

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE CENTER OF THE STORY:
A GENESIS SERIES

January 22, 2023

GENESIS: Center of the Story

(week 2)

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

Did you make any New Year's Resolutions this year? If so, how is it going?

> EXPLORATION

Last week we started off with this list of questions that, when answered through a biblical lens, leads us to a flourishing life.

Worldview Questions:

- **Origin** – **Where did I come from?**
 - *God made me, I am loved & cared for by Him*
- **Identity** – **Who am I?**
 - *I am a child of God, made in His image*
- **Meaning** – **What is my purpose?**
 - *To honor God and live for His purposes*
- **Morality** – **How should I live?**
 - *Trust Him at all times, take Him at His word*
- **Destiny** – **What happens when I die?**
 - *I start to live a new beginning, eternal life I'm created for*

“God has designed us for flourishing, and flourishing is simply ‘shalom in every direction, personal and public.’”

~Art Lindsley

Shalom = the Hebrew word for peace, describes a holistic completeness, soundness, and well-being.

In which areas of your life are you experiencing “Shalom” (holistic peace)?

In which areas do you need more of God's holistic peace?

In Genesis, chapter 1 we learned that God created all things. Here in chapter 2 we are given a more detailed explanation.

Genesis 2:4 (Read aloud)

In this verse you may have noticed that the order of the words “heavens and earth” are reversed. This may be a way to get our attention and prepare us for a different focus as we think about creation.

Genesis 2:5-7 (Read aloud)

The first human being came to life when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. This is a close and intimate encounter between God and creation. God forms the man with his hands. There is a different relationship between God and humans than there is between God and the other parts of creation.

Key Relationships For Humans to Flourish

Our Relationship to God: Spiritual

Our Relationship to Ourselves: Emotional/Psychological

Our Relationship to Others: Social/Relational

Our Relationship to Creation: Physical

“At the center of the story is a Relationship, we were made by the Relationship, for the relationship, to live in relationship.” ~Darrell Johnson

How would you describe your relationship with God?

Genesis 2:15 (Read aloud)

We can sometimes think of work as a curse, but here we see that the work God gives the man is a blessing that brings a sense of responsibility, purpose and continued relationship with God.

In what ways does your relationship with God influence how you do your work?

Genesis 2:18 (Read aloud)

The word “helper” is translated from the Hebrew word, “ezer”. Ezer has two meanings in Hebrew, depending on the pronunciation: to rescue / to save and to be strong. This is not a demeaning term. In fact it is most often attributed to God in the Old Testament as the one who “helps” Israel. The “helper” does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Why do you think this distinction is important?

Genesis 2:19-22 (Read aloud)

The man and the woman correspond to each other physically, socially, and spiritually. God desired that the man and woman be a spiritual functioning unit, walking in integrity, serving him, working and keeping his commandments together.

Genesis 2:23-25 (Read aloud)

We often hear these verses used in the context of marriage, however, marriage is not the center of this story. Relationship with God is the focus!

Your relationship status does not matter here. You can be single and be fulfilled in relationships with others, just as much as you can be isolated and all alone in a marriage.

If this passage was teaching that marriage was the highest goal to aim for then the Apostle Paul and even Jesus himself would have missed the mark of God’s best for them. The point is that we need God and we need each other to live a flourishing life.

How does your marriage or your singleness help you to flourish in your relationship with God?

Key Relationships for Humans to Flourish

Relationship to God - Spiritual

- God loves us first (1 John 4:9-10)
- We respond to God’s love (Matthew 22:36-38)
- We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)

Relationship to Ourselves - Emotional, Psychological

- “If I am not in touch with my own belovedness, then I cannot touch the sacredness of others.”

~Brennan Manning

Relationship to Others - Social

- Matthew 22:39-40, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- “When our trust in God erodes, so does our intimacy with others.” ~Tyler Staton

Relationship to the World - Physical

- God gives humans responsibility to care for the earth
- Our physical life matters to God

On a scale of 1 to 10, how are you doing in each of these key relationships?

> TAKE AWAY

Genesis reminds us that God is at the center of everything. His invitation to us is to order our lives in such a way that every part of our life, our relationships, our work, our way of being in the world is with God at the center.

Take some time to pray for one another committing to keep God in the center of your life this week.