

July 16/23 - Small Group – Leader's Guide

Read Genesis 1:1-2, 26-28

1. Elohim means "the powers". We see Elohim manifest His powers immediately at the start of the Bible. He creates the world and judges the world (as in, makes distinctions between created things). Elohim then extends His powers to humankind, giving to Adam and Eve His *tselem Elohim* (image of God). The first human pair exercise their *tselem Elohim* by ruling and judging the earth as gardeners in Eden. In view of this, how do we live out the *tselem Elohim* in us at this present time in our own cultural context?

The original design for humanity continues in us, even for Christians, in the cultural mandate to rule and judge the earth, without abuse, ego, or corruption, but with all truth, love, and justice. We go about prayerfully, asking God for His power and wisdom as we navigate in and through our stations in life, vocation, careers, and seasons of our existence, "ruling" our own households and affairs well, "judging" between good and evil, being stewards of God's economy in all our enterprises.

Read Psalm 82

2. Psalm 82 is a liturgical polemic and poem against the abusers of power throughout history. In the psalm, Elohim condemns lesser elohim for their abuse of power and neglect of the marginalised. The psalm ends with a liturgical prayer for Elohim (who is Ruler and Judge) to rise and judge the earth, for He rules over the nations. In light of this future that God will judge the abusers of power, how do we also pray and live out this final prayer of the psalmist for God to judge and rule?

We inhabit a posture of expectancy, that all our endeavours in the present will not be in vain, and will bear fruit that will last, even unto the new age. And so, we can fight for justice, call out against abuse and exploitation, speak truth to power, stand with the helpless, die with those who are dying. Our prayer for God to arise and judge the earth will be realised in the second coming of Jesus who will make all things right. In that promise, we work, we pray, we rest.

Read John 10:29-38

3. In this gospel narrative, Psalm 82 is re-enacted by Jesus and the religious leaders. Jesus assumes the place of president Elohim and judges and condemns the lesser elohim, the Pharisees, for their abuse of power and neglect of the marginalised. In the end, how does Jesus, the Son of Elohim, manifest His powers to the world, especially for His sheep?

Jesus ultimately proves His powers by laying them down as He died on the cross. In the end, Jesus proves His powers again by taking up His life when He rose from death. He did this not just so to model for us how to lay aside our lives, but to make real, to make possible, for His sheep (people who believe in Him) to actually do what He's done, for

Christians to truly sacrifice their own lives as their Good Shepherd has done. As our own Master has demonstrated for us, let us go and do likewise.

4. In the image of Jesus, in what ways are we being called to lay aside our powers for the sake of the powerless, to lay down our lives for others in the promise that our lives will be taken up again by God in the resurrection?

Allow space for others to share specific ways they are being challenged and called to practise self-sacrifice.