

Bible Passages

- Genesis 1:11-23
- Genesis 2:4b – 3:24

Background

The writings of Genesis were recorded in the desert, after the people had just escaped from bondage in Egypt for hundreds of years.

A people in bondage would have been surrounded by the prevailing Egyptian culture and creation myths of the day. The Genesis accounts of creation are in stark contrast to the Egyptian creation stories. A few notable details of the Egyptian myth:

- In the beginning was a chaos of bubbling water.
- The Sun and Moon were gods of light and darkness battling one another.
- Humanity comes as an accident, the tears shed from a god.

These stark contrasts with the Genesis story help us understand the significance the Bible account gives to the nature of God, creation, and humanity.

Definitions

Genesis

The first word of the Bible in Hebrew is also the title of the book: bereshith literally means "in [the] beginning". In Greek the word Genesis is geneseos and means "birth," "genealogy," or "history of origin."

Adam

The Hebrew word for "man" is adam, and it sounds like the word for "ground", which is admah.

Eve

The Hebrew word for "woman" is eve. Thus, in this account "Adam" and "Eve" literally could be translated "Man" and "Woman".

Gardening Stories

A Look at the Creation Stories in Genesis

Introduction

The increasing number of programmes dedicated to gardening on television and the ringing tills at garden centres are signs of the growing interest in gardening. There is growing interest in learning how to grow and nurture flowers and vegetables through the seasons and redesign gardens – it is as if we are becoming a nation of Green Thumbs!

Warming Up

Share stories or dreams about planning a garden or part of a garden from scratch. Discuss experiences of planning the garden, doing the work, the feelings that people have as the garden takes shape and when it is finished. Consider what is necessary to keep the garden in good order.

Looking at the First Creation Story

There are two different stories of creation given in the opening chapters of Genesis. We might understand these as planning a garden on a planetary scale! In the same ways as two biographies of the same person can complement each other and give us a greater insight into the person, so these two stories of creation reflect complementary pictures of God the Creator. Through the accounts we can discern pictures of our relationship to both God and creation.

The first account, which describes the six days of creation, is laid out like a responsive reading that might be used in church. **Read Genesis 1:11-23.** Imagine this passage read in worship with the congregation replying with the refrain: *And God saw that it was good. Evening and morning came the ___ day.*

For Discussion

- This refrain tells us about how God looks at creation. What does it tell us about God's character? about God's intent? about God's nature?
- What are the implications this refrain has for those who use the garden?
- What insight does this give us to the relationship between God and God's people?

Looking at the Second Creation Story

If the first gardening story is laid out like a responsive reading in worship, the second version reads more like a story. The whole story runs from Genesis 2:4b to 3:24 and includes both the account of creation and the fall. We are going to concentrate on the account of creation. Read Genesis 2:4b - Genesis 2:25.

For Discussion

- Are there any similarities with the gardening stories that your group shared in the warming up discussion?
- What does the story say about God?
- What does the story say about creation?
- What does the story say about our relationship to God and responsibility for creation?

Challenge

Church buildings are often designed so that people know they are a place where God is worshipped. Steeples, towers and crosses all act as symbols of a gathered church. If you have a patch of land, however small, outside your church, brainstorm how your church patch might be redesigned to witness to the glory of God the creator and express the sense of care that God's people are called to exercise with the environment.

