CORNERSTONE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A Gospel Shaped Identity
Cornerstone Life Group Study

This week we are reflecting on having 'a gospel shaped identity' and where better to start than Genesis when talking about identity.

Read: Genesis 1:26-28

- List as many of the characteristics of God as you can come up with.
- Which of these characteristics do we share?
- What did God mean when he commissioned mankind to "Be fruitful and increase in number, go and fill the earth and subdue it and rule together."

Unfortunately, the perfection in the garden of Eden was to be short lived, soon after they were created the man and woman chose to ignore God's command not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They doubted the goodness and sovereignty of God and their relationship with God and one another was broken.

Read: Genesis 3:11-19

- What were the consequences of the fall?
- How do we still experience these consequences today?

Read: Quote from Carolyn Custis James, Half the Church

Whatever we lost in Eden we find again in Jesus. Whatever God meant by "fruitful and multiply" and "rule and subdue," Jesus fulfills. As God's perfect image bearer, Jesus recaptures God's original vision for us by embodying true image-bearer living. And Jesus didn't do this in the pristine, sin-free garden our first parents inhabited, but in the fallen ruins of the world we occupy.   We will never grasp the richness of what it means to be fruitful and multiply or to rule and subdue in isolation from him.

Jesus—who never married or had physical children of his own and who surprisingly endorses singleness (as did the apostle Paul), not simply as an unfortunate consequence of a fallen world but as a kingdom strategy.

Jesus—who is King of kings and Lord of all, yet whose ruling and subduing take on a shockingly unfamiliar form from what we typically observe in people who occupy positions of power and privilege over others.   Jesus—who when asked what is the greatest commandment, didn't answer "be fruitful and multiply … rule and subdue," but " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength,' " adding, "The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these" (Mark 12:30 – 31).

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Somehow, all of these elements inform and shape the mission God gave us in the beginning.

- What does it mean to live as an image-bearer of God?
- How does the gospel shape our understanding of the fall?
- How does the gospel shape our understanding of our original mandate given to us by God in Genesis 1 and 2, and the restoration of our broken relationship with God because of Jesus?

Read: **Genesis 2:18-25**

The phrase 'suitable helper' comes from a combination of the words *ezer* and *kenegdo*.

The term 'ezer' or helper is used elsewhere in scripture to describe God as Israel's helper and shield. It used 21 times in the Old Testament. Twice in reference to the first woman, three times in reference to nations to whom Israel appealed for military support, and sixteen times in reference to God as the helper of Israel. Ezer doesn't mean or imply subordination or inferiority, rather it comes from the root word meaning strength and power. The word 'kenegdo' means 'corresponding to', 'equal counterpart', and 'similar to'.

Ezer kenegdo paints a marvellous picture of God's plan for the woman, his intention was that she would be a strong ally and perfect match for Adam.

- How was her identity distorted in the fall?
- How did Jesus restore her identity by his work on the cross?

Read: **Luke 11:27-29**

- Who does the gospel call us to be?

Final thought: **Quote from Carolyn Custis James, Half the Church**

The community of God's people should be the epicenter of human flourishing—where men and women are encouraged and supported in their efforts to develop and use the gifts God has given them wherever he stations them in his world. The church of Jesus Christ should be such a dazzling showpiece of female and male flourishing that the world will take notice.

Notes: