



AND THE LORD GOD  
COMMANDED THE MAN,  
SAYING, "OF EVERY TREE  
OF THE GARDEN YOU MAY  
FREELY EAT; BUT OF THE  
TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE  
OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU  
SHALL NOT EAT, FOR IN THE  
DAY THAT YOU EAT OF IT  
YOU SHALL SURELY DIE."

GENESIS 2:16

# GRACE

## IN THE GARDEN

### DATE

January 11 & 12

### WEEK

2 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Genesis 2:16

## SETTING THE STAGE

Today we continue with the Story of Grace, looking specifically at Grace in the Garden.

This week in Genesis chapters 2 and 3, we see the name of God become more personal. In Chapter 1, it was simply “God.” It was the Hebrew word, “*Elohim*.” But now we have “*LORD God*,” which we see 11 times in 22 verses.

When you see LORD in all “caps” that is the Hebrew word for Yahweh or Jehovah. It is the personal name of God. Think of it as the difference between Mr. Smith and John Smith. “John Smith” would be more personal, intimate, and accessible. So, in Chapter 2 we see God as more personal, intimate and accessible to His creation.

God did not wait until the New Testament with the birth of Jesus Christ to become personal and intimate and accessible. God is LORD God; Yahweh/Jehovah. A personal God from the very beginning of creation.

We know that God wanted to be involved from the beginning; hence the act of Grace in Creation. God never intended for His creation to be on cruise control or function like a robot. God created living plants, animals, nutrients that would allow growth and provision for all living creatures. His creation was designed to work together in perfect harmony, each unique element having purpose and value. In Chapter 2, we see this clearly in the midst of a garden.

God set, with great intentionality, that which He created in His own image, in the midst of a garden. We have seen the Grace of God in creation. And throughout creation, God spoke something into existence. Yet with man, He got His hands dirty by “forming” man in His own image, both male and female. *Continued on page 16 >*

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Grace In Responsibility
2. Grace In Freedom
3. Grace In the Fall

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Everything needed for life was in the Garden of Eden.
- The Hebrew word “*Akul*” means eat without restraint.

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# GRACE

## IN THE GARDEN

*Setting the Stage, continued* > Understanding what grace means requires going back to an old Hebrew term that meant “to bend, to stoop.” To show grace is to extend favor or kindness to one who does not deserve it and can never earn it. Receiving God’s acceptance by grace always stands in sharp contrast to earning it on the basis of works.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout creation God had shown grace by bending, stooping, and leaning towards that which He had created, getting His hands dirty in forming man and woman. The expectation of God was that in turn Adam and Eve would get their hands dirty by tending and taking care of that which God had created.

### 1. GRACE IN RESPONSIBILITY

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**GENESIS 2:8-10** *The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. <sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. <sup>10</sup> Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.*

The LORD God planted a garden that we have come to know as the Garden of Eden. Everything you ever needed for life was in the garden. There were plants, fruits, trees, and even four riverheads; all of which would work together to provide all the sustenance and nutrition needed; and it was all in the midst of the garden.

Understanding what grace means requires going back to an old Hebrew term that meant “to bend, to stoop.”

For many people this is a familiar story, or at least parts of the story are familiar to some degree. But consider the phrase, “in the midst of the garden.” We may be quick to overlook that phrase, but it gives detail to the fact that everything needed for man and woman were within the parameters of that garden.

The Tree of Life was in the “midst of the garden.” The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was in the “midst of the garden.” Everything that Adam and Eve needed was in the “midst of the garden.” All that was good in the world was in the “midst of the garden.” We also know that all that was bad for them was in the “midst of the garden.”

Adam and Eve were to live LIFE in the “midst of the garden.” The choices they were to make were to be made in the “midst of the garden.” The responsibilities they had were to be carried out in the “midst of the garden.” This garden was like every other garden that takes responsibility to keep it working and growing.

**GENESIS 2:15** *Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend (cultivate) and keep it.*



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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening: Believing in Grace is One Thing. Living it is Another*, Thomas Nelson, 2006.

There is grace in responsibility. God could have easily taken the burden upon Himself. He could have created the plants and trees in such a way as to never need attention or cultivation. Yet God wanted man to have responsibility. God wanted man to experience the grace of nurturing, the grace of cultivating, the grace of giving attention.

In Genesis 1, God was very clear from the beginning that He intended for man and woman to have authority and responsibility.

**GENESIS 1:26-28** *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

The concept of work and responsibility was never the result of the fall. The concept of work and responsibility is part of grace in the garden. God created us in such a way to give us the privilege of living freely, making choices, and having responsibility.

Even in the midst of the garden, Adam and Eve had the responsibility to tend and keep the garden. They had the responsibility to be fruitful and multiply. They had the responsibility to name the animals. They had the responsibility for one another. They had responsibility to their Creator, to do what He had asked within the garden. All of this took place because God created man and woman to be different from all other creatures. We are unique in our grace in responsibility. A responsibility which also comes with great freedom.

## 2. GRACE IN FREEDOM

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**GENESIS 2:16** *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;*

In the midst of the garden was grace in freedom. The Hebrew word “*Akul*” means to “eat without restraint.” So from the beginning, God wanted man and woman to experience freedom in the midst of the garden. He did not want to confine us to robotic status. He did not want us to be restricted in actions or opportunities. There is a measure of trust involved with freedom. Notice that God did not simply make a suggestion of freedom. He used a very strong word translated as “commanded.” It is the Hebrew word “*Tsavah*” which means a “command or order.”

In essence, God is making sure that Adam and Eve understand clearly that He wants them to experience grace in freedom. In the creativity of God, He provided a variety of animals, plants, trees, even four rivers instead of just one. God is letting them and us know that we have free choices to make in the midst of the garden.

**The Hebrew word “*Akul*” means to eat without restraint.**

And we still live in the midst of the garden today. Everything we need for sustenance and nutrition is available to us, especially in this country. We have been given great freedom, but remember freedom exists in the realm of responsibility. The two always go together.

In God’s grace, He provided man and woman with responsibility and freedom in the midst of the garden. Everything that was good was in the midst of the garden. Everything that was needed was in the midst of the garden. Everything that was part of life was in the midst of the garden; including two trees; the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (*Genesis 2:9*). God set everything up in the midst of the garden including parameters and boundaries.

**GENESIS 2:16** *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

God did not complicate it at all; in fact, He made it quite clear. Man has been given responsibility and freedom; freedom to choose. Obedience to God leads to life and enjoying all that is provided; eating without restraint and freedom. Disobedience to God ultimately leads to death. It was simply one tree in the midst of the garden that was off limits. God was not being mean. In the midst of the garden, God showed grace.

Think of it in terms of a parent and child. Every child has great freedom; but every parent would be remiss if they did not implement some parameters for the good of and protection of the child.

God is the ultimate parent. We are often the stubborn and prideful children. We are in this relationship with God, as His creation and He the Creator. Regardless of whether we acknowledge or embrace the relationship; it exists. God has set up parameters for our good and our protection. We have the complete freedom to listen to what God says and obey. Or we have the complete freedom to not listen to what God says and disobey and ignore the parameters.

God always wanted man and woman to have freedom of choice. Again, He did not want robots or puppets; rather He wanted living, breathing human beings created in the image of God. Here is another way to think of it; man came from the dust, the ground. Adam came from *Adamah* (which we saw in last week’s lesson). The trees and plants came out of the ground. So, man and woman have the free choice of relating more to the creation, that which comes from the ground; or the free choice of relating more to the Creator, the One who created the ground itself.

The free choice has to be made in the “midst of the garden.” Sometimes with freedom comes a fall.

### 3. GRACE IN THE FALL

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“If Genesis 3 were not in the Bible, there would be no Bible as we know it. Why? Because the rest of Scripture documents the sad consequences of Adam’s sin and explains what God in His grace has done to rescue us.”<sup>2</sup>

**GENESIS 3:1-7** *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;<sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”*

<sup>4</sup> *Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

In these seven verses, history was changed with the fall of man. There is no explanation of where the serpent came from in these verses, the serpent merely appears. Thus, begins a conflict that is traced through the stories from Genesis 3 to Revelation 21. It is a conflict that we face today at home, in the

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<sup>2</sup> Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening: Believing in Grace is One Thing. Living it is Another.*

workplace, on the ballfield, at school and even at church. Throughout Genesis, Satan is referred to as a serpent, although elsewhere in scripture he is referred to as a roaring lion, a dragon, angel of light, devil, the evil one, prince of this world and destroyer.

Regardless of the name or reference, Satan is consistent in that he wants to steal, kill and destroy. He wants nothing more or less than for us to be separated from God. In these verses, Satan, as the serpent captures the attention of Eve first.

Satan asked a very simple, almost innocent, question. *“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”* In the simplicity, there was a seed of doubt planted. Satan will often begin in such a way when he tempts us; simple, casual, and even seemingly innocent. There was nothing inherently wrong in the question. The problem was in how Eve responded. It is the response that changes everything.

Eve could have easily ignored the serpent. Though admittedly in the midst of the garden, a talking serpent probably would capture anyone’s attention. Eve began this brief conversation with the serpent, and she let her guard down.

And then as serpents tend to do, it struck. This time it was not with a seed of doubt, but an outright lie. When Satan, as the serpent, says this lie, notice where the eyes of Eve are looking.

**GENESIS 3:6-7** *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

It just takes a split second for your eyes to be taken off that which is right. Countless accidents occur each year because someone takes their eyes off the road. Countless golf balls have been missed because the golfer takes their eyes off the ball. Eve took her eyes off of God and the truth of God, if even for a split second. The tree looked good. The tree was pleasant to the eyes. The tree was desirable to make one wise. The tree was in the midst of the garden. The tree was accessible. And she took of its fruit and ate; and then she also gave it to her husband, and he ate.

With a blink of an eye, and a bite of the fruit sin entered the world. Then the eyes of both of them were opened. They had been given responsibility and freedom. They had been given parameters that were for their own good.

Their eyes were open and for the first time they felt shame in their nakedness. Their initial response was to try and hide. Artists have rendered fig leaves covering the private parts of both Adam and Eve, and yet it was possible they had tried to cover all of themselves in such a way as to hide in their shame. They knew they had done wrong. They had disobeyed God. Sin should always cause us to be uncomfortable whether it be ashamed of doing wrong or feeling guilty, both of which they experienced.

The verses that follow show Adam and Eve tried without success to hide from God. How often do we do the same? We disobey God. We sin. We take our eyes off that which is right. We believe the lie and we hide both figuratively and literally. Adam and Eve had such a personal and intimate relationship with God and yet because of their disobedience they hid.

**GENESIS 3:9-13** *Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”<sup>10</sup> So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”<sup>11</sup> And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”<sup>12</sup> Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”<sup>13</sup> And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

**“If Genesis 3 were not in the Bible, there would be no Bible as we know it. Why? Because the rest of Scripture documents the sad consequences of Adam’s sin and explains what God in His grace has done to rescue us.”**

Although Adam and Eve took their eyes off of God, God never took His eyes off of them. God knew exactly where they were. God knew exactly what they had done. But God wanted them to own their sin. God wanted them to confess their sin. God wanted them to realize they had made a choice to disobey.

God spoke to them. God's voice was both a horror and a comfort at this point. More than ever, Adam and Eve, were in a sinful state where they had to hear the voice of God. It is hard to keep our attention focused on His words when our sin is in view, but it more critical than ever.<sup>3</sup>

Upon hearing the voice of God, they began the ever-popular "blame game." Adam blamed both God and Eve: the woman "you" gave me, "she" gave me of the tree, and I ate. He owned his sin after he blamed both God and Eve. Eve blamed the serpent as being the one who deceived her; but then she owned her sin when she said, "I ate." They both openly confessed before God.

There were going to be consequences because of their sin. These consequences continue to this day. There were consequences for the serpent (v. 14-15). There were consequences for Eve (v. 16). There were consequences for Adam (v. 17-19). The pain of childbirth started as a consequence of Eve's sin. Thorns, thistles, sweat and pain in physical work started as a consequence of their sin. Physical death started as a consequence of their sin. And most importantly, spiritual separation from God started as a consequence here in these verses.

And yet, there is still grace in the fall. Remember, Adam and Eve noticed they were naked; they were ashamed of their nakedness after their disobedience. They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. But God showed grace.

**GENESIS 3:21** *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

In the simplicity of this verse, we see the complexity of God's grace. The fig leaves were not going to work. God provided a covering of their physical bodies that symbolized a covering of their sin and disobedience. Blood had to be shed for the skin of an animal to be made into a tunic that covered both Adam and Eve. Throughout the Old Testament God required the sacrifice of an animal; shed blood to serve as confession before God and to stay in relationship with Him. The prophet Isaiah realized the importance of the covering of God in this relationship.

**ISAIAH 61:10** *I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with robes of righteousness.*

In the New Testament, when Jesus was crucified on the cross; it would be the final sacrifice ever needed. Jesus was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. The blood of Jesus was shed on the cross so that you and I might be eternally covered for our sins, thus clothing us with garments of salvation and wrapping us with robes of righteousness.

The grace of the cross began in the midst of the garden when God provided covering for Adam and Eve. He has always shown His grace in the midst of our garden of battles, challenges, disobedience, mistakes, guilt, and even shame. The good news of grace that was found in the garden still prevails today.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. James Dixon, *Genesis: Expository Thoughts*. Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005, p. 91.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Life was meant to be lived “in the midst of the garden.” As far back as Adam and Eve, there was responsibility and freedom. We are not to live with a sense of entitlement. If anyone had the right to be “entitled” it would have been Adam and Eve, yet God graciously gave them responsibility in the midst of the garden.

The freedom we have today is unparalleled in all of history. However, with greater freedom, comes greater responsibility and a greater possibility of falling. Not falling from grace but falling from that which God had purposed for us; a loving personal relationship with Him.

In the midst of the garden we are to stay on the path. It all comes down to choices. Regardless of whether or not we see the bright colorful trees or the pesky little weeds in the garden; we make a choice on whether or not to stay on the path.

- Do we stay focused?
- Do we stay connected with God?
- Do we stay connected with family and friends?
- Do we remain faithful in our values and morals?

Adam and Eve made a choice that has consequences to this very day for all of us. God showed them grace in the fall. God covered their nakedness which symbolized the sacrificial covering that would be necessary to be right before God. God showed grace once again through His Son, Jesus Christ as that final sacrifice; covering us for all eternity.

Remember what Adam and Eve experienced in the midst of the garden is available to you as well.

God's grace.

God's provision.

God's mercy.

God's forgiveness.

God's protection.

God's direction.

God's grace finds us right where we are in the midst of the garden, covering us, forgiving us and walking with us.