

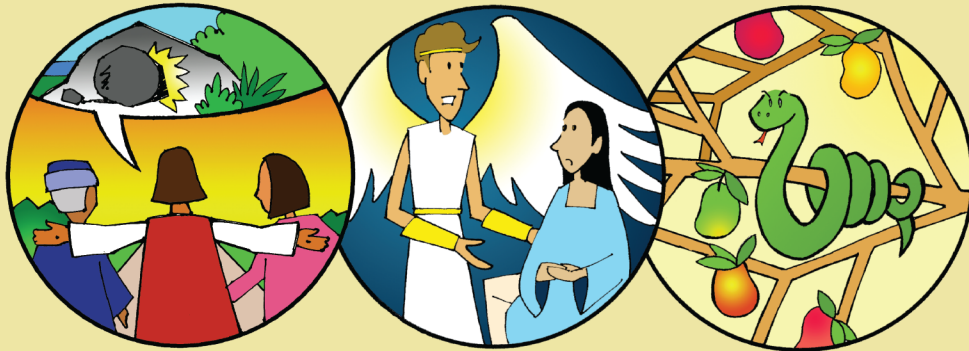
**SMALL GROUP
GUIDE**

**GUIDE
#3-1**

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LIVING THE WORD

Narrative Lectionary



Small Group Guides

Discussion Guides

Contributors

Publisher

Gregory Rawn

Editors

Cynthia Fairman Paulson

Nance E. Keyes

Gregory Rawn

Writers

Rev. Aimee Frye Appell

Rev. Amy Orstad

Christine Hallenbeck Ask

Rev. Ed Strietelmeier

Emmy Kegler

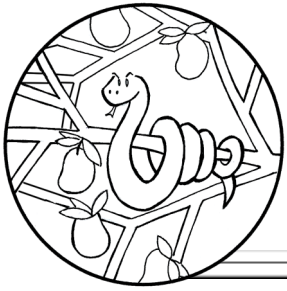
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Living the Word: Small Group Guides (Narrative Lectionary, Year 3)

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Creation and Fall

Promises Made, Promises Broken

About the Story

The first five books of our Bible are called the Pentateuch. Scholars believe there were four different authors or groups of authors who contributed to this compilation of writings. Therefore it is not uncommon to find conflicting details within the same basic story throughout these books. It is similar to the four different Gospel accounts in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

They contain many of the same stories with varying details, based on the audience to which each author was writing. Here in the Pentateuch, scholars differentiate between the authors even within the same verse.

It is also important to note that we are reading stories that were shared in an oral tradition. These events were spoken about and shared by families and communities of the people of Israel for generations before they were ever written down.

Our reading from Genesis chapters 2 and 3 is the second account of creation we find in the Book of Genesis. If you read Genesis chapter 1, you will learn of God creating the heavens and earth, all the living creatures, and lastly humans. The creation account from chapter 2 places a human on the scene through God breathing life into the dust of the earth. After that, God creates the world around them and gives the human dominion over vegetation and animals. Finally, God separates the human into male and female, companions together in God's work. The different accounts of the same story likely were written down from different oral traditions. Instead of focusing on the story as an historical account, it helps to focus on how God relates to humanity in each story throughout the Bible.

God gave the man and woman permission to enjoy all parts of creation, with the exception of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The Hebrew expression here (*tov varah*) does not speak to a moral knowledge, but a knowledge of "everything" as God does. God's response to the couple can give us insight into God's relationship with us. When they disobey, God does not kill them, but there are consequences. God still loves and remains in relationship with the people, but that relationship will now suffer.

The Point:

God loves us, even when we do the wrong thing. Humankind was created to be in relationship with God and with one another. God provides restrictions or guidelines as a means of protection. Even when we fail to follow what we know is in our best interest, God is continually forgiving us and creating something new.

Last Week/Next Week

This is our first week of study together and we are starting at the beginning! Genesis 2 gives us a creation story, but leaves us with a cliffhanger. The original relationship between God and people has been broken. Then things only get worse: Cain kills Abel, the flood happens, and the hubris of the tower of Babel. But all of this prehistory of things getting worse points us to God's promise to Abram.

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together with this, or another, prayer:

God of creation, all you have made is good. We give you thanks for your creation. Through the sin of Adam and Eve, and subsequently of each of us, we know the world is not a perfect place. Help us to create goodness and truth in every way and to work together to further your love in the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Into the Story

Genesis literally means "beginning." We are beginning our time together with the first book of the Bible. We are beginning with God's creation of earth and humanity. As we are beginning to know each other better as a group, let's introduce ourselves and share a memory from childhood.

Learning the Story

The story of creation shows God's desire to be in relationship with humanity. Even when trust is broken, God still loves us and keeps God's promises.

Read Genesis 2:4b-7 – Creation

- ☞ Why do you think this account of creation tells of God creating a human being before anything else? Does it matter?
- ☞ What two elements does God utilize in creating humanity?
- ☞ How might it change your day to think of God being as close to you as your breath?

Read Genesis 2:15-17 – Eden

- ☞ Why would God restrict just one tree from which the first humans should not eat?
- ☞ Do you think God expected the humans to break this command?
- ☞ Do you think this command from God is a threat or a promise? Or both?
- ☞ Why does God give us commands throughout the Bible – do not steal, do not envy, etc.?

Read Genesis 3:1-8 – Busted!

- ☞ The serpent claimed they would not die, but be like God. Was he right?
- ☞ Notice that God said they would die if they ate it, but after they ate it their eyes were opened. How do those two things go together?
- ☞ Is knowing more always a good thing?

Bible Connections

- ✚ Paul uses the story of Adam to illustrate the greatness of God's gift in Jesus (Romans 5:12-21).
- ✚ In John 8:44, the writer alludes to the serpent from Genesis 3:1.
- ✚ Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into the disciples in language similar to Genesis 2:7 (John 20:22).

Living the Story: Fellowship

Our fellowship together is a time to reflect and connect on a more personal level. Play the song "Tempted by the Fruit of Another" by Squeeze (1981), while group members list temptations they face. After the song is over, turn to a neighbor and share one example of a temptation with which you struggle. Then brainstorm ways you can avoid the temptation. Finally, agree to pray for each other to resist your temptations this week.

Closing Prayer

Count off by twos ("one, two, one, two") until everyone has a number. Then pray together responsively as follows:

Ones: God of forgiveness, just as the first humans broke your rule in Eden, so too we often do what we know is wrong.

Twos: Give us strength to avoid temptation, forgive us when we fail, and teach us to forgive others as generously as you forgive us.

Close together: In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

At Home

- ✚ Throughout each day, take a minute to focus on your breath, thinking about God breathing life into each of us. Pray that you may feel God's presence in and through your breath.
- ✚ Practice seeing God in everyone you encounter this week. Let it shape how you treat them.
- ✚ Pray for the person this week that shared their temptation with you.

Bible Nuts & Bolts: A Brief History of the Bible (Part 1 - Old Testament)

The Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament, was written over a period of several hundred years by a variety of different authors. According to tradition, Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, including Genesis, from which we get today's story; however, it is more likely that these books were compiled from various earlier sources during or soon after the Babylonian exile, around 600 BCE.

Daily Readings

Sunday—Read Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17, 3:1-8

Human beings are created by God, and are tempted by a serpent. Ask for God's forgiveness for succumbing to a temptation.

Monday—Read Genesis 3:9-19

God confronts Adam and Eve. Tell someone who has wronged you what they have done, hoping that your conversation will heal your relationship.

Tuesday—Read Genesis 6:9-22

God commands Noah to build an ark and promises to protect Noah, his family and the animals of the ark from the devastation of the flood. Apologize to someone you have wronged and promise to avoid that behavior in the future.

Wednesday—Read Genesis 7:17-24; 8:6-12

God causes a great flood over the earth that extinguished every living creature except for Noah, his family and the animals on the ark. Pray for people who have loved ones in natural disasters, and make a donation to an organization of first responders such as the Red Cross, your local police or fire station.

Thursday—Read Genesis 9:8-17

God makes a promise to Noah, his descendants and all creatures of the earth that God will never destroy the earth by flood again and marks the promise with a rainbow. Take some crayons or markers and draw a rainbow, then list the promises God has made that mean the most to you.

Friday—Read Genesis 11:1-9

Noah's descendants had one language and built a tower together, God came down, scattered the people and mixed up their languages. Watch a film in another language and see if you can follow the story without understanding the dialogue.

Saturday—Read Genesis 12:1-7

God calls Abram to leave his country so God may bless him and give his offspring land. Pray that God will guide your steps and give you the courage to trust God through the journey.