

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE CENTER OF THE STORY:
A GENESIS SERIES

January 29, 2023

GENESIS: Center of the Story (week 3)

Welcome to the Discussion Guide - designed to help you think more deeply about the sermon topic as you engage with others through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and real-life application.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen?

➤ EXPLORATION

The first two weeks of this sermon series focused on the the beauty of God's design in creation. He created something from nothing, creating order and beauty throughout the world and everything He created was good.

Genesis 2:8-9 (Read aloud)

The garden is the place where God dwells, the place where intimacy and fellowship with God is realized.

When or where do you feel most connected to God?

Genesis 2:15-17 (Read aloud)

The man is placed in the garden by God, there is purpose and intentionality for the man. He is to work the land, take care of all living things and to eat freely from the abundance of the garden.

Genesis chapter 2 hinges on one command: ***Don't eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*** God knows that

the man is not equipped to handle such knowledge. This command is meant to protect the man from harm.

Man was created to live in relationship to God. However, man is also given a free will to choose whether or not to rely on God or choose to go his own way. This is an issue of trust. God has given the man everything, including access to God 24/7, and the man has to decide how he will live.

“Failure to trust God with our lives is death.”

Walter Bruggeman

In what area(s) of your life do you find it difficult to trust God?

In chapter 3 we are introduced to an unexpected character who is also at work in the garden. This provides a perfect test case for the subject of temptation.

Genesis 3:1 (Read aloud)

The serpent tempts the woman by exploiting her weakness, vulnerability and blind spots. We can see a clearer picture of the serpent; also referred to as the devil or Satan. in the following passages:

John 8:44 (Read aloud)

Revelation 12:9

When you read the rest of Revelation, you will see God's complete and total victory over the Devil. But for now, the battle is in full force.

Genesis 3:2-3 (Read aloud)

The Woman Misrepresents what God said:

- God said 'you may eat freely' Eve quotes him as saying 'we may eat' - She minimizes the provision of God
- She also added a prohibition: 'you must not touch' but God said nothing about touching the tree
- She lessened the consequence, weakened the penalty of sin by saying, 'or you will die'. But God said 'you will certainly die'

The lie of humanity is that sin doesn't have consequences and that disobedience doesn't really bring death.

Why are these subtle misrepresentations so dangerous?

Genesis 3:4-5 (Read aloud)

There is another play on words here. The serpent uses the phrase "knowing good and evil." The word "knowing" is translated from the word "yada" which implies the most intimate relationship. The tempter is insinuating that God is holding her back from her destiny. The suggestion that eating the forbidden fruit will make them like God was powerful and effective.

We live in a culture that has incredible authority issues and some may be for good reason. But the serpent is clearly undermining the authority of God here.

When have you struggled with submitting to authority?

Genesis 3:6 (Read aloud)

As the woman contemplated the thoughts that the Serpent whispered to her, she noticed three things about the fruit:

- It would satisfy a practical need - to eat
- It was pleasing to the eye - beautiful
- It would give them wisdom - no need for God

The physical, the emotional, and the spiritual temptation all combined together here, making this suggestion of doing what God had forbidden so enticing and ultimately so deadly!

1 John 2:16-17 (Read aloud)

Eve focused solely on the possible good that she would enjoy by eating the fruit and completely ignored the harm that God had promised would come.

When you face temptation, how do you decide what to do?

Genesis 3:7 (Read aloud)

You will notice that they did not immediately drop dead, so was the serpent right? No! The implications of this go well beyond just physical death. They experienced a disconnection from God, their Creator and Father. It was a break in the intimacy God created them to experience.

Their eyes were opened, but the suggestion of divine enlightenment and equality with God did not come. They knew more, but the additional knowledge was counterproductive to a flourishing life. They also saw more, but what they saw was a distortion—the power of evil.

"Sin is a refused relationship with God that spills over into a wrong relationship with others."

Eugene Peterson

Genesis 3:8-13 (Read aloud)

Separation from God now results in hiding and running at even the sound of God's voice. They no longer have easy access to God.

What are the things that you would rather hide from God than openly share with God?

> TAKE AWAY

This story is important because it helps us make sense of life.

- God is Good! He created everything with clear boundaries and blessings.
- It reveals the true nature of temptation: doubting the goodness of God.
- It reveals the true nature of sin: It is not just disobedience or rebellion, it is unbelief.

We have asked some big questions in this study. Take some time to reflect on any area of temptation that has come up for you, and pray together, asking God to strengthen and guide each of you this week.