



HOME GROUPS

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Series: Stories of Shadow - Week 4 - August 7, 2022

Scripture: Genesis 1:27 - 3 NIV11

Community is shaped by the conversations we share. These questions are just one tool you might use to help host meaningful engagement with the themes emerging from this week's teaching.

Make sure to check the "Journal and Talk" section at the end. You may find that it is the only thing you'll do with your group today.

Message Summary: Jeremy explores the creation of Eve and unpacks some of the misconceptions we often bring to this text.

Connect: How do you find rest? What practices do you use?

Being Created Together

The first two chapters of Genesis tell us that all of humanity carries the Divine image in the world. This is a

remarkably progressive idea in a world in which it was only the kings and priests who were the image of God to the masses. However in this story, all of us — male and female, but also rich and poor, powerful and subject — all bear Divine witness. Genesis 2 describes how God formed a clump of dirt from the ground and breathed into it, so that it began to breathe on its own. This is also remarkable because the writers of Genesis were pushing back against other ancient origin myths, where humanity was born from the mixing of dirt with the blood of a defeated, murdered tyrannical god. This story says, no — our identity is rooted in generous gift not violent conquest; we are breath not blood.

- If we were to create an origin myth for humanity today, what values, ideas or social structures from our society would shape that story? How would it differ from the origin story in Genesis 1-2? Would it have more in common with other ancient origin myths?

The Making of a Helper

When God forms Eve out of Adam, she is called the helper. Both the words helper in English and ezer in Hebrew

have at their core the idea of assistance, support and help, so this is a good translation. However, the connotations of the word helper are opposite to ezer. In English, helper carries the connotation of assistance from below. A helper is someone who comes and supports and pushes you up. But in Hebrew, ezer assumes that help comes from above. An ezer is the one who reaches down and lifts you up into your potential. This word is often used elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures to describe God.

Think about that difference in worldview; one that believes help is embodied in those beneath us that act as a platform for us to stand on, and the other that believes help is embodied in those who reach down and elevate us. This idea unravels the notions of gender hierarchy that are often brought to this text. Genesis 2 is saying that the divine image is realized in human partnership, where neither is subordinate, but one reaches down to pull the other up so they can stand together, as equals.

- How could the connotations of ezer help reshape your understanding of what it means to help others?

Snakes and Fruits

In Genesis 3, the man and the women are both present for the serpent's deception; they share the fruit together and they share in the consequences. In fact, by the time you get to Paul, who is firmly embedded in a very patriarchal world, he pins all of the blame on Adam, saying that through Adam sin has entered the world with disastrous consequences for everyone. The irony of shifting all the blame to Eve, as some do, or to ignore her culpability as others try, is to miss the point of the Genesis narrative. Eve

is neither vile seductress nor naive victim in this story. She is a fully realized human character, equal to Adam. This is the whole point of the story. Humans — all of us — are interconnected by nature, and are, in fact, only fully human when we are together.

- How does this idea of only being fully human when we are together clash with our Western notions of individualism? What does it mean to be fully human only when we are together?

Imitation vs. Creation

Genesis 3 describes that the humans ate the fruit and gave into the serpent's temptations because they wanted to be like God. That desire — to be like someone else — is the root of so much pain in our world. What is most of our conflict centred on if not the desire to possess the place, authority, possessions, or relationships that someone else already has? We would often rather imitate each other than explore the unique possibilities we've each been gifted with. God has given us a world of endless possibility, and we have responded with the least creative option possible; the path of imitation, conflict and competition, rather than creative flourishing in partnership God's imagination. Eve and her partner are archetypes of the human experience, but they are not stereotypes we are bound to imitate.

- How has the need for imitation shaped your view of God?
- What are some of the ways you could experience God's imagination for creative flourishing in your life? Or together with others in your community?

BENEDICTION:

May you know yourself as loved today.

May you sense the freedom to truly be yourself.

May you recognize in Eve the full reflection of human heights and depths that exist in you.

And may that expansive archetype —

One that frees you rather than confines you —

Be the one that invites you to welcome the spirit of Jesus.

Journal and Talk

A new section this year that works well if you meet online.

Maybe this will be the only exercise you do with your group.

Keep your meeting time to an hour to avoid Zoom fatigue.

Do a quick check-in/connect - 2 min per person.

Invite your group to journal for 10-15 minutes in response to the prompts. Use the rest of your time listening to and interacting with each other's responses, as much as people are comfortable sharing.

Encourage your group to see this time as a way to tell and invite others into each other's stories. Protect this time from becoming a "let's fix you" space; it's all about active and gentle listening.

Journalling prompts:

- How does this idea of only being fully human when we are together clash with our Western notions of individualism? What does it mean to be fully human only when we are together?
- What are some of the ways you could experience God's imagination for creative flourishing in your life? Or together with others in your community?