

Discussion Notes

Beginnings: Who are we? Genesis 1.26-31

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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?

How do we define ourselves?

- We are “meaning machines” as Erwin Mcmanus puts it: “We are designed for meaning and desperate for it.” (Soul Cravings)
- We view our self-worth, and the worth of others, through the mirrors of achievement, stuff, or the approval of others.

“Let us make human beings in our image”

- “Let us...” the first hints of the Trinity; and a change in the speech formulas of Genesis 1 demonstrating that the following action is of supreme importance.
- Humanity has a unique place and responsibility in the creation order.
- “Image” in the Old Testament is the language of idolatry—representations of the so-called “gods”.
- Humanity is placed in God’s creation-temple as His representatives.
- We are distinctly capable of being in-dwelt by His Holy Spirit. We are not divine, but we are uniquely able to relate to God.
- This image is what explains all that is good and right in human beings.
- Men *and* women both bear God’s image *equally*. God uses both men and women as representatives in all of their individuality and giftedness.

“Be fruitful and multiply, fill the Earth and govern it...”

- First commandment is more than merely expanding the population, we are called to flourish and encourage the flourishing of the whole of creation.
- “Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.” (Gen. 1.28, The Message)
- God has given us the keys to the place; do we trash it on a joy-ride or respect and enjoy it in a way that encourages its health and well-being?
- Our care for our fellow image-bearers is grounded in this mandate and the ministry of Jesus (see the Messianic Psalm 72).
- We should be paying attention and stirred to action when things are amiss and respond reflecting God’s character.

“...and it was very good.”

- The final word over creation is one of exuberant joy and satisfaction.

We are to Respect the Image of God

- “Millions of human beings of all ages are treated as social trash or disposable items by the global North, and as a waste and human leftovers that are not worth anything that the invisible hand of the market expels.” (*The Liberating Message of Jesus*, Rodriguez)
- We must consider the impact of all we do on those who share the image of God.
- The unborn, elderly, mentally disabled, and the poor are devalued by the value systems of the global economy, power politics, and our obsession with perfection. We measure ourselves on these scales as well.
- Jesus destroyed all of the valuing scales He came in contact with.
- A faithful reading of Genesis demands we engage in the complex issues connected to the rights and privileges of God’s image-bearers.

We are to Care for Creation

- The details of creation point to a Creator who delights in what He has made.
- We need to correct the inherited theology of hymns like “I’ll Fly Away”, we are not just waiting to escape.
- As image-bearers we are called to partner with God in correcting those things that have gone wrong and ensure the continuing fruitfulness of the world—this is the true meaning of “keep”.

Your Kingdom Come!

- Jesus always saw the dignity of the oppressed and set right what was broken or bent (see Luke 13.10-17).
- God will bring the kingdom at the last day but for now “...we are called to build for the kingdom. Like craftsmen working on a great cathedral, we have each been given instructions about the particular stone we are to spend our lives carving, without knowing or being able to guess where it will take its place within the grand design.” (*Surprised by Scripture*, N.T. Wright)
- The mandate found in the creation account and lived out in the life of Jesus goes on. Every small and great act of love—from social justice to recycling—plays its part in the fulfillment of this prayer.
- This is who we are and what we are here for.

Discussion Questions

- Which of the three scales or mirrors are you prone to using to measure your worth? Achievement? Acquiring stuff? Approval?
- What are the consequences of forgetting others are made in the image of God just as you are?
- Was there a time you trusted someone with something you made? What were your expectations?
- How do you think your day-to-day can be enhanced by knowing that as God’s image you are called to creation care?