

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE CENTER OF THE STORY:
A GENESIS SERIES

February 5, 2023

GENESIS: Center of the Story (WEEK 4)

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

Where did you see God at work this week?

► EXPLORATION

What does cancer, a fight with a close friend, fires and floods, a mass shooting, abuse, addiction, mosquitos, identity struggles and attending the funeral of someone you love all have in common?

Actually, all these things have quite a lot in common. All of these things find deep origins and roots connected to the story revealed to us in Genesis. All of these struggles we may face, find similar expression in story after story throughout the Bible. All of these are part of the disorder of our world and also a part of the re-ordering of God's rescue work.

Genesis tells the story of unbelievable mercy and unexplainable mystery.

Genesis 3:13-19 (Read aloud)

As you see here, there were significant consequences for going against God's plan. One of those consequences was the breakdown of relationship. We were created for a relationship with God, with ourselves, with others and with

creation. Each of these relationships is impacted by the decisions made by Adam and Eve.

Consequences in our relationship with God:

- Once there was intimacy, trust, and delight; now there is suspicion, fear, and guilt.
- Once Adam and Eve walked with God but now they hide in the bushes to cover their shame.

Why do you think Adam and Eve felt the need to hide from God?

Sin brings separation and mistrust. God will still welcome us, but because of our guilt and shame, we may be tempted to hide.

Consequences in our relationship with ourselves:

- Rebellion involves self-deception
- Both Adam and Eve lost sight of God and of their God-given identity.

"When we no longer know the Creator as he is, we no longer know ourselves as we are."

~Darrell Johnson

A wounded relationship with God causes a wounded relationship with the self, so only a healed relationship with God can bring the healing we desperately need.

How has your relationship with God helped you understand and accept yourself?

Consequences in our relationship with others:

- Sin causes tension, power struggles and intimidation in relationships with others.

We don't have to look far to find examples of conflict between people. War, violence, crime and divisiveness are on full display in our world as a result of sin.

When faced with a relational conflict, what is your default response: fight, flight or freeze?

Consequences in our relationship with creation:

- Because of sin the ground is cursed and working the ground becomes a heavy burden.

Romans 8:22 (Read aloud)

Sickness, disease and death is a direct consequence of sin. God created a world that was "good" and with a broken heart he now watches it fall apart because of sin.

Like Adam and Eve, we were given "free will" to make choices. We can choose to trust God or we can choose to take matters into our own hands, just like Adam and Eve.

What are the benefits and challenges of having free will?

Genesis 3:21-23 (Read aloud)

Adam and Eve had tried to cover themselves with fig leaves, but here we see God take initiative to cover them.

"God does for the couple what they cannot do for themselves. They cannot deal with their shame. But God can, will and does." ~Walter Bruggeman

Genesis 3:15 (Read aloud)

God is speaking to the serpent and telling him that even though he has won this battle, the day will come when he will be conquered. This promise holds the rest of the Bible together. God is still at work, and will continue to be at work in order to bring His work to completion.

The promise is fulfilled through Jesus. Jesus enters our story to restore our relationship to the Father. Jesus chooses to suffer the consequences of the mess that our sins create and takes responsibility to reach out and rescue the brokenness of the world in order to restore for us a right relationship with God, with ourselves, with others and with creation.

Romans 5:15-17 (Read aloud)

What does it mean to you that because of Jesus you have access to the "provision of grace" and the "gift of righteousness"?

Our victory in life only comes through Jesus. That is why Jesus is sometimes referred to as the second Adam.

The story of scripture begins and ends in a garden. The Garden of Eden in Genesis was a place of beauty. It was a flourishing world that was at its best before it all fell apart.

When we come to the end of the story in Revelation 22, the world is once again described as a beautiful place filled with light and flowing with rivers of living water, trees and crops that yield good fruit—a return to restored Eden.

Revelation 21:3-5 (Read aloud)

This good news is a reason to celebrate. What God started in Genesis will ultimately be finished through the fulfillment of Jesus. E. Stanley Jones, a missionary to India said,

"The early Christians did not say in frustration '**Look what the world has come to**' which is easy to say as we read through Genesis or see the pain in our world. Instead, they said '**Look what has come to the world.**'"

They were not just focused on what had been ruined, but on the hope for restoration that would come through Jesus.

► TAKE AWAY

When we look at creation, we see God's good plan for the world and get a glimpse of what God wants for His people. However, because of sin we live in a broken world that needs the kind of restoration that only Jesus can provide. As we follow Jesus, we wait with hope and expectation for God's plan to be fully completed.

In what area of your life do you want to see God's restoration?

From Genesis to Revelation we can see that God's design for life is good. Even though we don't see it fully revealed now, we have the hope that His promises are trustworthy and true!