

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Eden | Genesis 2:7-10, 15 Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: to understand how the presence of God answers our deepest longings and how practicing the presence of God can change our life.

Sermon Refresher: The story of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2 explains better than anything else the deep longings that we all have as his human image bearers. We were created to live in the presence of God and to find our life's deepest meaning from living in his presence. Consciously practicing God's presence brings life-giving perspective and peace into our lives.

Icebreaker: What is everyone doing for Thanksgiving?

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 2:7-10a, 15 out loud together. This is the beginning of the story ...

Genesis 2:7-10a, 15

⁷Then 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. ⁸Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.

⁹The 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. ¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden ... ¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

2. What would it have been like to live in the Garden of Eden? What sticks out to you?
3. Now read Revelation 22:1-5 out loud together. This is the end of the story ...

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the

light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

4. Compare and contrast the Garden of Eden with the New City of God. How is the City like the Garden? How is it better than the Garden?
5. But for now, we are living in a Genesis 3 broken, fallen world. We don't belong here; this is not the way it is supposed to be. The Garden/City is the place we were meant for. Only in the future City of God (a restored and better Garden) will our deepest longings and desires be fulfilled. What are some longings and desires that you see in your own life that will only be fully fulfilled in the New City?
6. The most important thing about the Garden and the City was the uninterrupted experience of the presence of God. We can't fully experience it yet, but there are ways that God has given us to really experience his presence even now. What things do you do to remind yourself of the presence of God?
7. If you looked at the following situations through the lens of the presence of God, how would it change the way you tend to view them?
 - 1) A lingering sickness
 - 2) Too much to get done
 - 3) A beautiful sunset
 - 4) The annoying interruption of a child
 - 5) A persistent worry
 - 6) Feeling lonely
 - 7) An encouraging conversation

Sharing and Prayer:

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 out loud together.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

This passage shows us that there is a connection between our sense of joy and our sense of connection to God (prayer) and giving thanks in our circumstances. Stopping to give thanks to God is a great way to practice his presence and thus bring his perspective and peace to bear in our lives.

Have each person share two things they can be thankful for: one good thing and one hard thing. Go around in a circle and let each person pray saying thanks to God for both the good things and the hard things.