

ReGroups 7/9/23

Origin Stories: At Rest In Eden - Genesis 2

If you missed last week's lesson...

- Genesis was given to Ancient Israel, through direct revelation to Moses, so that they would know their origin story. Moses' generation were centuries removed from the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and had been raised in a culture totally detached from the God of Israel. For this reason, they needed to hear the true story of not only their beginning, but the whole world's. With a firm foundation of a Good God who carefully, intentionally created the world, the people would know to trust Him. We can rest assured that we have an all-powerful, self-sufficient God residing over creation.
- There's no reason - *nor direct benefit* - to attempt to reconcile the creation story as detailed in Genesis 1 with the many different scientific theories and ideas about our universe's beginning. The purpose of this account is to show us that our world's formation was no accident nor coincident. The details are given in an order that emphasizes both God's sovereignty and His goodness. Clearly, there would be no earth without Him, and all that he has filled it with has been provided to enable the best possible life.
- The world was created to be a good place, full of good things for God's people. It's easy to treat the world like a giant burden to bear until eternity comes, but we must remember that God is glorified through all the earth and everything in it.
- We were made in His image, denoting our value and worth. We share in our Creator's likeness, having the capacity to imagine, enjoy, and make much of this life. This not only inspires us to make the most of our time, but also informs how we are to see everyone around us.

Spend a few minutes **recapping** what you learned from Genesis 1. For those who weren't with us last week, lean on your group members for any questions you may have or discussions you may have missed out on.

Read Genesis 1:1-3, 26-31 and **share** your thoughts about God's original vision over the world. **What do we fail to appreciate about creation that is revealed in the simplicity of Genesis 1? What should we focus on in order to get back to Genesis 1's foundation?**

Sabbath Promise

Genesis 2:1-3 reveals to us that *the seventh day* was a special day in that it symbolized the complete nature of creation. In true poetic fashion, God only needed six of the seven days in a week to create the world. The message here is that God always provides just enough, with room to trust in Him and rely on Him.

Consider this, He didn't create it all in one day, with six days of leisure and extra. He didn't do in three and a half, so as to allow for equal of both. He stretched creation across 85% of a week's time. The 15% of extra served as a buffer between *not enough and too much*.

This theme is found all throughout the Bible, underscoring *God's sufficiency* for our lives and our needs. Recall the story of Elijah and the Widow of Sidon in **1 Kings 17:8-16** and the words of Jesus in **Matthew 6:25-34** and **discuss** God's promise to always provide enough. **How does His performance across Creation Week reflect His sufficiency? How does our flesh and worldly fears/aspirations detract from the Sabbath Promise?**

Sabbath Rest

Remember the children of Israel would have first learned about the Sabbath during their Exodus from Egypt. Genesis of course gives the backstory, but their first Sabbath experience can be found in **Exodus 16:22-30**.

In this story, God begins providing manna from Heaven to feed them along their journey to Sinai. He informs them that on the sixth day they would receive two days' worth, and introduces Sabbath observance to them. The entire purpose of this principle would be to teach them to rely on God for their provisions. Every day as He fed them, He was wiring them to trust in Him for their daily bread. On Fridays, they would have to trust Him for two servings of that bread. Across their forty year wilderness experience, it was as if God was a father with a child in His lap, spoon-feeding them and etching into their hearts that He could be trusted to provide.

After entering into the promised land, practicing the Sabbath was one of many habits meant to remind them that they received their homes because of God's grace, not their own merit. Famously, Moses issued a sobering reminder to them just before their conquest of Canaan. Read **Deuteronomy 8:11-18** and **discuss** how a Sabbath Rest would've trained them to always trust in God's grace, over their own power.

Obviously, over time the Sabbath became more of a religious point of pride than a reminder of God's faithfulness. Jesus came into a world where people were more worked up about arguing over what constitutes work on the Sabbath and judging those who didn't honor it correctly. This same trend continues today, but thankfully the words of Jesus remind us of the Sabbath promise and rest and point us in the right direction: **Mark 2:27-28**.

These verses remind us that God *didn't* create people in order to have servants to obey His laws and rituals, **but rather He gave us those things to us in order to bless us and remind us of Him**. The Sabbath is meant to be a symbol of hope, regardless of whether its observed on Saturday in ancient times or Sunday in the church age. Ultimately, it was always meant to *point us to Jesus* and the rest and provision He gives to our souls.

Finished, Not Tired

One last note on the Sabbath, it's important to understand that God didn't rest because He *had* to, but because He *could*. He wasn't worn out from the week, but rather *He was finished* with room to spare. We rest in Him knowing that He can finish what we cannot and are not able to.

When creation became undone because of sin, God went back to work and ceaselessly was putting all the pieces in place to bring redemption. When Jesus was accused to breaking the Sabbath, He spoke of God's continuous work behind the scenes in **John 5:16-17**, with was reflected in all that had led up to Jesus' arrival to earth. In **John 19:30**, Jesus declared that the work was finally done (*again*). Upon His ascension, He took a seat on Heaven's throne, and has been resting and providing rest ever since. **Hebrews 4:9-10** tells us that this is the true Sabbath Promise and Rest, which is available to every believer.

I AM that I AM

Read **Genesis 2:4-14** and see the focus shift from the earth's general creation to the creation of a home for mankind. You'll notice in these verses that the name for God changes slightly, with the addition of "*the LORD*" before God. This is the first mention of God's covenant name, *Yahweh*, which was how He introduced Himself to Moses at Mt. Sinai; see **Exodus 3:13-15**.

While, the name *Yahweh* evokes the general power of God, it specifically speaks of the intimate side of God. With this name, the Almighty, Infinite God is inviting us to know Him personally.

East in Eden

Eden was overflowing with everything humanity could ever need or want. God had imagined a wonderful world for His choice creatures to enjoy. His hands-on approach to designing and realizing the perfect paradise echoes the good He saw in creation and the good He intended for it. **Genesis 2:15-17** reveal that God had a purpose for the first man and intentions on protecting Him from losing touch with that purpose.

God gave us a purpose to “**work and keep**” the earth. Originally, Adam was put in the place of a priest. The Garden of Eden was *like a Temple*, surrounding by the greater earth. The Tree of Life at its center was *like the Holy of Holies*, where God could be fully experienced. **Numbers 3:6-8** similarly describes the role of the priests in the Tabernacle, which would harken back to these days in Eden. **What are your thoughts on this parallel?**

However, God would not force Adam to serve Him and placed in the Garden an exit ramp. You may wonder, why would God make such possible? It all comes back to *the merciful nature of God*. He will not force on anyone that which they do not truly want. God made a choice to create us, and we too have a choice to serve and enjoy Him or not.

Made For More

Finally, read **Genesis 2:18-25** and hear the introduction of the first family. God emphasizes in verse 18 that man is made for relationships. Our Triune God is in community and we are at our best and most comfortable in community. The foundation of every earthly community is family units that keep God at their center.

A marriage, at its purest form features a man and woman connected by their shared devotion and affection for God. We know from the New Testament, that even in its original form, marriage was always meant to communicate the relationship between people and God to our surrounding world; see **Ephesians 5:31-33**. Regardless if we are single, married, separated, or widowed - this passage reminds us that *we were made to be connected with other people*, so as to encourage our greater fellowship with God. Here in Genesis 2, we've learned that God's first act of creation included creating a perfect environment for the first community of faith to begin and thrive. **Before dismissing, talk about the seeds of the Church we can find therein and what inspiration we can take from this incredible picture.**