

## Discussion Notes

*Beginnings: Who is God? Genesis 1.1-27*

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How does our story start? The beginning of a story makes sense of the rest. Genesis 1-3 sheds light on our God-given nature and purpose. Here we begin again, rediscovering the origin of our humanity and hope. This nine-week series will ask questions like: Who made us? Who are we? Why are we here?

### Genesis 1 & 2 Overview

- At a glance, Genesis 1 & 2 seem to be telling two incongruent creation stories.
- Upon deeper examination it appears we have been given two sides to the same story; much like an A-side and B-side of a record, similar, but with different emphases.
- Genesis 1 gives a panoramic prologue of the mighty creator God (Elohim) speaking the world into existence. Genesis 2 focuses on the intimately close LORD (Yahweh) and His intimate ordering of creation in general and humanity in particular.

### In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...

- The first verses of Genesis highlight the important fact that God is over, above, and in control.
- This emphasis is radical because other ancient cultures tended to depict the gods as aspects of creation (storms, mountains, sun, moon, etc.), or as mirrors of themselves.
- The Spirit of God hovers over the deep dark waters. He is over any dark, scary, or chaotic circumstance we come up against. The most common command in scripture is "Do not be afraid!"
- *God brings order and fullness to that which was shapeless and empty.*
- Days 1-3 (light, heavens/sea, dry land) highlight God ordering. Days 4-6 (luminaries, birds/fish, land animals/people) highlight God filling.
- Repeated phrases—*God said, 'let there be', and God saw that it was good.*
- Overwhelming emphasis in Genesis 1 is who God is.

### God's Centrality and Supremacy

- God is not a part of the environment.
- The Hebrews could live with the peace that their God was over all of his creation. They didn't have to guess from their surroundings how he felt about them.
- Nature might be unpredictable but God's primary interest is to bring form and fullness to creation – he has good in store for creation and humanity as its apex.

### God's Power of Speech

- Creation doesn't come out of a struggle. God simply *speaks* and things come into being.
- God's words are powerful. Is it any wonder why John 1.14 calls Jesus "the Word made flesh"? Jesus is God's influential Word in action amongst us.
- It's also why Jesus' words are so powerful (See Mark 4.35-41).

- “Within God’s world, one of the most powerful things human beings, God image-bearers, can do is to speak. Words change things – through promises, commands, apologies, warnings, declarations of love or of implacable opposition to evil.” (Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, p.37)

### **God’s Goodness and Creation’s Goodness**

- After each creative act there is the refrain “...and God saw that it was good.”
- Creation isn’t to be worshiped and isn’t in control. It is *good* and an expression of God’s character.
- God has given us the keys to the place. God has entrusted humans with what He has made.
- The Genesis story says that our motivation to care for the world (and within it one another) doesn’t come from the world itself, but from God’s character.
- We should take little steps—like recycling and not littering—to care for creation.

### **Creation is God’s Temple**

- Many scholars agree that the structure of Genesis 1 seems to reflect the building of an ancient temple.
- A temple is a place made by people for a ‘god’ to reside and be worshipped in.
- Genesis is *revolutionary* in its time. Humans don’t build a temple for the gods; the creator God has designed the cosmos to be his temple.
  - “Nothing created is divine, but creation is sacred space.” (Provan, *Discovering Genesis*, p.57)
- In this creation temple we don’t make the gods in our image. God has made humans in his image and places them in the temple as caretakers and representatives.
- On the seventh day God “rests”—that is resides—in His creation temple.
- After Jesus’ ascension the Spirit resides in humanity.
- All of life, every ordinary detail, is good and sacred.

### **Lord’s Prayer Response**

“... holy is your name.”

- In the ancient world someone’s name summed up or depicted their character.
- God’s character, His *name*, is revealed in creation, Jesus, and in *us* as Spirit-filled image-bearers.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What are some “deep, dark waters” in your life? Where is God in relation to them?
- Have you had an experience that you used to interpret how God feels about you? How does the God found in Genesis 1 relate to that?
- When has someone spoken something powerful over you?
- Who can you encourage in a similar way?
- How will seeing ordinary life as good and sacred enhance your everyday experience?