

In the Beginning, God

Jan. 20, 2019

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Psalm 8:3-9

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Meditate on Psalm 8:3-9 as a group.

Icebreaker

What part of creating do you most marvel at and why?

Text for Discussion: Genesis 1

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

The Bible is God's unfolding story which gives us a new identity and a new context to view our own life stories. It's important to remember that above all, the Bible is the story of God's abounding love for us. If we miss this, we miss the point of the story. It is the heart of the Bible that can be seen from the very beginning in Genesis 1.

There is a God. And we are not God.

There are only two things: God... and everything else, which relies entirely on God and His decision for it to exist. Jesus said we are blessed if we understand how much we need God, for we have far less control over things than we realize. We think it terrifying to admit this, when it's actually liberating to stop pretending we are in control. We live in a disenchanted, broken, self-centered world. Following Jesus frees us, though, displacing us from the center of our lives. And it is the Bible which offers us a continual glimpse into the reality and truth that we are not God.

Scripture is true and reliable. It will never fail us in all that it intends to teach.

To properly understand Genesis 1, we must discern how it was meant to be received by its original audience. It makes claims about the real world but does so in an exalted, lyrical way, so reading it in an overly literalistic fashion dishonors the text. The Israelites first knew God as their Redeemer, rescuing them from the slavery of Egypt. But Genesis 1 says that God is both redeemer *and* creator. Even more: God is The Creator of everyone and everything – the One who spoke the universe into existence. The heart of the creation story is not “how”; it is “Who.” As J.I. Packer wrote, *“The message of this chapter is this: You have seen the sea? The sky? The sun, moon and stars? You have marveled at the complexity of human beings? Well now, meet the One who is behind it all. You have enjoyed these works of art. You must meet the Artist.”*

All truth is God's truth. We never need to be defensive or shy away where the truth leads.

The Bible and the natural world have the same author. And because they have the same author, any apparent contradiction is just that: apparent. We should be open-handed with our questions, freely acknowledging there are a lot of topics on which sincere, reasonable people can disagree. There is so much more diversity in the Christian tradition than most have been led to believe. We should never feel threatened by asking our questions. The church honors all who seek the truth.

God created us – each of us – uniquely. And behold: it is very good.

The question for most of us is not “Is God there?” but whether He really cares about us personally. God loves creation. And not just in Genesis 1 where we see God's care for the physical well-being of His creation. At the end of the Bible, God doesn't discard all He has made; He renews it. Sadly, so many people regard themselves as worthless and unlovable. Why is it so easy to believe God can say all of creation is good, yet doubt that this

applies to ourselves personally? Despite our brokenness and sin, the Gospel says that in Christ we are seen as good and beloved children. This has always been God's way. In the very beginning, He brings order out of chaos, making something good and beautiful out of the darkness.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How does our understanding of God as Creator of everything affect how we live each day?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- The Bible will never fail in what it intends to teach. What is at the heart of what God intended for Moses to teach his original audience in Genesis 1?
 - What does Genesis 1 not intend to teach?
 - How do you think the message of Genesis 1 gave the original audience (Jews after their escape from Egypt) a much needed identity?
 - What identity does it give to you?
- How does God describe His creation? What implications does the way God describes His creation have for your daily life?
- How does knowing that you are created unique, one of kind, and "very good" affect your self esteem? Explain.
 - Compare this to ways your self-esteem may have been raised apart from God. What was the outcome?
- Other than the creation story, how do we know God has high regard for human bodies? See John 1:14 for an answer.
 - Use this to explain that God had a plan of redemption from the very beginning.
 - What encouragement do you receive from knowing this?
- Compare Genesis 1:1 with John 1:1-3. What are your thoughts about these verses?
- How does our understanding of God as Creator of everything affect how we live each day?
 - How does this generate more trust in His sovereign control of what we are going through?
 - Did you learn anything new or have any new life applications from Genesis 1?

Prayer

Ponder and praise God for the majesty of His creation. Pray that we would be better stewards of God's creation including our bodies. Pray that we would love our city and bodies, that they would flourish under our dominion. Pray rather than tell your personal prayer requests.

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

The Bible is a story of God's great love for His people, a love letter. Since we are made in the image of God, let's write a love letter this week. Send a note to a friend or family member who needs to be reminded not only of your love, but of Christ's. Continue your Bible Reading Plan.