

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (January 22, 2023)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

As we enter our third week in the study of the book of Genesis we arrive at a passage that addresses one of the greatest controversies of our day, the controversy surrounding our identity.

At one time or another we have all asked the question, “Who am I?” Sometimes we phrase it this way, “I’m not really sure I know who I am ... I need to take time to find myself. “The desire is good. We want to live intentionally, honestly, not conforming to who others expect us to be, being true to ourselves.

Who do I want to be? How do I want to express myself? What do I believe? What are my priorities in life? What am I good at? Who or what do I turn to in order to find answers to my identity questions? We’ve been told by parents, peers, teachers, TV, movies, music, ads, that we need to be this way, look that way, prioritize this rather than that. “You’re a natural tennis player” “You were made to be a teacher.” “You are ... (fill in the blank)” So many outside voices trying to shape us, tell us who we are, and who we ought to be.

But is that really who I am? How do I know that I’m not trying to be who others think I should be, or want me to be? This quest to find ourselves sometimes takes us into unexpected and unusual places, not always good places. We fall in with the wrong crowd. We dabble in dangerous activities, with dangerous substances and addictions. These, and more, offer to help us find ourselves. We drastically reject our past, our upbringing, throwing out the good with the bad.

We can only wander in the desert so long, experiment so long, ruminate so long. At some point we have to arrive at, or move closer to, answers to the questions before us. We cannot drift thorough life on a continual “search for ourselves” identity-less. Honestly that would be extremely selfish and would, itself, ultimately become our identity. At some point we have to trust someone or something to help us with the questions of who we are, and what we will be. There comes a day we must set a course and move forward even though we do not, and will not, have complete answers to all of our questions. Who, or what, can help us? Christian faith claims that our identity has been given to us by God. And it is only as we move closer to God, enter into a direct relationship with Him and with His people (the church), that we discover the freedom and the power to be who we were created to be. We spend the rest of our days learning and living that out. Who are you? Who will you be? At Grace we are discovering that together and it will take us beyond ourselves.

Made in His Image (Genesis 1:24-27)

²⁴ And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds – livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.’ And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, ‘let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’

²⁷ So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.”

What DOES IT SAY?

1. What does this passage say about God’s relationship with us?
2. What does this passage say about who God is? About God’s power? About God’s plan for us?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. What does “let us make man in our image” mean?
4. What does “In the image of God He created him, male and female He created them” mean?
5. What does it mean for man to have “dominion” over creation?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

6. What is awe-inspiring to you about the animals that inhabit our planet? Which animals are you most fascinated with & why?
7. Who or what helps you understand your identity, who you are?
8. What does it mean to be created in the image of God?
9. If this passage is correct in describing how God created us, how do you reflect “the image of God” (what aspects of God ‘s nature and character are visible in your life)?
10. Who are you? How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you, in two sentences?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God, and God talking to you. Ask God to help you understand who you are. Ask God to help you reflect His nature and character. Ask God to help you grow into who He created you to be. God will help you because He created you, and He loves you.