

This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).



Weekly Questions:

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

From Garden to Garden: Creation 2 Genesis 2:4-25

- **The Dust and Breath: Our Shared Identity.** In Genesis 2, we see a more intimate portrait of creation. God forms the human (*adam*) from the dust of the ground (*adamah*) and breathes the "breath of life" into his nostrils. We are simultaneously humble—reminded of our connection to the earth—and dignified, carrying the very breath of the Creator. This "sacred dust" identity means we are not self-made; we are recipients of life. How does it change your view of yourself and others to realize that everyone you meet is a combination of common dust and divine breath? In what ways have you forgotten your "dustiness" (limitations) or your "breath" (divine dignity) lately?
- **The Problem of Isolation: Made for Belonging.** Even in the perfection of the first garden, God identifies one thing that is "not good": that the human should be alone. God provides a "helper" (*ezer*)—not a subordinate, but a partner of equal strength and dignity—to stand "alongside" him. We were created for relationship; isolation is a fracture of God's original design for Shalom. Why do you think God considers isolation "not good," even when the human had an unhindered relationship with God? Where in your life are you currently experiencing the gift of belonging, and where do you feel the weight of isolation?
- **Unashamed Intimacy: The Goal of Relationship.** The chapter concludes with the man and woman joined together, "naked and unashamed." This describes more than just physical appearance; it is a state of total transparency and vulnerability without the fear of judgment, rejection, or exploitation. Our world often encourages us to hide behind masks of status, performance, or power. What would it look like for you to move toward "unashamed" transparency with God or with a trusted person in your community?
- **Practice: Living in Belonging**

In creation, God establishes that we are made for one another. As people carrying the breath of God, we are called to be agents of belonging in a world that is often fragmented and lonely. This week, practice the *Shalom* of relationship through these intentional acts:

- **Audit the hiding:** Identify one area of your life or a relationship where you are "hiding" or wearing a mask to avoid being seen. Intentionally share a moment of honest vulnerability with a friend or in prayer, inviting God into that space.
- **The Belonging Recognition:** Once a day, look for someone in your "Out" circle (a stranger, a neighbor, or a coworker) who might be feeling isolated. Offer a genuine word of greeting or a simple act of kindness to acknowledge their shared dignity.

- **Share God's Belonging** Intentionally reach out to someone in your "In" circle (your church family or close friends) just to check in. Practice the "generous, big-hearted love of Jesus" by listening well and reminding them that they are not alone.
- **How can you share God's belonging with someone this week, trusting that we are truly made for one another?**