of man is at the beginning, followed by plants and animals, and finally Adam's companion, Eve. In this account, God moves beyond speaking creation into being and actually uses his hands. Genesis 2:7: "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living

being.” Instead of speaking vegetation into being, he actually plants a garden with his hands: “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed” (v. 8).

In this narrative, God is very personal. His hands mash up the soil, and he forms man with his own hands, like an artist creating a masterpiece out of clay. He puts his mouth up to the nose of Adam and breathes air into his body, prompting Adam’s heart to beat for the first time.

God bends over and plants a garden in Eden, moving the soil around the seeds and provides water for them to grow. Then God puts Adam to sleep, like a good surgeon, and removes a rib to create Eve, Adam’s companion. God is close and involved in his creation. He uses his hands and his mouth to create as he stands in the middle of his miracle and watches it all come to life.

Complete picture

Some would claim these accounts are contradictory and ask which is true. The order of creation is different, as is the method. However, these two accounts, placed side by side, give us a more complete picture of creation and the God behind it all.

Two hikers on opposite ends of the Grand Canyon would describe the same canyon in different ways, yet their descriptions together would help us to see the wonder more clearly and completely. Likewise, these accounts show us a God who is all-powerful, yet so personal. We see our God as distant, watching it all come together with his words, yet so close he holds his creation in the palms of his hands. Both narratives, on their own, are true depictions of the Creator, but when put together, we get a more comprehensive view.

Aftermath

God created a beautiful world and put people in the middle of it all. Adam and Eve's needs were met—physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially. God provided everything they needed to live a life full and eternal. But that life was only possible when coupled with choice. Adam and Eve chose knowledge over faith and rebellion over obedience. The aftermath is a broken world that continues to shatter with every passing day. Ever since the first disobedience, all creation has been yearning for completeness. We know the pain of being broken, and we long to be whole.

The story does not end with the shattering of creation but moves on to an ultimate healing. God did not give up on his beloved creation. Looking further into his word, we see the all-powerful God who created everything with his words decided to limit his power, come to earth and speak the truth to all people.

The distant God, who looked down on all that was good, decided to come so close his feet were covered in the mud and the mire as he walked. The God who breathed life-giving breath into Adam's nostrils is the same God who came and sacrificed his own life in order to give us life again. God's story was marked by goodness in the beginning, and although we see glimpses of that goodness today, we all are waiting for the ultimate healing in the end.