



STAFF DEVOTIONS

DEVOTION 1: GOD IS THE GOOD CREATOR

The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made. Psalm 145:9

For a few moments, imagine yourself strolling through a section of the garden of Eden. This beautiful abundance of flora and fauna was just declared by the Creator to be “very good.” The creation was a manifestation of the goodness of the Creator. In your mind’s eye, how does this original paradise reflect the goodness of God?

Do the flowers fill the air with glorious fragrances? Do the serpents hanging from the trees fill you with delight at their bright colors and silky smooth skin? Do you gently stroke the thick fur of the large bear to your right? Do you gasp in awe at the towering sauropod as he lumbers past?

Contrast this with the view that Carl Sagan held about God and his creation:

“If God is omnipotent and omniscient, why didn’t he start the universe out in the first place so it would come out the way he wants? Why is he constantly repairing and complaining? No, there’s one thing the Bible makes clear: The biblical God is a sloppy manufacturer. He’s not good at design, he’s not good at execution. He’d be out of business if there was any competition” (Carl Sagan, *Contact* [New York: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster, 1985]).

In Sagan’s Eden, the flowers God created prick you with thorns when you bend over to inhale their fragrance. The serpent slithering past your feet inspires a fearful shriek. The lion creeping up behind the lamb suddenly takes a bite out of it. And the dinosaurs are nowhere to be seen because they died out millions of years ago.

What important factor did Carl Sagan fail to take into account? *He believed that the world we live in today is the world God originally created. He didn’t understand that we now live in a fallen world—a world that has been corrupted with sin. His view has been colored by the belief that the world is millions of years old and that the fossil record—filled with evidence of death, disease, suffering, and thorns—is a record of the way things have been for the past several million years.*

Carl Sagan isn’t alone in viewing the Creator this way. Media mogul Ted Turner and even Charles Darwin himself

are just a few of the many who can’t comprehend the goodness of God because of what they see today.

Although all of creation shouts, “There is a God!” (Romans 1:20), it has been marred with our sin.

Read Psalm 33:5. In what ways do you see the love of God still reflected in his creation?

In what ways do you see the effects of our sin?

Think about how you represent the all-good Creator to those in your care. For example, are the “design features” you share with your children reflective of a good God or a fallen creation?

As you present today’s C, do so in a way that emphasizes the goodness of God. His original creation was complete and “very good.” It was full of life, peace, and joy. He provided light for us to see by (day 1), air for us to breathe (day 2), vegetation for us to eat (day 3), majestic arrays of stars to study before bed (day 4), abundant fauna for us to enjoy (days 5–6), and a creation for us to care for. He created for his glory.

Read Psalm 107:1, 15, and 119:68, as well as this Puritan prayer about the infinite goodness of the Creator.

King of glory, divine majesty,
Every perfection adorns thy nature and sustains
thy throne;

The heavens and earth are thine,

The world is thine and its fullness.

Thy power created the universe from nothing;

Thy wisdom has managed all its multiple concerns,

Presiding over nations, families, individuals.

Thy goodness is boundless;

All creatures wait on thee;

Are supplied by thee;

Are satisfied in thee.

How precious are the thoughts of thy mercy and grace!

How excellent thy lovingkindness that draws
men to thee!

—Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 216.



DEVOTION 2: GOD IS OUR RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. Deuteronomy 32:4

After every tragedy, the media abounds with reports of people asking, “If there is a good and loving God, why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?” Have you ever asked this question or heard this question asked?

As the infinitely good God, the Creator fashioned a world that manifested his goodness according to his pleasure and for his glory. He established rules for his creation to follow. The standard to which he held his creation is himself: absolute goodness. With one bite of fruit, Adam fell short of that standard. With every act of disobedience, we too fall short of his standard.

Because God is absolutely pure and holy, untouched by sin, he cannot partake in sin nor approve of it in others. He established a penalty for falling short of his standard: death. The goodness and holiness of God demands that he judge sin. As the righteous judge, he had no choice but to carry out the punishment that he had set for breaking his rules.

He imposed a sentence from which we have no means of escaping on our own. We can’t get away from our punishment for sin—death, eternal separation from our Creator.

When a murderer is given a sentence for his crime, do we blame the judge who sentenced him? The answer to the age-old question, “Why?” lies not at the feet of the Creator but in the bite of a fruit by man.

As you share with the children today about the second and third C’s in our journey through time—the corruption that entered the universe after Adam sinned and the

catastrophe that resulted from God’s judgment on sin—be careful to emphasize that the mess we find ourselves in is not the fault of our good and loving Creator. This helps children answer the “why” question when they encounter a tragedy. In general, this is the result of living in a cursed world, which is the deserved punishment for sin. We need to also continually point them toward the great gift that the Creator has for us (salvation through Jesus Christ), which we’ll talk more about later.

Read Psalm 89:14 and think about the words of this Puritan prayer.

Thou Maker and Sustainer of all things,
Day and night are thine,
heaven and earth declare thy glory;
But I, a creature of thy power and bounty, have sinned
against thee
by resisting the dictates of conscience,
the demands of thy law,
the calls of thy gospel;
yet I live under the dispensation of a given hope.
Deliver me from worldly dispositions,
for I am born from above and bound for glory.
May I view and long after holiness
as the beauty and dignity of the soul.

—Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 139.



DEVOTION 3: GOD IS THE INFINITE SUSTAINER

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us. Acts 17:26–27

Imagine if our entire world spoke the same language. Even with our English-speaking world of over 300 million people, what have we accomplished?

It's easy to pat ourselves on our backs about how much we have done. This attitude is perhaps best demonstrated at NASA. A tour of the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, USA, provides a glimpse at the massive machines and impressive technology NASA scientists have produced. During one segment of the tour, a narrator intones that with man "nothing is impossible." Another narrator, an astronaut, affirms this attitude, "Whatever we can conceive, we can achieve."

Do such arrogant statements shock you?

If you're familiar with today's lesson, they shouldn't. Read Genesis 11:4–6.

At the time of the tower of Babel, people arrogantly thought they could achieve whatever they wanted. However, God judged their rebellion by bringing a multiplicity of languages, causing them to scatter over the earth.

Why does mankind today have this same philosophy: "And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (Genesis 11:6)?

Ever since the temptation in the garden of Eden, when Satan said Eve would be like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5), mankind has been in rebellion against God, trying to be god. The first judgment was the entrance of death into the world. Later, God judged mankind's rebellion with a watery catastrophe. And in today's lesson, we find a judgment that included a confusion of mankind's one common language into many languages.

So, what should our attitude be? Read Acts 17:24–31. These verses show that God is the Infinite Sustainer of all things—apart from him, we can do nothing. He gives us life, breath, and everything else. In him, we live and move and have our being.

Today, let's look for opportunities to show the children the importance of walking humbly before the Infinite Sustainer, recognizing our continual need for him. We need to carefully reflect any glory that might come our way to God, and teach our children to do the same.

Read Colossians 1:15–17 and think about this Puritan prayer.

O God All-Sufficient,

Thou hast made and upholdest all things by the word of thy power;

darkness is thy pavilion,

thou walkest on the wings of the wind;

all nations are nothing before thee;

one generation succeeds another,

and we hasten back to the dust;

the heavens we behold will vanish away

like the clouds that cover them,

the earth we tread on will dissolve as a morning dream;

But thou, unchangeable and incorruptible,

art for ever and ever,

God over all, blessed eternally.

Infinitely great and glorious art thou.

We are thy offspring and thy care.

Thy hands have made and fashioned us.

Thou hast watched over us with more than parental love,

more than maternal tenderness.

Thou hast holden our soul in life,

and not suffered our feet to be moved.

Thy divine power has given us all things

necessary for life and godliness.

Let us bless thee at all times and forget not how thou hast

forgiven our iniquities,

healed our diseases,

redeemed our lives from destruction,

crowned us with lovingkindness and

tender mercies,

satisfied our mouths with good things,

renewed our youth like the eagle's.

May thy Holy Scriptures

govern every part of our lives,

and regulate the discharge of all our duties,

so that we may adorn thy doctrine in all things.

—Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 211.



DEVOTION 4: GOD IS THE SOVEREIGN SAVIOR

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. Psalm 24:1

Fill in the following blanks.

1. ____ told Noah how to build the ark.
2. God provided all that ____ needed, including great wisdom.
3. God brought all the ____ to the ark at just the right time.
4. God provided a seaworthy, safe way for man and animals to ____.
5. God shut the ____ after Noah, his family, and the animals entered the ark.
6. God caused the ____ to cover the entire earth.
7. God directed Noah when to leave the ____.
8. God provided the ____ as a sign that he would never send another global flood.

Based on these statements, what attribute of God do you think we are focusing on today? *He is the sovereign Savior of the world.*

Although each of the questions in the quiz highlights God's sovereign salvation as seen in the account of the Genesis flood, let's focus specifically on number five.

In his instructions for building the ark, God told Noah to put a door in the side of the ark (Genesis 6:16). The ark had only one door to pass through to escape God's terrible judgment. By faith, Noah and his family entered the ark. Once they were all inside, the Lord shut them in (Genesis 7:16).

What is significant about God shutting the door of the ark? After God shut the door, the time of judgment was at hand. Only those who had gone through the doorway would be saved. No one else could enter. Noah and his family had to obey God's command to build and then enter the ark for salvation—but God commanded the construction of the ark as the means of saving Noah's family in this time of judgment.

The ark is a picture of salvation in Jesus Christ, our "ark" of salvation. Jesus said that he is the door of salvation (John 10:9).

The Bible makes it clear that we are dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1). Nothing we can do can save us from our sin and its consequence of eternal separation from God. But the Bible also tells us that if we confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus and believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead, we will be saved (Romans 10:9). We are saved by grace through faith as a result of God's gift to us (Ephesians 2:8). Salvation is all due to God. Our responsibility is to go through the doorway (Jesus), and God will save us.

The next judgment will be by fire (2 Peter 3:5–12). God has provided salvation through the ark—his Son, Jesus Christ. Many are hearing the warning of the coming judgment, but who will enter through the God-given means of salvation—the death and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf? A time is coming when God will close this door. Are we ready?

Let's close this time by reading Acts 4:10–12 and thinking about this Puritan prayer.

Sovereign Lord,
Thy will is supreme in heaven and earth,
and all beings are creatures of thy power.
Thou art the Father of our spirits;
thy inspiration gives us understanding,
thy providence governs our lives.
But, O God, we are sinners in thy sight;
thou hast judged us so,
and if we deny it we make thee a liar.
Yet in Christ thou art reconciled to thy
rebellious subjects;
Give us the ear of faith to hear him,
the eye of faith to see him,
the hand of faith to receive him,
the appetite of faith to feed upon him;
that we might find in him light,
riches, honour, eternal life.

—Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 222.



DEVOTION 5: GOD IS THE LOVING REDEEMER

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47

As we wrap up our journey from Genesis to Revelation, let's take a look at the connection between the seven C's.

God is the Good Creator: The one who created a “very good” world is the one who will restore his creation to its original glory.

The one who created the first man is the one who came to be the second man—the last Adam.

The one who breathed into Adam the breath of life is the one who gives eternal life to his children.

God is the Righteous Judge: The one who sentenced the first man to death for his rebellion is the one who came and suffered the sentence of death on behalf of mankind.

God is the Infinite Sustainer: The one who created time is the one who stepped into time so that he could live as a human.

The one who confused the languages at Babel is the one before whom people from every tribe, nation, and tongue will bow and worship.

The one who scattered the people around the world is the one who commands us to go into all the world and preach the gospel, making disciples of all nations.

God is the Sovereign Savior: The one who provided an ark for Noah and his family is the one who provided the Savior of the world.

The one who judged the world with water is the one who will judge the world with fire.

The one in whom all things hold together is the one who became part of his creation, born as a baby.

Today, let's take a look at another attribute of God seen in the last C.

God is the Loving Redeemer: The one who killed animals to cover the sin of Adam and Eve is the one who came to bleed on the cross for sinners.

The one who placed a curse on the creation is the one who came to redeem his creation from the curse.

The one who promised to send someone to crush the head of the serpent is the one who fulfilled the promise by rising from the dead, conquering the “last enemy.”

The one who created the heavens and earth is the one who will create a new heavens and earth wherein righteousness and his children will dwell.

Why has God done all this? “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16).

As you talk with the children today, look for opportunities to share the love of the Creator and Redeemer with them, pointing them toward the one who has done so much for us.

Let's close by reading 1 Corinthians 15:21 and thinking about this Puritan prayer.

O Thou Most High,
Creator of the ends of the earth,
Governor of the universe,
Judge of all men,
Head of the church,
Savior of sinners;

thy greatness is unsearchable,
thy goodness infinite,
thy compassions unfailing,
thy providence boundless,
thy mercies ever new.

We bless thee for the words of salvation.
How important, suitable, encouraging
are the doctrines, promises, and invitations
of the gospel of peace!

We are lost: but in it thou hast presented to
us a full, free and eternal salvation;
weak: but here we learn that help is found
in one that is mighty;
poor: but in him we discover unsearchable
riches,

blind: but we find he has treasures of
wisdom and knowledge.

We thank thee for thy unspeakable gift.
Thy Son is our only refuge, foundation, hope,
confidence;

We depend upon his death,
rest in his righteousness,
desire to bear his image;
May his glory fill our minds,
his love reign in our affections,
his cross inflame us with ardour.

—Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 219.