



WEEK TWO: Genesis 2:4-25

Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

Life Groups are a critical ministry of our life together at GyMEA Baptist Church where we want everyone to find their place in God's family and in God's mission. These resources are produced each Monday as a companion to the sermon series. Choosing to use these resources facilitates our sense of community as we share together around common themes and passages.

Each week's resource includes a brief overview of the sermon series and of the sermon (which can be accessed on GBC's YouTube channel or via your favourite podcast platform), along with a series of activities to do together. Don't forget that The Big Ill podcast comes out mid-week as another companion to the sermon.

These range from questions to ask, prayers to pray, practices to try, and biblical passages to read (usually in the time between Life Group meetings). Feel free to pick and choose what will work well for your group – you don't have to do everything!

We also include additional things that we are encouraging our Life Group leaders, as leaders of GBC, to be sharing with your groups. These include reflecting on a particular mission commitment of GBC, promoting and praying for GBC initiatives, and celebrating what God is doing in and through our community of faith.

If you have feedback on these resources please contact Nicole Jones at LifeGroups@gymeabaptist.org.au

Origin Story – Genesis 1-11: A Brief Introduction

The stories, genealogies, and poems in Genesis 1-11 form a prologue of sorts to the main action of Genesis (and the entire Bible) that begins with the call of Abraham. Prologues are important *to* the story but are not *the* story. The things we learn in these chapters orient us inside the story that unfolds.

These origin stories are also the broadest introduction to Jesus. It is the story of *all* humanity that we encounter in these texts. For those who are beginning to explore faith this is a wonderful on-ramp to the story.

Sermon Outline: Key Text(s): Genesis 2:4-25

This chapter is often referred to as the second tablet of creation. It tells the story of creation from a different perspective than the account in chapter 1. We are to read them together but resist the desire to harmonise them (In other words, we allow the two tellings to inform each other, but don't try to combine them into one, unified account.).

The first thing we note about this second telling is that the God who created the heavens and the earth has a name – Yahweh (translated as LORD in our English versions). This is the covenant name of God that is introduced in Exodus 3:14 and in Exodus 6:3 we are told that God did not reveal this to the patriarchs! The narrator’s use of the name here prepares us for the story to come and informs us that the covenant making and keeping God of Exodus is the God of creation.

The description of the earth in 2:5-6 parallels 1:1-2; a formless and empty place. This is an example of reading the accounts together without harmonising them (e.g., trying to figure out what Day the actions of 2:5-6 refer to). The emphasis seems to be on the lack of anyone to work the ground. One commentator suggests we should imagine a wild, uncultivated land rather than an empty one. Either way, in the second scene (and yes, there are seven scenes in chapter 2, just as there are in chapter 1) the LORD forms a man from the dust and breathes into him. This act of creation is more intimate than that described in chapter 1 but we are certainly to recognise that the man (or “the adam”) is created in the image of God.

In the third scene we are told about the garden that the LORD God planted. This stands in contrast to the uncultivated land that surrounds it for a garden implies intentionality, order, and purpose. This garden is filled with trees with two special trees in the very middle – the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The fourth scene (2:10-14) lies at the centre of the seven and, therefore, holds an important place in the chiasm (A chiasm is a literary structure where the first section corresponds to the last, the second to the second last, the third to the third last, etc. It is a common feature of biblical literature. The emphasis in a chiasm is often on the beginning, end, and middle sections.). For such an important section it is a bit unexpected – a list of four rivers and where they flowed and a somewhat random reference to gold, aromatic resin, and onyx.

There appear to be two things going on here. First, the narrator is picking up common ancient near eastern imagery of a well-watered paradise. Second, there seems to be hints that the garden is meant to be a prototype for the tabernacle and temple. In the middle/holy of holies is the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; the source of life and the “law”. In the tabernacle the holy of holies contained the very presence of God, the source of life, and the ark of the covenant in which was the law of God. The tabernacle/temple was filled with gold and precious stones, as well as lots of water. On top of that, the LORD God put the man into the garden to “work it” and to “keep it”. The Hebrew terms that are translated this way are also used to describe the role of the priests who were to work and keep the temple.

This points to the purpose of humanity. They are to multiply and fill the earth, governing it as God’s representatives, and, here, to fill it with his order and “law” until the whole earth was one big temple – to the praise of God’s glory!

In scene five – with corresponds to scene 3 – the man is placed in the garden and given wide permission (to eat of any tree in the garden) along with one prohibition (to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). The scene ends, however, with a shocking statement. The LORD God saw that something was not good! And that which was not good was that the man was alone. The “solution” is to find a helper suitable for him.

We tend to think of helpers as subordinate, but here it is a matter of finding an equal for him in the work that he has been given. This is made evident by our prior knowledge that men and women are created equally in the image of God (1:26), by the fact that the Hebrew term translated “helper” here is most frequently used to describe God as Israel’s helper (see Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 27; Psalm 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11; 121:1-2), and by the following action in which the animals are brought to the man to see if an equal can be found. His naming of the animals is not about authority, but about discernment; seeing what things really are. All the animals and birds are brought to the man but no helper could be found for him.

So the LORD God causes the man to fall into a deep sleep and takes a rib and “builds” a woman from it. None of the ancient near eastern creation accounts we have contain a separate and unique creation of women. This is the sixth scene that corresponds to the creation of the man – told in the same number of Hebrew words.

In the seventh scene, which corresponds to the first scene as well as the seventh scene of the first tablet, the LORD God brings the woman to the man who identifies her as his equal – bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh! The narrator concludes with an editorial comment on marriage and a somewhat playful description of the first couple; naked but unashamed.

This scene, like the description of the seventh day, is a blessed, holy, sacred gift from God and tells us something important about sexuality and human relationships that will become important in the story that follows. Again, we must read the two accounts together – men and women – independently of marriage – are wholly created in the image of God. They are not half-image bearers until they meet their other half!

This account tells us more about God – he alone knows what is good for us, including the appropriate boundaries, and yet is also a personal God, forming the man and the woman with his hands looking out for them. It tells us more about ourselves; the boundaries within which we flourish, our purpose to bring the order/kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, and the dignity of our work.

In short, these passages provide us with the meaning of life!

Questions to Ask

NOTE: The questions below are arranged into two sets. The first three are very open, allowing for wide exploration and discussion. The second set are more specifically tied to the sermon. Use one, both, or a mix of the two depending on your group.

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What questions do you have about this text? [If you meet prior to Wednesday, you can access the Big III question portal and ask some of these questions there.]
3. What might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to do in response?

4. What do we learn about God in these two chapters? (Try not to read later revelation back into these chapters.)
5. Work/vocation is given to humanity prior to the fall meaning there is something fundamental about work to our purpose. How does this impact the way we work? How does this affect how we think about retirement? Unemployment?
6. What implication are there for the clear teaching of the equality of men and women in the creation accounts?
7. If these passages contain the meaning of life, how can you demonstrate this meaning in your relationships – with others and with God – and in your work?
8. There are a few boundaries that God provides for human beings. Reflect on the importance of boundaries. What do they do? What do they allow?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes to see evidence of the created good and to grant you the courage to participate in the restoration and renewal of all things.

A Practice to Try

As you start each day – and engage in your vocation (paid or unpaid work) – consider how it reflects the forming/filling of Genesis 1 and the order of Genesis 2. Pray for greater clarity of how you can engage in that work in your own.

Readings to Read This Week

The following texts trace, in brief, the temple imagery in Scripture.

- Exodus 40

- 2 Samuel 7:1-17
- 1 Kings 8:1-12
- Ezekiel 43:1-9
- Revelation 22:1-5

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

One of our strategic priorities is Community Engagement. This has a number of broad focuses, but one of them is evangelism. This series in Genesis is a broad introduction to the story that leads to Jesus. Is there someone in your life who you might invite to listen to these sermons, attend a service with you, or who might even join your Life Group?

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. On Sunday Marc launched a financial appeal for our Ministry Budget, asking our community of faith to prayerfully consider a) increasing their regular giving and, b) giving a one-off gift to help us catch up. More information will be emailed to our attendees to help inform their response. You may want to touch on this appeal and remind your group to prayerfully and thoughtfully consider their response to this invitation.

Additional Resources

The mission commitments of GBC

We have made several references to the mission commitments of GBC. This is the title we have given to our vision, purpose, and values. These will no doubt be familiar to you, but we thought it might be helpful to provide a clear overview of them.

Our mission commitments begin with John 20:21, “As the Father sent me, I am sending you.” These words contain a central belief about what we are called to as a community of faith: that we are to continue to ministry and mission of Jesus to restore and renew everything according to the will of the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we reflected on this commission we formulated a mission statement to attempt to summarise what we wanted to do. While we don’t refer to it very often, it is helpful to see the progression of our thought. The mission we formulated was: Everywhere we go and in everything we do, we will invite everyone to follow Jesus.

Taking the pattern we find in the Gospels we affirm that anyone can begin to follow Jesus; regardless of what they believe about him, what they know about him, and without changing their lives. When Jesus called his first disciples he demanded none of these things; only inviting them to follow him. Over time they learned about him which challenged their beliefs about him and raised the implications for their lives, but initially, they only needed to be willing to follow.

The individual transformation that comes as people place their trust in Jesus and the commission that he has sent us to participate in led to a simple vision statement; what we want to see. We want to see lives changed by Jesus.

All of this took shape in our purpose as a community of faith – our “why”. To be a community of faith who courageously take up the invitation of God the Father to participate in His grand plan to restore and renew all things in Christ Jesus through the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit.

It was only as we gained clarity on our purpose that we identified a set of values that we believed were aligned with these mission commitments. The five values we identified are:

- To be On-Purpose. Intentional to create margins in our lives to participate in God’s mission.
- To be Big-Hearted. Generosity in all our resources as a reflection of God’s own generosity to us is a central value.
- To be Whole-Life Learners. As followers of Jesus we are called to ongoing transformation of our lives; learning to be more like Jesus. This also invites humility as we recognise our ongoing need of change.
- To be Others-Focused. To demonstrate love and care to others, over and above ourselves is a key characteristic of followers of Jesus.
- To be Trust-Worthy. We don’t want to get in the way as people begin to follow Jesus. We want to reflect this value in our commitment to being a Safe Church.

These are the mission commitments that we hope will serve to give us some common language that reminds us of our unity together as followers of Jesus and the community of faith here at GBC.