

Discussion Notes

Beginnings: Why are we here? Genesis 2.15-25

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Rikk Watts

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: where we have been

- God gives form and fullness to that which was empty and formless.
- 3 basic structures: night/day, waters above/waters below, sea/land. Explaining seasons, weather, and food are under God's control.
- Form and fullness come in increasing complexity, focus moves from heaven down to earth.
- It is a good creation, but not perfect. God gifts the world with change, which allows it to grow and develop.
- Spirit hovers over the waters. Spirit is the architect, most texts dealing with Spirit speak of Creation/Renewal (see also Ps. 104.30; Isa. 32.15)

The garden

- Gardens grow and need tending. We have a vital role in ensuring the Garden's flourishing.
- "Eden" means *delight*. The story begins with a good creation full of delight and joy.
- God's character is revealed by the goodness of creation's start. In other creation narratives humans were created as slaves to keep the gods happy. God places humanity in a garden of delight.
- Isaiah 6:3—the fullness of the earth is God's glory. All the goodness of Creation testifies to God's goodness
- "Watch and work" in Gen. 2.15 is an unusual pairing only found elsewhere in Num. 3.7-8 of the priests in the tabernacle.
- Working for the flourishing of the whole earth is a priestly act. All our work is priestly.
- God's fridge in heaven is covered with pictures of the work His kids have done. We were made to work and be creative in Creation.

The tree

- In God's good creation we are given choice, and God cares what we choose.
- The presence of the tree in the garden does not mean that God does not want us to have knowledge.
- Think of Solomon (1 Kgs 4.29), He asks God for wisdom and God grants it. Not just "religious" wisdom either, knowledge in every area possible is granted to Solomon.
- Not about God keeping us ignorant.
- Remember Creation is God's temple and humanity is shaped in his *image*.

- Image=Idol, and they were shaped in sacred gardens (sound familiar), they had their limbs and appendages enlivened (Jesus' ministry anyone?) to enthrone the idol in the temple.
- In God's story we do not make a temple or idol for Him. He makes His temple (creation) and places us as His image in it.
- Humans are designed to be the physical manifestation of God's presence on the earth (Ps. 8.4-9).
- With all this freedom, what has to remain in the center is God's character and not our own inclinations, desires, or reason.
- The tree is named the tree of the knowledge of *good* and *evil*.
- When we try to find out good and evil on our own we deny our fundamental identity as image bearers.
- God wants us to know good and evil! He just has to teach us.
- Acting autonomously alienates us from God. "You shall surely die..." means placing ourselves in the center of reality is suicide.
- Remember Col. 2:3-4, Jesus reveals all wisdom and knowledge. He is the full image of God, our teacher, the new Adam, and the Creator.

Discussion Questions

- How do you react to the idea that God has richly provided all things for us to enjoy (1 Tim. 6.17)?
- Have you ever had an experience of your everyday work being "priestly" or "spiritual"? Describe it. How do you maintain that viewpoint?
- When was a time you placed your own "knowledge of good and evil" at the center of your life? What did it look like?
- In what ways do you let God teach you what is good and what is evil? Examples of when it was a hard lesson?
- How has Jesus shown you what is good and what is evil? Which parable or story from his life do you cling to for guidance and how has it helped?