



Growth Group Questions
September 8, 2024
“It All Began In A Garden”

Context:

For the next two months we will be considering the theme of “Cultivate – Lessons From The Land.” As we move into Genesis 2 the seven- day creation story comes to an end. The seventh day does not have the refrain of “evening” and “morning” like the first six days which implies that creation was to enjoy a “perpetual” rest until sin got in the way. As chapter 2 continues we move from an orderly narrative of all of creation to a focus on the pinnacle of all creation – human life.

The language of cultivation – or work the ground - looks to the future labor of Adam in Eden at Genesis 2:15, but also anticipates the negative story of what happens to the working of the ground after Adam and Eve are banished from the garden of Eden. The land was to be cultivated by Adam and Eve, but the land will suffer because of their sin and work will be difficult.

We see God as an artist who sculpts humanity as well as the animals. The word “formed” used in verse 7 is also used in the Old Testament to describe the work of a potter, as well as how God formed the nation of Israel. We also see that the Hebrew word for *man* (adam) is connected to the Hebrew word for *ground* (adama). Humankind and the ground have always had a connection.

The Hebrew word for Eden is probably derived from a Semitic word which meant abundant waters. When the word is used as a noun it means delight. It is not associated with the idea of paradise where there is no work or no concerns. In the center of the garden were two trees which helped to remind Adam that the middle or center of his world was to be God.

The word for “work” in verse 15 is used in the Old Testament for tilling the soil, or for other labor, as well as service to one another. Adam was also to “take care of” the garden which includes following God’s instructions and guarding creation. From the beginning humankind was given a “priestly” role. Just as the Levites/Priests were to care for the tabernacle in Leviticus and Numbers, so were Adam and Eve to care for God’s creation and creatures.



Scripture:

Genesis 2:4-9

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. 5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. 8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:15

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Psalms 8:3-8

3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?
5 You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.
6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:
7 all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,
8 the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

47 The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we[a] bear the image of the heavenly man.

Colossians 1:15-17

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.



Questions:

1. What does the word “cultivate” mean? What images come to your mind when you hear this word?
2. Pastor Paul said God wants to cultivate a relationship with us. What does that say to you?
3. What can we do to enable God to better cultivate a relationship with us?
4. Similarly, Pastor Paul said God wants us to cultivate relationships with others. How do we do that?
5. In his book *Every Good Endeavor*, Tim Keller says that God doesn’t want us “to relate to the world as park rangers, whose job is not to change their space, but to preserve things as they are. . . No, we are to be gardeners who take an active stance toward their change.” What does that statement mean to you? How does it describe God’s expectations of us?
6. In Genesis 2:15, we are told that God put man in the Garden to “work it and take care of it.” What does this mean for us today?
7. In 1 Corinthians 15:47-49, the Apostle Paul speaks of two men. Who were these men? What do they have in common and how are they different?
8. In Colossians 1:15-17, what does it mean that “all things were created by Him, through Him, and for Him”?
9. How does the understanding that all things were created by Him, through Him, and for Him shape the way we should live our lives?

Pastor Paul’s Sermon Reflections:

1. What are you doing to “cultivate the community or communities you are part of?”
2. Is there something in your life that is actually “good,” but you keep thinking it is not “good enough”? A place where you are not content, but God is saying you really should be content.

