

Net•Work Notes

Week 2, Day 1: Creation—Living out God's Image

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

Reflections of God

God creates and God loves. Genesis tells us that we are made in the image of God, which means that in some way we reflect who God is and what God does. So how do we reflect God's creating and loving? Genesis teaches us that to be a human being means our lives are established on two major pillars: work (creating!) and relationship (loving!). Human beings are given a good work to do and are created for living in dynamic relationship with "others". We create and we love!

Throughout our quest we will focus on our "work" and our "love". Without a good hold on to these two pillars, we will not be able to reach the goal of our quest: true communion.

Creating and Loving

Review chapter 1 of Genesis. In Genesis 1 we see God in the midst of God's work. God calls forth light. God separates light from darkness. God creates Sun and Moon. God causes a dizzying array of creatures to fill the sky, seas, and land. God shapes a human being from the dust (cf. Genesis 2:7). God loves to create!

And God loves what he creates. God's love is evident in his naming of his creation. Naming gives meaning and weight to things and people. God's love is also evident in the pleasure he takes in creation: "Behold, it was very good." God's love is evident in his act of blessing. God creates and God loves. Fullness of life is found in the rhythm of creating and loving.

Take a few moments and list those activities where you find that you are most creative.

Have you ever thought about what you love? Sometimes we are embarrassed to admit we love people or activities. But we should not; this is a reflection of God and how we are created. So, get past the embarrassment for a moment and think about activities, interests, or people that your love. List one or two below and take a moment to thank God for them.

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Week 2, Day 2: Creation—Living out God's Image

...then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

What's in a Name

Do you know the story behind your name? Perhaps you are named after an important person in your family, or maybe you are named after somebody whom your parents admired, or maybe your parents just took pleasure in the sound of your name. No matter how it came to be, you can be sure that your parents spent hours thinking about the name they would give you. Such loving attention to naming is essential to being a human being.

Read Genesis, chapter 2. Chapter 1 of Genesis looks at the cosmic dimensions of God creation. Genesis 2 takes a focused look at the crowning point of God's creating: the creation of humankind, the one creature made in God's image. What do you notice about the special attention given to human beings?

First, notice that God is a "hands-on" creator. God lovingly shapes us. Nowhere else do we see God "touching" the creation as he works. We are the creature in which you can see God's fingerprints! Then notice how we are given life: God *breathes* life into us. Think on that a moment. Our life originates in the breath of the Living God. Awesome.

God places *Adam* (Hebrew word for "man") in a prepared place: the garden of Eden. And here man receives his first work: the act of naming creatures. God was the great name-giver of the cosmos (see Genesis 1). Now, human beings are given the work of naming. When we "name" something it is recognized as unique, as worth noticing. Names are a way of communicating the *essence* of a thing. Naming is

essential to discovering and learning about the world around us. Without naming we cannot know something. Without truly naming, it is impossible to love.

Have you ever named something? If you have, write that name below. Why did you give it that name?

Do you know why you were given your name? Write the reason below. If not, and if a family member is available, ask them!

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Week 2, Day 3: Creation—Living out God's Image

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

Knowing, Loving, and “Keeping”

Reread Genesis 2. This chapter continues the message that God's creation is lovingly ordered and arranged. The focus of the second chapter is the creation of human beings and their placement by God in a prepared place with a special responsibility. Human beings (in the person of Adam) are given the special work of tilling and keeping the garden of Eden in which God has placed humankind. This work of tilling and keeping is parallel to the dominion given to humankind in Genesis 1. We have already seen one way that this work is done: we are called to “name” the world around us. We were created to discover the wonders of creation all around us, to explore it and know it in all its beauty and complexity.

The word “keep” in Genesis 2:15 means a loving, responsible attention to something entrusted to our care. This is the way human beings are to treat the creation around us. In some translations of this passage the word “serve” is used. We are created as God's servants in the care and keeping of God's creation. In the dominion given to us we are not given the freedom to abuse the creation or simply exploit it for our selfish purposes.

Just like Adam, each human being is given the work of “tilling and keeping” the garden. No, this does not mean we are all called to be farmers. Creation does not stop in the field: it is as high as the heavens and as deep as the seas. You reflect God's image when you discover a part of creation that you want to “till and keep” in your work. What in our world draws your

interest? What do you get excited or passionate about? It is likely that the “work” God has given you is found close by!

Think about why you think God made work a part of his good creation and write a couple of your thoughts below.

What is something that you get excited or passionate about?

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Week 2, Day 4: Creation—Living out God's Image

...the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." Genesis 2:18

You Are Not Alone

As you think over God's creation of the universe, notice that God was not all work. God's spent six "days" creating, but then on the seventh day, God rested. We are told that God "blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (Genesis 2:4). Blessing and hallowing sound like serious "religious" acts, don't they? But have you ever stopped to think what they may mean. What was God doing as he blessed and hallowed? I believe that God was taking the time to enjoy and love his new creation. I think God was having fun (the book of Job tells us that he created Leviathan, the sea monster, "to sport with").

God loves to behold and care for the creation. He created humankind to behold and care for it, too. This is our work. But that is not the only thing we were created for. We were also created to love. We were created for relationship—to hold before our eyes another person and see the glory of God reflected in their face. To be created in God's image means to be the "face" of the love and mystery of God for others. God knew that it wasn't good for *Adam* to be alone. So God created a partner and helper that was a good fit for Adam. This story also illustrates that men and women were created for mutual love and helping relationship.

Human beings are relational, loving creatures. We are meant to discover purpose and meaning through right relationships with other people, with the creation itself, and, finally, with the God who created us. We are called to know God personally. From the very beginning the Bible presents God as speaking to

human beings. God is personal and wants us to know him. We are created for a personal, loving *walk* with God (cf. Genesis 3:8).

List below some things in creation that you enjoy or love.

How do you think another person can show us the "face" of God? Who has been a person in your life who has helped you to know God better?

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Week 2, Day 5: Creation—Living out God's Image

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat..." (Genesis 2: 15-17)

Created for *Human* Living

God creates us and provides us a home in a prepared place within creation. Our position within creation gives us enormous power for good or evil. And so it comes as no surprise, if you think about it, that God puts before humankind a reminder of both our power and our limits as creatures of God: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sometimes people think that God placed the tree there as a perverse trick to try and trip up Adam and Eve. Christians and Jews have read this story as God's way of giving a visible reminder that we are called to live out our lives in the image of God in humility before God, with proper limits to the use of our decision-making. To practice obeying God by not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would have meant practicing living under the loving guidance and order of God: a way of practicing caring and keeping within God-established limits. *Human* living means accepting to live under God's limits, within God's wise order, and refusing to live as if we were gods.

Discovering a Pattern for Life

So, we are set in the middle of God's good creation. We are created to reflect the creative goodness of God. We don't create from nothing, but we discover our good work as we explore the creation and bring the materials and elements of the creation into new and dynamic combinations and relationships. Our relationships themselves can take on God's patterns

and so reflect the glory of God. What relationships in your life need God's ordering care?

Do you think that it is important for human beings to understand their limits? Share a little what you think about this. What do you think happens when humans don't recognize their limits?

Where do you see the need for God's ordering care in the world around you? Name one situation or person that needs God's ordering care and spend a few minutes praying for that situation or person.