

Biblical Worldview Themes for *Reading 2*

Wisdom

Creation

Wisdom is the skill of living well in God's world. God made His world to work in a certain way, and life will only work well when lived the way that God made His world to work. Wisdom calls out to everyone (Prov. 1:20; 8:1–13). *Keeper of the Wild Words* demonstrates the importance of being observant. Observing the way God made His world to work is an important part of becoming wise. Even people who do not know God can see how God's world works. Words are also God's gift for enabling people to share wisdom with each other. "When You Can Read" and *Clara and the Bookwagon* both teach that wisdom can be gleaned from books. It is true that Christians can learn things from books written by people who are not Christians (Dan. 1:17; Acts 7:22). However, true wisdom comes only when observing the world through the lens of God's revelation in the Bible. In *Avocados for Sale!* wisdom is seen in action. The wise son is diligent in his tasks, and he makes his father glad as well as receives the reward of his labor.

Fall

When people look at God's world, the main thing that they should see is God's glory (Ps. 19:1; Rom 1:18–21). But sinners refuse to see God when they look at His creation. Instead, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22). A fool is someone who fails because he does not live God's way in God's world. Thus, while a Christian can learn wisdom from books written by people who are not Christians, they must also be alert to the foolishness in those books, too. This reading program contains selections by both Christians and non-Christians so that we can train students how to distinguish what is true and false.

Often, people reject God's wisdom because they wish to hold on to some sin. In "The Monkeys and the Crocodile" the monkey's foolish teasing brought about harmful consequences.

"The Farmer and the Donkey" reveals that true wisdom cannot be found by listening to everybody's advice.

Redemption

A person is wise when he trusts the LORD with his whole heart and does not lean on his own understanding. Instead of being wise in his own eyes, a wise man fears the LORD.¹ This means that a wise person will turn away from evil. He will seek to know God and to let God guide him into straight paths. Straight paths are paths in which the consequences for living contrary to God's ways are avoided. The Bible is the most important source of wisdom. Observing God's world must take place in light of what God has revealed in the Bible. This means that William Tyndale's translation of the Bible into English (in "The Bible in English") was essential for English-speaking people to know God and grow in wisdom.

True wisdom cannot exist apart from other virtues. "King of Brass Cobweb" demonstrates the importance of bravery and truth existing alongside wisdom.

1 "To fear God does not mean that a person should be afraid of punishment all the time, like a disobedient worker who is afraid of his boss. Sinners should fear God's judgment. But the fear of God that godly people have is different. The fear of God that godly people have is different. The fear of God that a godly person has is more like that of a son who loves his father so much that he fears to do anything that would disappoint his father or would cause his father to need to discipline him. He is not worried about losing his father's love; he knows his father will always love him. He just loves his father so much that he always wants to do what pleases his father. This attitude is what God wants all of His children to have toward Him." *Bible 4: Pathway of Promise* (BJU Press, 2019), 134.

Hard Work

Creation

God created humans to work (Gen. 1:28; 2:15; Ex. 8:9). This is part of the Creation Mandate, and it is part of how humans reflect the image of God (John 15:17). There are consequences to trying to live in God's world without working (Prov. 6:6–11; 10:4–5; 14:23; 24:30–34; 28:19), and these consequences combined with the fact that even fallen humans bear the image of God (distorted as it may be by sin) mean that even non-Christians recognize the importance of hard work. *Katy and the Big Snow* teaches that a hard worker finishes the job; “The Boy and the Dike” teaches that good work requires perseverance. Effective work not only requires perseverance, but it also requires creativity, as both “First Flight” and “Kate Kangaroo” exemplify.

While hard work is pleasing to God, rest is also an important part of God's creational design. God set a pattern of rest after six days of work that He expected humans to imitate (Gen. 2:1–3; Ex 20:9–11). Work should be balanced with rest and an appreciation for the world that God created. This aspect of life is on display in “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.”

Fall

Sin has made work more difficult (Gen. 3:17–19). Sin has also corrupted people's approach to work. Some people make work an idol, depending upon work apart from God to meet their needs (Ps. 127:2). Other people are lazy (Prov. 6:6–11; 10:4–5; 14:23; 24:30–34; 28:19). *The Little Red Hen* illustrates the fact that those who will not work should not eat the fruits of others' hard work (2 Thess. 3:10).

Redemption

Christians work hard in obedience to specific Scripture commands and instruction, but they also work diligently because it is a way of loving others. “Granny Nell's Dulcimer” teaches that the hard work of developing skills and talents enables a person to minister to others. Students should be encouraged to be diligent in developing their own skills and talents with this motivation. “Susannah's Books” reveals that even Christians who have been laid up by sickness can work hard for the Lord in their own way. Students at this grade level may similarly feel that their scope of working for the good of others is limited. They should be encouraged, nonetheless, to look for ways they can help others with the opportunities that they have. Though *The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge* is not a Christian work, students should draw from it the principle that God-honoring work helps others, and they should learn to be diligent in such work.

Kindness

Creation

Kindness is a virtue in which a person acts and speaks with the goal of helping and being good to another. Kindness is a virtue exercised in community, and God created humans to live in community (Gen 1:26–28). Kindness is also a manifestation of love (1 Cor. 13:4). Because kindness is a creational norm, even non-Christians recognize its value (even if they have a distorted understanding and practice of this virtue).

Several of our selections emphasize the importance of kindness. Christians recognize that we should be kind to all people everywhere because all people bear God's image. This reality also motivates Christians to show kindness to those with special needs (as in “Dogs at Work” and “Shyla, the Seeing Eye Puppy”). “Two Coins for the Carousel” teaches that giving to others brings greater joy than satisfying one's own desires. *The Giving Tree of the Desert* provides the opportunity to teach that God created humans for companionship, and showing kindness to others is a way of fulfilling this purpose.

Kindness often means doing something good for someone, but often being with someone is often more important than doing something for them—a truth captured by *Sunflowers in Skagway*.²

2 “A Gift for Mama” is included in this section. I'm uncertain quite how to relate this story to our theme. The boy is kind in wanting to get a gift for his mother, and perhaps he is kind in being willing to give up what he has to help others with their needs—although he often just has things taken from him.

Fall

The informational text about Irene Sendler reveals that great sins against other people provide opportunities for kind people to respond to the evil they see with help toward those in need. Likewise, *The Whispering Town* shows that kindness involves helping those who are being treated unrighteously.

Redemption

True kindness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Kindness is fundamentally rooted in the character of God (Rom 2:4; 11:22; Eph 2:7; Titus 3:4), and true human kindness results when Christ is formed in us. Therefore, true kindness is only possible for the Christian. Most of our selections are not by or about Christians, but we can nonetheless apply them to how believing students should respond. *The Ugly Duckling* can be used to teach students that they should not let the unkindness of others discourage them. God has created them just as He has meant them to be.

Obedience

Creation

God created mankind to be obedient to Him. The command to not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a test of obedience to God. God also designed His world with orders of authority in which some people are to obey others. In the family, children are to obey their parents (Eph 6:1; cf. Ex 20:12). In both *Wagon Wheels* and *Mumsi Meets a Lion*, obedience to parental instruction proves to save the life of the obedient child.

Fall

Adam and Eve failed the initial test of obedience, and humans have had a problem with rebellion and disobedience ever since. “Little Fred” is described as a boy who “always acted right.” We will want to instruct students that, apart from Jesus, there is no such boy; we are all born sinners and need to be saved from our sin. True obedience cannot come through a resolve to be good. Several selections highlight acts of disobedience and their consequences. *Little Bear’s Big Adventure* teaches something about the cost of disobedience. The myth of Icarus reveals the deadly effects of hubris and disobedience, and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* also reveals the dangers and consequences of disobedience to parents. “Little Twigs” contains lessons about the way the wrong kinds of friends encourage disobedience.

There is also a kind of obedience that falls short of what God requires. “The Whole Duty of Children” alludes in its title to Ecclesiastes 12:13 in which the “whole duty of man” is said to be “Fear God and keep his commandments.” This poem is a secular substitute: it does not reference God at all but is focused on good manners as conceived a century ago.

Redemption

“The object of regeneration “. . . is to manifest in the life of believers a harmony and agreement between God’s righteousness and their obedience.”³ Christians are to be characterized by obedience (1 Pet. 1:14, 22). The hymn “Trust and Obey” provides an opportunity to teach that obedience is the evidence of trust, or faith, in Christ. There is no way to be happy in Jesus without obedience. But more than that, there is no way to abide in Jesus and for Him to abide in us other than by a faith that results in obedience. Such obedience will not be perfect, but it will be present. “Little Twigs” rightly teaches that the proper thing to do after disobedience is to confess and repent. The Bible account about Samuel (“Samuel Obeyed”) also models how God’s people should hear and obey God—even when the obedience being asked is difficult.

God’s Creation

Creation

God made a very good world for students to enjoy (Gen 1:31). To give God proper glory for this wonderful creation, students need to take time to observe what God has made. *Southwest Sunrise* provides an opportunity to

3 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster, 1960), 1:684 (3.6.1).

teach students that the varied beauty of God’s creation should lead students to thank God no matter the location He has placed them in.

Several selections teach students about different aspects of creation in ways that should elicit wonder and worship. “The Best Nest” should lead students to marvel at the way God designed birds to build nests while “Be Wise about Owls” should lead students to marvel at the design of owls. “I Can Hear Spring” does the same with geese and should call to mind that God made the seasons and promised, in the Noachic covenant, their regularity.

Psalm 8 teaches that humans should not only glorify God for his creation but also that God entrusted the rule over creation to man. This was first manifested in the commission of Adam to keep the garden of Eden, and *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* celebrates this calling for humans to be gardeners. “The Building Season” also teaches that understanding God’s creation helps us become good stewards of that creation.

Fall

Because of Adam’s sin, God subjected His good creation to a curse (Gen. 3:17–18; Rom 8:20). The corruption of the creation as a result of sin makes the world a dangerous place, as *Hill of Fire* contemplates. “A Volcano Erupts” examines one of these dangers and how to mitigate them. It also teaches students that some natural disasters, like the Flood, are God’s judgment on a fallen world.

Sinners also have a misunderstanding of how creation can transform a person. The main character in *The Raft* has his attitude toward nature and his grandmother change as he experiences nature on the raft. The story sees nature as having a transforming effect on a person rather than the God of creation transforming a person.

Redemption

God has placed all of creation in subjection to man (Ps. 8:4–6; Heb. 2:8). But in a fallen world, creation itself rebels against human rule. Thus, this rule is often not evident (Heb. 2:8). However, Christ is the Man who will lead redeemed humanity in ruling over God’s creation, just as Psalm 8 describes.

Contentment

Creation

“Christian Contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, freely submitting to, and taking complacencie in Gods wise, and fatherly dispose in every condition.”⁴ Christians (and others) should be content because God is sovereign Lord over all things. Since our circumstances are all in His hand, we should be content.

Fall

Discontentment is dissatisfaction with God. In “God’s Grumbling Children,” Israel’s grumbling in the wilderness (Exodus 15–16) was such a grave sin because it was not mere concern over the necessities of life but a discontentment with God Himself and His provision for them. This tendency toward discontentment is engrained in fallen man. It stands at the root of the first sin. Adam and Eve were discontent with all that God had given them. Often, as with the Fall itself, greed for more can cause us to lose what we already have. This dynamic is in play with *The Fisherman and His Wife*. Envy over what others have often robs us of thanksgiving for what we have already been given, as *The Crow and the Peacock* aptly illustrates. Finally, *Mole Had Everything* teaches that having everything does not satisfy. This is why Paul said that we should be content with food and clothing (1 Tim. 6:7–8), and Jesus taught that His followers should not worry about these necessities but should trust God to provide them (Mt. 6:19–24; cf. Mt. 4:4).

Redemption

Just as discontent—“neither were thankful” (Rom. 1:21)—is a great sin, so gratitude and thankfulness are the fruit of contentment. One of the chief evidences of God’s transformation of a person is their growth in gratitude. “First Thanksgiving of All” teaches students that Christians can be thankful even in hard times and with very little. This

4 Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (London: W. Bentley, 1651), 3.

attitude of thanksgiving was formalized by the Puritans, who would regularly set aside days of thanksgiving to thank God for the blessings He had given them. These thanksgiving days stand behind the Thanksgiving held by the Pilgrims, which is carried on in American tradition today, as explored in “Thanksgiving Day.” God’s people of all ages can be content because God is their good Shepherd, who cares for them even in the valley of the shadow of death or in the presence of enemies. “Let Me Sing” provides an opportunity to each that when a person loves God, he or she can be content in any circumstance by looking for ways to show God’s love.