

## **Oct 20 – Leader’s Guide - Genesis 1-3: Covenant of Vocation**

1. If you could summarize the storyline of scripture in just a few sentences, how would you do so?

*This is simply a reflection question to pull up to the surface the storylines we carry with us into our reading of scripture. Don't spend too much time here but it would be important to bring to the surface the storylines that people are working with as we seek to bring to the surface a storyline that is often relegated to subplot rather than THE plot.*

### **Read either all of Genesis 1-3 or Genesis 1:1-4, 26; 2:7-9; 16-17; 3:1-6, 8, 22-24**

2. (1:26) Humanity was created in the image and likeness of God to have dominion over material creation. What does this mean?

*Here is an unedited portion of the sermon that should help you reflect on this question:*

*Being created in the image and likeness of God is about representation and reflection.*

*You see in the ancient near east when kings or emperors took new territory they would set up an image – or likeness of themselves – to signify their sovereignty over the land – much of the time that was expressed in the form of a statue – but at other times that was expressed by installing a vice regent – someone who would rule the land in their stead – in their image – in their likeness*

*This is our created purpose – to be God’s vice-regents – to rule in his stead – to have dominion over material creation – now some of you are likely squirming at this point right – because this dominion has become domination – this theology of ruling in God’s stead has been utilized to justify our ravaging of the planet to fuel our insatiable consumption – but this theology also has a vital corrective to that horrific mis construal – image and likeness is not just about representation – it’s about reflection.*

*We were created to rule in God’s place by reflecting the image and likeness of God out into the world – the rest of creation was to see in us their creator’s nature and character.*

*Perhaps the best way to think of it is this –that we were created to be a mirror of sorts – that as our lives are rightly oriented toward God we would then reflect his character and nature out into the world –oriented to his love – his goodness – kindness – compassion - justice – mercy – grace – we would then reflect that out into the world.*

*Genesis chapter 2 literally fleshes this out – as God gets his hands dirty – shapes us like an artist from the ground – and then breathes into his breath – his ruah – his spirit – his life – and then places us in Eden – a place where heaven and earth meet – a place where God’s space and human space overlap – for both God and humanity walk in the garden – and there where heaven and earth meet humanity rules as God’s vice regents - oriented toward God reflecting his nature and character – so that all things would flourish – all things would have the fullness of life – that was our created purpose – a glorious purpose – a covenant of vocation.*

3. (2:9,16) What choice is represented by the presence of the two trees in the garden? What is the consequence of humanity's choice?

*Eating from the tree of life meant the continuance of life, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would bring death.*

*At the heart of the choice is this - will you rule by reflecting God's ways out into the world - or will you rule deciding for yourself what is right and what is wrong?*

*The choice was made and humanity was exiled from the heaven and earth space. Death the natural consequence.*

Humanity's exile from Eden does not change our nature - created to reflect the nature and character of God. If we aren't reflecting the character and nature of God we will reflect the character and nature of something else. This gives perspective for the most common command of scripture - have no other gods before me - for oriented toward those idols we will reflect them out into the world.

4. What are some of the 'idols' we worship? What is the impact of each on us? On others? (as we reflect that out into the world)

*Power, wealth, love, comfort, status, beauty, reputation, pleasure to name but a few...*

*In the sermon Tim gave a few examples to help our reflection. Here they are - which may help you reflect on others.*

*We may worship approval – a good thing but in idolatry we make it an ultimate thing - longing above all things to be loved and affirmed – as a result our greatest fear will be rejection – we will do everything in our power to avoid being rejected – and as a result we will shrink back from confronting the harmful behaviors of others for fear they will reject us – as we mirror that yearning for approval out into the world those around us will feel smothered – because we are looking to them to meet an insatiable need – a need that was meant to be filled by God.*

*We may worship comfort – longing to be free to do whatever gives us the most pleasure – as a result we'll resist responsibility – for the resulting stress erodes our comfort – as we mirror that out into the world others feel neglected.*

*We may worship power – longing above all to be successful - in life – in business – in finance – our greatest fear humiliation – being exposed as anything other than we would want others to see – as we mirror that out into the world people around us feel used – for they're simply pawns - collaborators – there only to contribute to our success.*

5. It was Martin Luther who said in his commentary on the 10 commandments that we can't break commandments 2 through 10 without breaking commandment one. Commandment one? Have no other gods. Meaning that every sin, every injustice, every aspect of human brokenness is symptomatic of worshipping something else other than the living God. Discuss.

*It may be helpful here to take a few of the commands and talk about what idol sits behind our breaking of them which will then set a trajectory for exploring the larger truth behind this.*

*For example setting aside the command to keep Sabbath may be that we have made a God of success, career, production etc.*

*Setting aside the command to honour father and mother may be that we have made a god of personal autonomy and don't want family to impede upon that.*

### **Read John 20:19-22**

6. What connections do you see between the Genesis and John passages? What is this telling us?

*As God does in Eden Jesus does in the upper room. He breathes on them - filling them with his breath, his ruah, his spirit, his life*

*This action is one which affirms his divinity, his union with the father.*

*As God breathed to bring us to life - Jesus breathes his spirit to recreate us that we would reflect new creation*

*We were given God's life to reflect his glory - the disciples were given the Spirit to be Jesus' witnesses, to reflect his glory.*

7. The solution to our reflecting idols is right orientation for the sake of right reflection. How does our worship of the living God in Jesus lead us to reflect his nature and character?

*I don't have a particular direction that I would want you to take this question simply to let it sit with your group as this will prepare us for the remainder of the series.*

*There is a truth though that we become what we worship.*