



# UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Culture Wars

January 26 - February 1

Genesis 1-2

## Things to Know

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## Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.*

## Sermon Recap

From the opening pages of Scripture, work is presented as a good gift from God. Before sin entered the world, God created humanity in His image and entrusted them with meaningful responsibility. Genesis 1-2 shows us that work is not accidental nor merely a means of survival; it is part of God's original design.

God calls His people to steward what He has made, to cultivate creation, and to reflect His character through faithful labor. When our work is connected to God's mission and aimed at God's pleasure, it becomes an act of worship. Our vocation (wherever God has placed us) is one of the primary ways we live out our identity as image-bearers and participants in God's ongoing work in the world.

## 1. We Work for God's Mission - WHAT

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15

Humanity is created in God's likeness and immediately given responsibility. Being made in the image of God means we work under His authority and for His purposes. Adam is placed in the garden "to work and keep it," showing that stewardship is central to God's design.

Our work (whether vocational, domestic, volunteer, or relational) is one of the primary ways we participate in God's mission. We are managers, not owners, entrusted with resources, opportunities, and influence for God's glory.

Key truth: Work is not just something we do to get by, it is part of how God carries out His purposes through His people.

## 2. We Work for God's Pleasure - WHY

Genesis 1:31; 2:2-3

God looks at His work and calls it "very good." He delights in what He has made, including the people He created to steward it. Work done in obedience and faith is pleasing to God, not because it earns His favor, but because it reflects trust in Him.

When work is aimed at God's pleasure rather than personal recognition or success, it becomes worship. Whether seen or unseen, significant or simple, our labor matters because it is offered to God.

Key truth: Work becomes worship when it is done for God's pleasure, not personal glory.

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## *Discussion Questions*

1. How does Genesis 1-2 challenge the idea that work is a curse or a necessary evil?
2. Why is it important to remember that we are stewards, not owners, of our work and resources?
3. In what ways has your view of work been shaped more by culture than by Scripture?
4. How does seeing your work as worship change your motivation or attitude?
5. What might it look like to view your job, school, or daily responsibilities as a mission field?

# Read

Read Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:15 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

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## Scripture

**Genesis 1:26-31  
and Genesis 2:15**

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man<sup>[a]</sup> in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and 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> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>15</sup> The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

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Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:15

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# Living on Mission In Community

## Work Where God Has Placed You.

God has intentionally placed you where you are—not by accident, but for His purposes. Faithfulness in your work is one of the primary ways you reflect Christ.

## Be Salt and Light Through Stewardship.

Living on mission often looks ordinary: working with integrity, serving others, and honoring God in daily responsibilities. When done for His glory, ordinary work becomes extraordinary worship.

*How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?*

## Optional Breakout Questions

*Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:*

1. How did you feed yourself?
  - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
  - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
  - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

# *Leader Resources - January 26-February 1*

## **Small Group Curriculum - Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15**

### **1. Session Overview**

Genesis 1-2 gives us a biblical foundation for vocation. Work is not punishment; instead, it is a purpose. God created humanity to steward His creation and reflect His character through faithful labor. Leaders should help group members connect identity, worship, and mission to everyday work, while remaining sensitive to burnout, frustration, or discouragement.

### **2. Opening**

#### **Prayer:**

“Father, You are a God who works with purpose and delight. Thank You for creating us in Your image and entrusting us with meaningful responsibility. As we open Your Word, help us to see our work through Your eyes—not as a burden to endure, but as an opportunity to worship You. Where we are weary, bring rest. Where we are distracted, bring clarity. Shape our hearts to be faithful stewards for Your glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen..”

Icebreaker question:

Break into groups of 2-3.

#### **Ask:**

“What is a job, task, or responsibility you once disliked but later realized shaped you for the better?”

### **3. Scripture Reading**

Have someone read Genesis 1:26-31 and Genesis 2:15 out loud.

### **4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)**

#### **1. We Work for God’s Mission - WHAT**

God creates humanity in His image and immediately gives them responsibility. This shows

that work is not random or secondary. Work is central to God's design. Adam is placed in the garden "to work it and keep it," meaning humanity is called to cultivate, guard, and steward what belongs to God.

#### **Leader Emphasis:**

We are managers, not owners. Our work (jobs, families, responsibilities, influence) is entrusted to us by God for His purposes.

#### **Helpful Prompt:**

"What changes when we see our work as stewardship instead of ownership?"

## **2. We Work for God's Pleasure - WHY**

God delights in what He has made and calls it "very good." Our work is meant to please God, not to earn His approval or prove our worth. When our motivation shifts from recognition or success to faithfulness and obedience, work becomes worship.

#### **Leader Emphasis:**

We do not work *for* God's love; we work *from* God's love.

#### **Helpful Prompt:**

"How does working for God's pleasure reshape our motivation?"

## **5. Discussion Questions**

1. As discussion unfolds, listen for these themes and gently guide as needed:
  - a. **Burnout:** Affirm rest as biblical and necessary.
  - b. **Identity in work:** Re-center identity in being image-bearers, not achievers.
  - c. **Meaninglessness:** Emphasize that faithfulness matters even when results feel unseen.
  - d. **Mission:** Help people connect daily work to eternal impact.
2. If discussion stalls, you might ask:
  - a. "Where do you feel tension between worship and work right now?"
  - b. "What would faithfulness look like for you this week?"

## **6. Application**

Encourage the group to move from **information to application**.

Ask:

**"What is one way God may be inviting you to approach your work differently this week?"**

Examples may include:

- Working with greater integrity or diligence
- Releasing control and trusting God with outcomes
- Viewing coworkers or responsibilities as a mission field
- Practicing rest as an act of worship

## 7. Closing Reflection and Prayer

### Reflection:

1. Where have I allowed my work to define my worth?
2. Where is God inviting me to trust Him more fully with my labor?

### Prayer:

“God, thank You for calling us to meaningful work. Teach us to labor with joy, humility, and faithfulness. Help us to see our work as worship and our lives as part of Your mission. May everything we do bring You glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

## 8. Memory Verse

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” — Genesis 2:15

## 9. Leader Notes

- Emphasize faithfulness over success
- Affirm both paid and unpaid work
- Avoid productivity guilt; lead toward gospel freedom
- Reinforce that rest and work belong together
- Keep the tone pastoral, not performance-driven