

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 26

1	PRAYER
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Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> GENESIS 6:1 – 9:28
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Genesis 6:1 – 9:28). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

3	MEMORISATION (20 minutes) <i>[THE GOSPEL]</i> (1) ROMANS 3:23
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The third series (C) of memory verses is about “The gospel”. The titles of the five memory verses are:

- (1) The nature of sin. Romans 3:23
- (2) The punishment of sin. Ecclesiastes 12:14
- (3) The atonement of sin. Romans 5:8
- (4) Salvation is a gift. Ephesians 2:8-9
- (5) Salvation by faith. John 1:12

A. MEDITATION

Read Romans 3:21-23. “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets (that is: the Old Testament) testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

(1)

Write the following memorisation verse on a white or blackboard as follows:

Nature of sin Romans 3:23
For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

Write the Bible reference on the back of your card.

1. The meaning of the word “sin” in the Bible.

The word sin means to miss the goal or target. In the Bible it refers to our relationship to the God of the Bible. Sin means to miss God’s goal for your life. God’s goal for people is:

- to have the right relationships, especially, the right relationship to the God of the Bible
- and to do the right things in the eyes of God

But, because people do not have the right relationship to God or to other people and not even to themselves, they are called sinners in the Bible. Because they do not do what is right in God’s eyes, they are called “sinners”. The word “sin” also means “to fall short of God’s perfect standard for human life, which is Jesus Christ.

Whatever the people in the world regard as right (good works, right beliefs, good behaviour, etc.) is measured against God’s absolute goal and perfect standard that is revealed in Jesus Christ and was then recorded in the Bible¹. God’s standard is absolute perfection. “Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point, is guilty of breaking all of it” (James 2:10)! It is clear that no one lives good enough! No one’s good works are good enough! Romans 3:23 says “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Thus, even people who live very exemplary lives and do many good works are “sinners” in God’s eyes. All people in the world (except Jesus Christ) miss God’s goal and fall short of God’s perfect standard.

The word “sin” means:

- doing what is wrong in the eyes of the God who revealed himself in the Bible.
- not doing what is right in the eyes of the God who revealed himself in the Bible.

¹ Thus, NOT what another teacher, prophet or religious book says!

2. The root of sin and the fruit of sin.

People, who say that they do not lie, steal, murder or commit crime, are still “sinners”, because they only look at the fruit of sin and not at the root of sin.

(1) The root of sin.

The root of sin is self-sufficiency or independence from the God of the Bible. It describes:

- the broken relationship with the God of the Bible
- or having no relationship with the God of the Bible

Even if some people are not committing crime, stealing or lying, they still have no relationship with the living God. Even if they live good lives, they are “sinners” because they live their lives separate or independent from the living God who revealed himself in the Bible. Even if they live a very religious life, they are still “sinners”, because they live their lives apart from the God of the Bible and according to their own religious ideas and practices.

The root of sin is to miss the goal of the God of the Bible for your life and setting up your own moral or religious goals and standards apart from the God who revealed himself in the Bible. The root of sin is to deliberately transgress the boundaries set by the God of the Bible or to denigrate all boundaries and live without any boundaries of God at all. The root of sin is rebellion against the God of the Bible. The root of sin is to create and believe your own world-view and culture apart from the God who revealed himself in the Bible. The root of sin is to twist the Word of God (the Bible).

(2) The fruit of sin.

The fruit of sin is doing what God forbids or neglecting to do what God commands. It describes:

- doing what is wrong in the eyes of the God of the Bible
- and neglecting to do the good things in the eyes of the God of the Bible

The fruit of sin grows out of the root of sin. The fruit of sin makes the root of sin obvious, visible and undeniable. The fruit of sin is doing what God forbids or not doing what God commands.

Lists of things God has forbidden are found in Mark 7:20-23, Romans 1:28-32, Galatians 5:19-21, Titus 3:3 and Revelation 21:8. Sin therefore does not just describe any human concept of wrongdoing, but describes the broken relationship with the living God, the God who revealed himself in the Bible. When Christians preach the gospel, they must help people to understand “sin” in both its root meaning and fruit meaning.

3. The glory of God.

“The glory of God” is the expression of God’s divine nature and presence. God had created the first man and woman in his own image (Genesis 1:27), that is, they possessed the characteristics of God, like life, holiness and love. After they fell into sin, they lost this image of God and no longer possessed these characteristics of God. Instead, they became spiritually and physically dead (Genesis 3:19), they were unholy and unrighteous (Genesis 6:5), they had become loveless (Genesis 4:8-9) and they hid from God (Genesis 3:8-10).

This is what Romans 3:23 means. All people have lost the purpose which God had for their lives. Consequently they have lost the image of God. They lack the necessary divine characteristics to stand as “justified” in God’s presence. They lack a sense of God’s presence. God’s standard for people to draw near to him, to be justified and to be accepted by him is nothing less than 100% perfection. After the fall into sin, no man qualifies to draw near to God or to be accepted by God. Consequently, all people have lost God’s approval, are unworthy to receive God’s praise and deserve God’s condemnation instead.

Summary. All people have lost their original state of innocence or perfection since birth (Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5) due to the fall of Adam into sin (Romans 5:12). They have lost God’s glorious characteristics and consequently have lost God’s approval.

B. MEMORISATION AND REVIEW

1. Write. Write the Bible verse on a blank card or on one page of your small notebook.
2. Memorise. Memorise the Bible verse in the right way. (1) Nature of sin. Romans 3:23.
3. Review. Divide into twos and check one another’s last memorised Bible verse.

4	BIBLE STUDY (70 minutes) [THE CHURCH] (1) THE CULTURAL TASK OF THE CHURCH: GENESIS 1:24 – 2:25
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In Dota manual 3 there are 6 Bible Studies about “the Church”:

- (1) The cultural task of the Church
- (2) The evangelistic task of the Church
- (3) The missionary Task of the Church
- (4) The goals of the Church
- (5) The leadership of the Church
- (6) Christians live and function as a body in the Church.

Make use of the five steps method of Bible study and study Genesis 1:24 – 2:25 together.

STEP 1. READ.

GOD'S WORD

Read. LET US READ Genesis 1:24 – 2:25 together.

Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.

STEP 2. DISCOVER.

OBSERVATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART?

Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share).

Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered.

(The following are examples of people sharing what they have discovered. Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things, not necessarily these things).

1:27

Discovery 1. The creation of the man and the woman in the image of God.

God created both the man and the woman in his image. The specific characteristics of both the man and the woman are needed to express the personality of God. I am very different than the animals, birds and reptiles, because they do not have the image of God. As an image of God, I have been given the same characteristic features that God possesses. This truth helps me to understand myself, to respect how wonderful I am created and to have a healthy self-esteem.

1:28

Discovery 2. The blessing of God.

Genesis chapters 1 to 3 is the first time that the God of the Bible speaks directly to man. In Genesis 1:28 God only spoke a blessing over the creation and animals, but God spoke his blessing directly to the man and the woman. This is after Genesis 2:16-17 the second revelation of God to man! In it God gives to people his task and his purpose for life. This clearly shows that there is a great difference between people and animals.

God created me for a specific task. I am created to have a personal relationship with God, a personal relationship with other people and a responsible relationship towards God's natural creation. With regard to God, I must bear his image in a worthy way. With regard to other people, I must respect the difference between male and female. With regard to the natural world, I must subdue it and rule over it.

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Genesis 1:24 – 2:25 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

Question 1. What is the relationship between Genesis chapter 1 and Genesis chapter 2?

Notes. Genesis chapter 2 is not a second version of the story of creation that had its origin from another source or country, as some people allege. Genesis 2:4a clearly teaches that *human history* only begins after the completion of the creation of the universe (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3).

(1) Genesis chapter 1.

Genesis chapter 1 is not "history" in the modern sense of the word, because "time" (which people can calculate) was only created on the fourth creation day (Genesis 1:14). Genesis chapter 1 is "a revelation of God" concerning the creation of "the heavens" in the sense of "the universe" and especially the earth (Genesis 1:1). Because the creation of human beings was God's final act of creation (Genesis 1:26-27), the man and the woman were not present when God created everything else. Later God revealed to them:

- WHO created everything (Genesis 1:1)
- FOR WHOM God created everything (Genesis 1:14,26,29)
- and FOR WHAT PURPOSE God created everything (Genesis 1:28; cf. Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16).

(2) Genesis chapter 2 and 3.

Genesis chapter 2 elaborates the creation of specifically:

- the man (Genesis 2:4b-7)
- the garden in Eden (Genesis 2:8-17)
- and the creation of the woman (Genesis 2:18-25).

Genesis chapter 3 describes the history of the fall of the man and the woman into sin and their consequent expulsion from the garden in Eden.

2:4b-17

Question 2. What was the chronological order of the creation of plants and man?

Notes. While Genesis chapter 1 reveals that God first created the plants and trees, then the animals and finally the man and the woman, Genesis chapter 2 seems to have a different order: first the creation of the man, then the creation of plants and animals and finally the creation of the woman. However, Genesis chapter 1 and chapter 2 are not contradictory, but rather complementary.

(1) Genesis 2:4b-7. The creation of man.

Genesis 2:4b-7 begins to relate human history: the creation of man that would work the ground and produce crops. The original Hebrew text of genesis 2:4b-7 is a complex compound sentence consisting of a main clause (with an initial and a final part) and two parenthetical clauses (in between). The main sentence is: “In the day the LORD God made the earth and the heavens (the universe)” – (then 2 parenthetical clauses) – “(then) the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.”

The beginning clause and the first parenthetical clause (Genesis 2:4b-5): “In the day the Lord God made the earth and the heavens” - - - “besides all shrubs (and trees), before these appeared on the earth, and besides all plants of the field, before these sprung up, because the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and (because) there was no human being to work the soil (ground)”

This describes the initial situation AFTER the creation of light, the atmosphere and the continents in Genesis 1:3-10. There were no shrubs, trees, wild plants or cultivated plants yet, because God had not yet sent rain and because God had not yet created man to cultivate the soil.

The second parenthetical clause (Genesis 2:6): “but mist (vapour) came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground”

This elaborates what happened when God created the plants as in Genesis 1:11-13. At the time when God created the plants and trees he first made mist (vapour) rise out of the earth in order to create the condition for plants and trees to grow. He created mist to rise up from the earth, to water the surface of the ground and to form rain clouds. Job 36:27-28 says that God draws up the drops of water, which distil from the mist (vapour) as rain, (the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind”).

The final clause (Genesis 2:7): “- - - the Lord God formed the man, (who was) dust of the ground, and breathed (blew) into his nostrils the breath of life, by which the man became a living being”.

This describes how God created man as in Genesis 1:26-27. He formed Adam, which means “man”, from the elements of the ground and blew his breath into Adam’s nostrils. Thus Adam became “a living being”. The creation of man was unique: his “body” belonged to the created material world, but his “spirit” came from God and revealed man as being the bearer of the image of God!

(2) Genesis 2:8-17. The establishment of the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:8-17 continues to relate human history: The Lord God planted a “paradise” for man in which he had to work. The word “paradise” means “garden”. Eden was a garden located somewhere in the east from the viewpoint of the recorder of this revelation. The location of the four streams at the time of the planting of the garden cannot be established. Since the time of creation all kinds of catastrophes on earth (like earthquakes/movements of the continental plates and floods) could have changed the geographical positions.

Genesis 2:9 says, “God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground”. This does not refer to the original creation of trees on the whole earth (Genesis 1:9-11, a situation after Genesis 2:5-6), but to the growing of trees LATER in the Garden in Eden.

In the middle of the garden were two special trees. “The tree of life” not only maintained physical life, as the fruit of all the other trees did, but could especially give eternal life (Genesis 3:22).

“The tree of the knowledge of good and evil” gave complete knowledge and discernment (cf. Isaiah 7:15-16) of what was good and what was evil. The knowledge of good and evil did not come by eating of the fruit of this tree (Genesis 3:22), but precisely by NOT eating of the fruit of this tree (Genesis 2:17)! God’s prohibition to eat from the fruit of this tree gave Adam the right knowledge of good and evil, namely, refraining from eating of the fruit of the tree would be “good” and eating of the fruit of the tree would be “evil” and punishable by death! Thus, obedience is “good” and disobedience is “bad” and punishable by death!

Also the command “to guard (Hebrew: shamar, to watch, to guard) the garden” (Genesis 2:15)(NIV translates: to take care) against some kind of evil power gave Adam knowledge of good and evil: namely, guarding the garden would be “good”, but neglecting to be watchful against this evil power would be “evil”!

God had given Adam the task to work or cultivate the garden and to guard or watch over the garden (Genesis 2:15-17). The perfect creation (Genesis 1:31) included:

- meaningful work (Genesis 2:15)
- bringing culture to this earth (multiply, subdue and rule)(Genesis 1:28)
- guarding against some kind of evil (Genesis 2:15), which was only revealed in Genesis 3:1.

Conclusion. Both Genesis chapter 1 and 2 teach that the plants and trees were created *BEFORE* the creation of the man.

2:18-25

Question 3. What was the chronological order of the creation of animals and man?

Notes. Genesis 2:18-25 continues to relate human history: the creation of the woman. Genesis 1:20-27 clearly teaches that the birds and animals were created *before* the creation of the man and the woman. Genesis 1:26-27 is a summary statement of the creation of the man and the woman without mentioning how long a time there was between the creation of the man and the creation of the woman. Genesis chapter 2 clearly teaches that the woman was created a considerable time *AFTER* the creation of the man!

(1) Genesis 2:18. God’s plan to create a woman.

“The LORD said, ‘It is not good for the man (Adam) to be alone, I will make a helper as someone opposite (as a suitable complement) for him.’”

Just as God made an introductory statement Genesis 1:26 before he created Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:27, he made an introductory statement in Genesis 2:18 before he created the woman in Genesis 2:19-22.

(2) Genesis 2:19. Man was created after the creation of animals.

Some translations of the Bible translate Genesis 2:19 as follows, “Now the LORD God formed out of the ground all the animals and birds and brought them to man”, as if God created man *BEFORE* he had created animals and birds. But the Hebrew verb in Genesis 2:19 is in the perfect past tense (Hebrew: wa-jitser) and is best translated by: “God had formed” instead of “God formed”. The correct translation is, “When the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field (Genesis 1:24-25) and all the birds of the air (Genesis 1:20-23), thus *BEFORE* the creation of man (Genesis 1:26) he brought them to the man (*AFTER* man had been created) to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.”

(3) Genesis 2:20a. Man named the animals and birds.

“So the man gave names to all the life stock, the birds of the air, and all the beasts of the field.” By giving names to animals and birds, man shows that he understood the nature of animals and birds. By spending much time with the animals and birds and observing them, man became intensely aware that he was very different than animals, birds and fish – he was a creature in the image of God!

(4) Genesis 2:20b. Man found no suitable helper among the animals.

“But for man he (himself) (Adam, not God) found no helper as someone opposite (that is, suitable, as a complement) for him.” Some people explain Genesis 2:20b as if God was not able to find a suitable helper for man. They furthermore interpret the creation of birds and animals as a failed attempt of God to create a suitable helper for the man. They say that man moved among the animals and birds and gave them names, but God could not find a suitable helper for the man among them. This interpretation is not plausible, because the God who was able to create the man (Genesis 2:7) could just as easily create the woman (Genesis 2:21-22)!

The expression: “But for Adam no suitable helper was found” is the Hebrew way of saying “Adam found no suitable helper for himself”. It was not God, but man who could not find a suitable helper for himself! The best translation is, “But he (that is, the man and not God) found no helper that is opposite (that is, suitable, complementary) for him.” The first human being on earth did not find another human being in the likeness of God that could be his complement! This means that before God created the woman, he first awakened a desire in the man Adam for a relationship with a woman that would be his complement.

After a long time of relating to animals, these animals could not fulfil Adam’s desire. Only a human being that resembled the human Adam could fulfil that desire. Therefore God created a woman in Genesis 2:21-22, Eve, from the side of the man, by which God gave expression to the mystery of “two becoming one” in Genesis 2:23-24. She was not taken out of his foot to be his slave and also not out of his head in order to rule over him. She was taken out of his side in order to be his equal and the helper at his side.

Conclusion. Both Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 teach that animals were created *BEFORE* the creation of man!

1:26-29; 2:7

Question 4. What makes a human being different from any other creature?

Notes. Human beings are created differently than the other creatures.

(1) The human body.

Genesis 2:7 says that God formed man from the elements of the ground and breathed the breath of life into man. In this way man became “a living being” (In Hebrew “a living soul”, consisting of a body and a spirit). While God formed animals by his creative command, he formed man by his own hands and his own breath of life. This shows that the human body and the human spirit are unique and have a very special destiny.

(2) The human spirit.

Genesis 1:26-27 says that God made the man and the woman in his own image or likeness. This does not mean that God gave them the divine nature as God possesses the divine nature. Man was given a spiritual nature that corresponds to God’s spiritual nature. People possessed the real and similar characteristic features of God. They were in another degree “copies” of God’s personality. In this respect, people are unique in the whole creation. Nothing in creation besides the man and the woman bears the image of God!²

(3) The human relationship with God.

Genesis 2:15-17 says that God spoke directly to the man. This was probably the first time God spoke directly to man. In Genesis 1:28-29 God also spoke directly to the man and the woman. Genesis chapters 1 to 3 are the first revelations of God to people! This means that people have the ability to listen to God and to speak to God, to know God and to communicate with God. God blessed the man and the woman and gave them three important tasks:

- To multiply and fill the earth with people in God’s image
- To subdue the earth
- To rule over the garden with its fauna and flora

God thus made it very clear that he created the earth “for people” and that he made people the stewards of his creation!

Summarise. People have a physical and a spiritual existence, that is, they have a body and a spirit. The “body” and the “spirit” together form the “soul” or “living being” that is called “man” (Genesis 2:7). In this way man is different than all other creatures. Only man is able:

- to think rationally
- has intuition to know something without rationalising
- has a conscience that can distinguish between good and evil
- has the ability to know God and relate to God
- has feelings or emotions (love, mercy, joy, but also holy anger, etc.)
- has a will that can choose and make decisions
- has the ability to design and create things (that is, the ability to make things out of matter that already exists)

2:24

Question 5. Why is marriage not just a human institution, but the institution of God?

Notes. Marriage is a cultural institution of God.

(1) Marriage is God’s idea and institution.

God awakened man’s need for a life partner and he took the initiative to create a woman for man.

God also took the initiative to institute the marriage relationship BEFORE the man and the woman fell into sin. The Christian marriage has the following requirements:

- At marriage, the man and the woman must leave their parents.
- The marriage relationship is a relationship between one man and one woman, in which the man is required to cleave to his wife (singular) in a way that they never tear apart (Matthew 19:5-6; Ephesians 5:31-33).
- The sexual relationship is limited in three ways: it is limited to one man and one woman, to the period AFTER their marriage and to take place only inside their marriage (Hebrews 13:4)³.

(2) God maintained marriage as his institution after the fall of man into sin.

Both the Lord Jesus Christ (in Matthew 19:1-6) and the apostle Paul (in Ephesians 5:22-33) repeat God’s marriage institution as an institution that must be maintained throughout human history in all cultures on the whole earth.

² Cf. DOTA manual 1, lesson 4 “Where do I come from?” The prehistoric humanlike creatures, ape-men or cave-men, were just like animals not created in the image of God. They were not bearers of the image of God. Adam and Eve were the first human beings, that is, creatures created in the likeness of God and with a spirit that was able to know God and fellowship with God!

³ A sexual relationship between two men or two women or with people before or outside the marriage relationship is strictly forbidden by God. Such relationships are not “a marriage” in God’s eyes no matter what non-Christians say.

1:28a

Question 6. How do Christians regard multiplication of people on earth?

Notes. The first task of man is to increase the number of people on earth.

(1) Before the fall.

Notice that this command is given AFTER Genesis 1:26-27, which says, “God created man and woman in his own image” and BEFORE Genesis 3, which describes how the man and woman fell into sin. Therefore, the command in Genesis 1:28 demands an interpretation in its context. God’s original intention was to fill the earth with people who were bearing the image of God, as they were before they fell into sin! God designed the earth to be filled with people who know him, love him, obey him, walk with him and glorify him! God designed the earth to be filled with people who are like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24).

(2) After the fall.

However, after the fall into sin, Genesis 5:1-2 says that Adam had a son in his own likeness, in his own image. Since the fall into sin, the earth is being filled with people who do not bear God’s likeness in the same way as before the fall into sin. Nevertheless, God’s original purpose did not change. God still wants to fill this earth with people who bear the image of God (Genesis 9:1).

Through the salvation work of Jesus Christ, people become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:20-24). Therefore, when Christians consider questions like the over-population of the earth, birth control or how many children a couple should have, they must consider God’s purpose to fill the earth not just with any kind of people, but with people in God’s image. In general, God gives the man and the woman the choice, the ability and the responsibility to fill the earth with people who bear the image of the God of the Bible, in true righteousness and holiness, regardless whether they have their own children or not. They may contribute by helping the children of other people become bearers of the image of God (through conducting Sunday Schools, children clubs and youth fellowships).

1:28b

Question 7. How should people subdue the earth?

Notes. The second task of man is to subdue and manage the earth for God.

(1) The word “subdue” literally means: to subdue, to subjugate or to tame, to make level and thus to conquer.

Therefore, the task of the man and the woman is to bring culture to the uncultured areas of God’s creation. They must make the uninhabitable areas habitable, turn the fallow land into arable land and tame the wild animals for domestic use. They must discover the natural laws in God’s creation, that is practise responsible science, and use these physical and chemical laws for the well being of people. However, this right to practise science, agriculture and industry is not without limits!

(2) The word “subdue” also means to preserve, to pickle.

Therefore, the task of the man and the woman is to preserve God’s creation from misuse, abuse and destruction. The use of the resources of the earth (like oil, water and wood) has limits imposed by God. People may not misuse the resources of the earth for selfish enrichment or for the destruction of other people who live on the earth. People may not abuse God’s creation by polluting the atmosphere, air, water or ground in a way that permanently disturbs the delicate balance of nature and leads to the destruction of plants, animals and the human race on earth. People may also not waste the resources of the earth by mismanagement and thus cause famine and poverty. In Revelation 11:18 God warns the multi-nationals, the governments and the military powers on earth that destroy the earth, that the time will come that God will destroy them!

(3) The task of subduing includes bringing the culture of God’s kingdom to all the people in the world.

The culture of any nation is their world-view, truths, beliefs, superstitions, norms and values that are expressed in their customs, traditions, behaviour, relationships and institutions. After the fall into sin, the cultures of all the nations in the world moved away from the living God and from the culture of the kingdom of God. Through the years, people have lived without the living God and have again and again incorporated sinful aspects into their cultures. It is God’s purpose, not only to change people, but also to change their culture! God intends to create a special people of God with a special culture, called the culture of the kingdom of God on this earth! Because human behaviour is the object of God’s revelation in the Bible, most teachings in the Bible is directly aimed at changing culture!

1:28c

Question 8. How should people rule over the earth?

Notes. The third task of man is to rule over everything except people.

(1) The word “to rule over” literally means to have dominion over, to subjugate.

Therefore the task of the man and the woman is to control the creatures that God created in the air, on the land and in the sea. For example, in Proverbs 12:10 we read, “A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest act

of the wicked are cruel.” A Christian should therefore not be cruel to animals, but instead give good care to the animals in his possession. Likewise, Christians should give good care to the whole of God’s creation.

(2) Man may use animals, birds and fish for the benefit of people.

People must rule over the animals, birds and fish by making wise and edifying decisions with regard to the well-being of people. Before people fell into sin, God gave every seed bearing plant and every tree that has fruit with seed in it as food to people. However, after the fall into sin and the destruction of the sinful world in the flood, God also gave every kind of animal, bird and fish as food to people. “Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything” (Genesis 9:3).

(3) Man may not rule over other people.

The task to rule is limited to animals, birds and fish. This means that certain people may not arbitrary rule over other people, oppress them, enslave them or kill them. One nation has no right whatever to rule over another nation. And no one in any nation has the right to oppress, enslave or persecute anyone: minority groups, foreigners, refugees, women (for the sex industry), children (for cheap labour or child soldiers), etc.! A government may not oppress, persecute, extort, enslave or destroy other people!

“For every nation of men God determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. so that men would seek him, reach out for him and perhaps find him” (Acts 17:26-27). Thus, God’s goal with the history of every nation is that it would seek the God of the Bible and find him!

But the earth and all its resources still belong to the God of the Bible (Psalm 24:1) and no nation has the right to claim a particular piece of the earth as its possession. People are only stewards of God’s possessions!

(4) May Christians get involved in the governing authorities?

In the Old Testament, besides the kings of Judah like David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, people like Moses, Joseph, Daniel and Nehemiah were all in very high and important positions of government in great countries like Egypt, Babylon and Persia. And they all had a very good influence on everybody!

In the New Testament, Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the governing authority of the Jews. In Luke 7 and Acts 10, Roman military officers became Christians. In Acts 8, an important official of Ethiopia became a Christian. In Acts 13, the proconsul of Cyprus became a Christian. And in Acts 17, a member of the Athenian council became a Christian.

Jesus Christ has come to save people from every part of society. This includes people in authority. When people in positions of authority become Christians, they may have very good influence in their positions. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Christians are urged to pray for all kinds of people, but especially for “kings and all those in authority, so that they may live peaceful and quiet lives and in order that all kinds of people may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus said that the apostles would testify to the governing authorities (Matthew 10:17-20; Acts 23:11; cf. 1 Peter 2:15).

(5) To rule is mainly limited to this earth.

To rule must be mainly limited to this present earth. The exploration of space that costs billions must be evaluated in the light of the poor, the destitute and the hungry living on earth!

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Genesis 1:24 – 2:25.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Genesis 1:24 to 2:25.

- 1:27. Continually be aware that God has created you to be a bearer of his image in this world.
- 1:28. Be actively involved in filling this earth with people, who bear the image of God. Train your own children and the children of other people to know Jesus Christ and to change into the likeness of Jesus Christ.
- 1:28. As a student, discover the natural laws in God’s creation, that is, practise responsible science, and use these physical and chemical laws for the well-being of people.
- 1:28. Preserve God’s creation from misuse, abuse and destruction.
- 1:28. Bring biblical or Christian culture to all the people in the world.
- 1:28. Make wise and edifying decisions with regard to the birds, animals and fish resources on earth for the well being of people.
- 1:28. If a Christian is in a position of authority, let him have as much as possible good influence on society.

2. Examples of personal applications from Genesis 1:24 to 2:25.

I have come to a much better understanding of God's cultural task to Christians. Christians need to seriously consider the following issues:

- To stop the destruction of nature and upsetting the ecological balance. For example, to stop the destruction of the ozone layer around the earth, the destruction of the rain forests, the over-grazing of fields and the destruction of certain animals in the food-chains.
- To stop the pollution of the world. For example, to stop water pollution caused by dumping toxins and industrial waste into rivers and lakes. Stop air-pollution caused by uncontrolled industrialisation and transport. Stop noise pollution that destroys the hearing of many people.
- To stop the harmful applications within agricultural science. For example, to stop the injection of growth hormones in animals that people must eat, the adding of harmful preservatives and colouring to food and the changing of the structure of food by genetic engineering in plants.
- To stop the harmful applications within industrial science. For example, to stop the production of nuclear bombs and the production of materials for bacteriological and chemical warfare.
- To stop the harmful applications within medical science. For example, to stop the abortion of unwanted children, mercy killing and genetic engineering in human beings.

I have become convinced that the cultural task that God has entrusted to the Church is not limited to the natural issues. Out of necessity it must also include intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual issues.

- Negatively, Christians should be engaged in fighting things like the lies, pornography and violence, which are propagated in the mass media like in magazines, the TV and show business. They should oppose the legalising of abortion and homosexuality, and oppose the tolerance of racial discrimination and corruption. They should oppose gambling and lotteries and other chance games that enslave very many people. They should oppose the production, spreading and use of drugs. Etc.
- Positively, Christians should be involved in subduing ungodliness and unbelief by spreading the Christian faith. They should be involved in subduing immaturity and fruitlessness among Christians by disciple making. They should be involved in eradicating social evils and ungodly values. They should be involved in building up good institutions like hospitals, old age homes, educational institutions and healthy recreational facilities, which have true Christian influence instead of anti-God orientation. They should counsel people and help them to heal from their broken lives. Etc. The cultural task of the Church concerns the total man, all parts of creation and every aspect of human culture!

STEP 5. PRAY. **RESPONSE**
 LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Genesis 1:24 – 2:25.
 (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[INTERCESSION]</i> PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples.
Preach, teach or study the Bible study of Genesis 1:24 – 2:25 together with another person or group of people.
2. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of Genesis 12:1 – 15:21 each day.
Make use of the questions method of quiet time. Make notes.
3. Memorisation. (1) Nature of sin. Romans 3:23. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
4. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. Update your notebook on making disciples. Include the notes on your personal time with God, memorisation notes, Bible study notes and this preparation.