

A Place *Foundation of Faith [Genesis 1-11]*

Genesis 1:26–2:8 (preached on April 26, 2009)

Note to Discussion Leaders: Please remember to start by reading the Bible passage as a group. While this is a “sermon discussion” guide, it’s vital that our reflections and applications are grounded in scripture. In a similar vein, do your best to help group members to link their discussion points to the scripture text. Don’t skip over all the questions that invite the group to observe and interpret specific verses in the passage.

READ Genesis 1:26–2:8 (NT reading: Colossians 1:15-20)

REFLECT

1. **Warm-up.** Do you have any memories of being attached to a place as a child (hometown, your street, bedroom)? Share some of them with each other.

2. What are some features in the passage that illustrate God’s personal interest in the place he created? What is your interest level in knowing your place well (your city, neighborhood, street, its people, its history, etc.)? List some specific ways you can get to know your place better.

3. Read Genesis 2:5-8. Why might it appear that this paragraph contradicts the creation sequence found in Genesis 1? How might remembering that the seasons were already in place (1:15; cf. v. 11-12) help our understanding of the passage?

4. *God gave mankind the responsibility of cultivating and developing the wild earth he’d been given* (1:26, 28; 2:5, 15). How might this perspective shape our attitudes toward both the prosperous and the dilapidated parts of the city? What would it look like for you to “cultivate” your neighborhood — develop or beautify or “tame” its “wild” parts?

5. What do you think of the idea that unless we believe the creation is “good” (1:31), we won’t care about the creation? What are some subtle ways we can approach the creation as “bad” or “worthless”?

6. Consider the following quotation: *“It is hardly too much to say that most Christian organizations are as happily indifferent as most industrial organizations to the ecological, cultural, and religious implications of industrial economics. The certified Christian seems just as likely as anyone else to join the military-industrial conspiracy to murder Creation. ... Our destruction of nature is not just bad stewardship, or stupid economics, or a betrayal of family responsibility; it is the most horrid blasphemy. It is flinging God's gifts into his face, as of no worth beyond that assigned to them by our destruction of them. To Dante, ‘despising Nature and her gifts’ was a violence against God. We have no entitlement from the Bible to exterminate or permanently destroy or hold in contempt anything on the earth or in the heavens above it or in the waters beneath it. We have the right to use the gifts of Nature, but not to ruin or waste them. ... We are holy creatures living among other holy creatures in a world that is holy.”*

Do you agree or disagree with this assessment? More importantly, what parts of this view of our relation to nature are consistent with Genesis 1-2?

7. Do you agree that in our modern world it is hard to cultivate a sense of place? Consider the following quotation: *“Modernization is progressively erasing geographical distinctions as a means of defining community. The modern individual is almost wholly rootless, bereft of any psychological connections to place. To be sure, the new freedom from various parochialisms is in some sense exhilarating, but it does not come without a price. Those who belong everywhere can also be said to belong nowhere; they have been emancipated from the small town only to become anonymous, unconnected in our large world. Where the self wanders the earth as a vagrant, belonging nowhere, something that is profoundly intrinsic to being human has been lost.”* (David Wells, *God in the Wasteland*)
8. What do you agree or disagree with? Do you agree that connection to place is “profoundly intrinsic to being human”? What are the advantages of seeing “geographical distinctions as a means of defining community”? Disadvantages?
9. Do you carry within you a longing to *belong* to a “place”? How does it *affirm* your longing to know that God will not one day *eliminate* “place,” but rather, he made us to belong to a place that will *last forever* (2:4; cf. Rom. 8:19-23; Isa. 66:22; Rev. 21:10)?