

Putting God First Study
Lesson 2: THE GOD WHO IS FIRST
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A Bible Study Series of
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Introduction: Years back, a somewhat comical expression became popular: “You’re not the boss of me!” Though stated playfully, it nevertheless reflects a truism: Our resistance to authority runs deep. In this lesson, we will explore why God, the One without whom we would not even exist, the One who was there “in the beginning,” is the rightful “boss” of us all!

When we read the opening verse of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, the very first thing we notice is that God is already present when the story begins. Genesis 1:1 says: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Verse by verse, we learn what God said, made, created, blessed, saw, and so on, but nowhere are we told when, how, or by whom God Himself was created. Why is that? The answer is both simple and mind-boggling: It is because God is not a creature. He has neither a beginning nor an end, but rather has ALWAYS existed outside the realm of time and space as we know them. He is, in fact, the author and creator of time and space, and of all else that exists.

On some level, we can understand these truths. But have we ever really stopped to consider their implications? Since God has always existed and is the Creator of all that exists, including ourselves, does He not have every right to exercise complete authority over us?

The text for today, which is taken from Genesis 2, serves as a reminder of the authority of the Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth. His creative power includes everything including man and woman. As creator, God has the right to command us to obey and to do His will. God teaches us how to glorify Him and how to live fruitful and faithful lives. To please God, we must simply **PUT HIM FIRST IN EVERY AREA OF OUR LIFE**. Enjoy the lesson!

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 2:15-17

¹⁵ 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.”

I. God Gives Adam Stewardship--Genesis 2:15

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

God placed Adam into the paradise of the Garden of Eden with a job to do. God created a world that included work needing to be done; He created man with a mission to do that work. Even before sin entered the world, human beings were

Stewardship is caring for something that doesn't belong to us but for which we are responsible.

meant to work, to help to accomplish God's purpose. Adam and Eve's purpose was to, "*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.*" (Genesis 1:28) To subdue the earth means to tend and care for the earth, keeping the weeds and wild animals at bay, and working at keeping the land productive. Tragically, Adam's

sin (Genesis 3) involved a failure in his work. God intended for our work to be a way of communing with and worshiping Him. After the sin of man, there is a paradigm shift from *tending the land* to *working the land*. Mankind transitions from keeping the land looking good as gardeners to working the land to ensure we have food resources. This resulted from the willful decision of Adam and Eve to disobey God.

At some point, they did not truly realize the garden nor its plants and animals belonged to them. They did not have free reign over everything. They were to manage the garden as stewards. Biblical stewardship is *caring for something that doesn't belong to us but for which we are responsible*. The term is a clear reminder that we do not own anything. Everything is God's because He is FIRST. The reality is that "*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*"(Psalm 24:1) The Christian task is to be good stewards. Putting God first is remembering that we work for God and everything belongs to Him.

- How have you at times been a good steward? How have you been a bad steward?

Jesus taught this same idea in **Matthew 24:42-44**.

⁴² *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

Jesus Christ taught about being faithful servants who are diligent and hardworking whether the master is there to inspect their work or not. As a wise manager, the faithful servant takes care of others, is responsible, and manages the resources God has given them well. At times, we are not wise in managing God’s blessings. The danger is that we often put our needs first! Furthermore, the danger is that we care more about the blessings than about the God who blesses us.

- **What are the qualities of being a good steward?**
- **How should this truth impact all that we do?**

II. God Commands Adam--Genesis 2:16.

¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;

God allowed Adam and Eve freedom in the Garden of Eden. Yet, God established the boundaries for their freedom. There were multiple trees in the garden from which Adam could eat; however, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was off limits.

God gives Adam *freedom* yet that freedom to do what he wanted always was to be exercised within limits. God gives us similar freedom. Some things He allows and others He prohibits. We often focus on the limits God sets, but God wants His children to experience the joy of freedom. Paul gives us a clear idea of freedom and what it means and doesn’t mean.

1 Corinthians 6:12

‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say — but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’ — but I will not be mastered by anything.

What does this mean for you? This means Jesus set you and I free from the punishment, power, and presence of sin in order to live a life that is dedicated to

Him. He frees us from the bondage of the things of this world so we can *bind* ourselves to Him. We are freed from the world to become servants (slaves) to Christ! In this sense, we come to understand that we are not completely free at any time. We choose to be released from the world and then we choose to be controlled by The Lord.

- **How can humans be given free will yet still be commanded by God?**
- **What is at least one “takeaway” about how we make choices that are in tune with God’s purposes?**

III. Disobedience to God Has Consequences--Genesis 2:17

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.”

God does not approach the prohibition of the tree like a policeman seeking to give out a ticket for doing wrong. God sought to protect Adam and Eve like a loving father warning his child about potential danger. This warning gives the man an opportunity to demonstrate faith and obedience in God.

By permitting Adam and Eve to freely eat from every tree in the garden, except for one, God presents a test of obedience and responsibility. God didn’t hide the tree from him. The tree was in plain view. God simply warned him not to eat of it. This forced Adam and Eve to choose obedience each day. Remember, God does not force us into obedience. Rather, God desires His children to lovingly obey as a sign of trust and commitment to Him.

When do you struggle most to obey God’s commands?

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:13**:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.
1 Corinthians 10:13

When the tempter came in the form of a serpent, Adam and Eve had the choice to say *no*. They chose, as do we, to sin. We must remember God is not the source or cause of the evil, but he does allow it (Jas. 1: 13-15). God desired Adam to choose

obedience in the face of temptation. God certainly gave Adam a choice in the matter and He also provided a way of escape. If we read Genesis 3: 1-7 critically, we find a number of times where Eve could have stopped the conversation with the serpent. We also can identify that Adam, standing nearby (verse 6), should have led his wife into obedience. When temptation comes, God's word promises a way out. Too many times, we make the excuse that... "I could not help it." But we cannot use that as an excuse to sin.

- **What are some temptations you face and how can you obtain victory in these areas?**

CONCLUSION: God told Adam how to experience life through obedience to His word. God, in giving this command, warned Adam of death. If he chose disobedience, he would surely die, which God does not desire. God desires Adam to experience life. And God is gracious, merciful, and loving enough to give Adam His word, to tell Adam the way to life, to tell Adam how to avoid death.

Sometimes we think that the commands of God are restrictive in our lives. We may even feel that living according to God's word keeps us from enjoying life. We must come to understand that God's commands provide a way for us to have fulfilled and enjoyable lives that please Him and protect us. To achieve all that God desires for us, we must choose Him **FIRST!**



QUESTION TO PONDER

Knowing the outcome of the story as we do, why do you think God placed the tree in the garden in full view of the man?