

Getting started

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In Review



Beginnings

by Steve Wiens

NavPress

“I don’t do goals,” I say when it’s my turn to introduce myself. A thin blanket beneath me, my legs folded, I am sitting in a circle of women at my local yoga

studio. We are at a workshop “setting intentions for the New Year” with “a feminine approach to goal setting.” I am skeptical. I am more of a “let the destination find you” kind of person. I am better at beginnings.

This could be why I opened a book on beginnings a few weeks earlier with such feverish hope. *Beginnings: The First Seven Days of the Rest of Your Life*, by Steve Wiens, is an ode to human goodness and our perpetual potential for fresh starts.

Using the creation narrative from Genesis 1 as a template for how new life grows, Wiens moves through the themes of light (day one), expanse (day two), seeds (day three), seasons (day four), monsters (day five), us (day six), and stop (day seven). The epilogue describes how resurrection (day eight) is the actualization of all that potential planted within us.

Creation is a process of becoming, Wiens says, and the book promises a unique way of locating oneself in it when life feels stuck, or in my case, suspended.

Since August my husband and I have been officially licensed as foster parents, and despite the county emphasizing the huge need for our “service,” we are still waiting for our first placement. We don’t see ourselves fostering to meet needs. God, no. We’re fostering because we want to. We think we might even enjoy creating an alternative kind of family.

The emphasis on our relentless God-given generativity was what I loved most about *Beginnings*. Wiens, founding pastor of Genesis Covenant Church, is not only one of the best writers I came across all year but also a modern midrashic marvel whose biblical exegesis made me say, “Ahhh.”

In the chapter on day two, he reveals that the Hebrew word *raqa*, the root word for expanse, can mean to be solid or make broad. Along with God, who created vast sky out of endless water, Wiens asks us to let go of the reality we know and become broader.

On day four, Wiens draws on his and his wife’s struggle with infertility to connect with the biblical figure Hannah’s season of barrenness. Things are not as they seem, for the Hebrew word *zera*, typically translated as Hannah asking for “a son” in English, is better translated as her asking for “a seed” for her people. Wiens points to all the ways we can bear fruit for one another.

Day six is a reflection on God as an “us,” heavenly parents-to-be who are giddy to create something together in humankind. The God of Genesis 1:26-27 is not genderless but wholly masculine and wholly feminine, says Wiens. This God is genderfull. We are made in the image of possibility.

As the workshop (and my legs) unfolds, I am starting to warm up to the idea of naming intentions for the new year. Our instructor says getting clear on our desire (I want to become a foster parent) and the underlying feelings behind the desire (because I want to feel enchanted, challenged, and connected) helps us hold intentions loosely. Instead of focusing only on the outcomes we await in the future, we focus on the small actions we can take everyday to experience those feelings. Goal setting is another process of becoming, and one that acknowledges the generous number of pathways through which life can push.

I can't know if or when my desire to foster will turn into something sturdier like devotion. But I know now I can do something every day to feel my way forward. Wiens writes, “You are not a noun. You are a verb. You are endlessly becoming.”

It is time to get up off the mat.