

GLENKIRK CHURCH

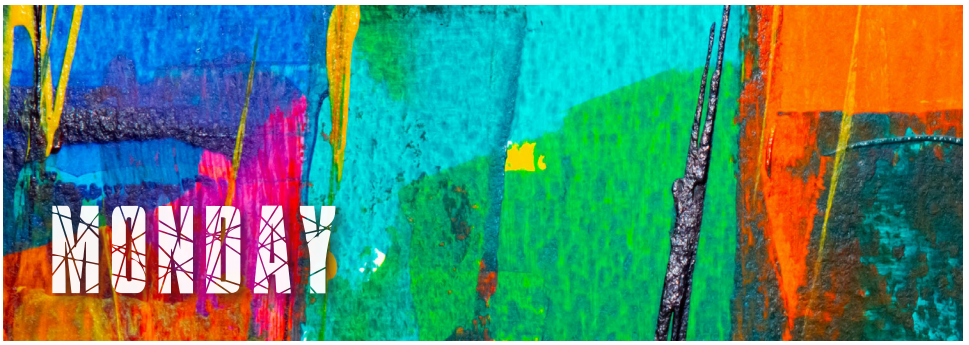


WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

DEVO

APRIL 1 - 5, 2024





Read **Genesis 1:26-27; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

“Let Us make [humankind] in our image, after Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26, emphasis added). God Himself is relational; He created us for community. God’s own triunity reveals community: the communion of Father, Word of God, and Holy Spirit throughout eternity. Genesis hints at God’s triunity at its outset: “*In the beginning, God created ...*” (Genesis 1:1)—the Hebrew used word for God, Elohim, is a plural form of a singular noun.

John’s statement, “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8), makes sense because love is relational. This truth is nonsense among religions whose “god” is monotheistic while nontrinitarian, including the cults (who reject Christ’s deity) and Islam (“Allah,” knowing neither the Son nor Holy Spirit). Christianity celebrates that the Creator loves humans, uniquely created “*in His image*” (Genesis 1:27). God’s love is so great that “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14), sacrificing Himself to reconcile believers with Yahweh.

Though our relationship with God is personal, we share responsibility for social justice and the Church’s faithfulness, the communities of which we’re a part. Godly Daniel understood communal responsibility, praying “*we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled ...*” (Daniel 9:5, emphasis added). Upon descending Mt. Sinai

with the Law and finding the people reveling before the golden calf, Moses interceded with God: “If [You will] not [forgive the people], please blot me out of Your book [of life]” (Exodus 32:32).

The theme of the current teaching series is loneliness, a hazard of contemporary life despite increasing technological connectivity. Jesus understands loneliness, having experienced it. At Calvary, He was abandoned by all of his disciples except John, Mary Magdalene, Mary wife of Clopas, His mother, and His aunt (John 19:25). Upon receiving the fullness of God’s wrath on the cross—the Father turning away in judgment—the Savior appealed, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34).

Do you ever battle loneliness? You are not alone—God is with you and you have an available Christian community of brothers and sisters. And when you “act justly, ... love mercy and ... walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8), you reveal Jesus—the “Friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 12:4)—to others.

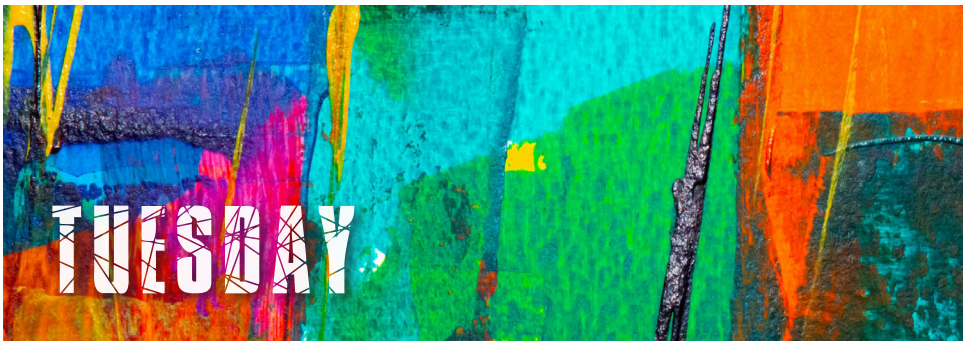
QUESTIONS

What does God’s own triune nature indicate regarding community? Why does the Apostle John’s statement, “God is love” (1 John 4:8), make sense only in a Christian context? How did Jesus know and address loneliness?

PRAYER

Zoe International

Pray for Zoe team members who need God’s supernatural leading and timing as they venture out to find children who are waiting to be rescued from traffickers.



Read **Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 4:1-11; John 8:44**

“All ... good lies have an element of truth to them.” (John Davis) New Age philosophy and some cults twist “*God created humans in His own image*” (Genesis 1:26) into maintaining that we’re all divine or at least have that potential. New Agers even claim “the Christ nature within me” as a nod toward Christianity, corrupting true biblical application. One cult misapplies God’s imagery in us by holding that mere men faithfully following the way of that faith can become “gods” of their own solar systems, even suggesting that God Himself is a fully self-actualized former human.

Such misguidedness is nothing new: Satan—unable to create, able only to counterfeit, distort and corrupt—is a master at using misapplied truth or part-truths to deceive. He did so with Adam and Eve, promising them that upon eating the forbidden fruit, “*You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:4). The enemy conveniently omitted that their rebellion would cause immediate spiritual demise and prompt a curse causing creation’s fall and the eventual physical death of virtually all.

Amidst Jesus’ 40-day wilderness experience, Satan came to tempt Him. The devil misapplied Scripture to entice the Messiah, but was

fighting out of his weight class. The Lord countered with Scripture properly applied, refuting Satan’s deceptions and driving the overmatched enemy away.

A favorite lie that the devil promotes: “All religions are essentially the same (thus, ‘there are many paths to God and heaven’).” There is some truth to the first part of this claim regarding moral behavior. However, it is wholly mistaken regarding reconciliation with God—Christianity alone recognizes that the Almighty Himself paid the price for our redemption in God the Son’s atoning sacrifice.

Bank tellers and cashiers are trained to know what legitimate currency looks like, the best means for enabling detection of counterfeits. This provides one illustration as to why we should read and know the Bible: only by knowing the Truth can you distinguish it from deception. Know Jesus, know Truth; no Jesus, no truth.

QUESTIONS

How does the enemy use lies and half-truths to ensnare people? How do you respond to those claiming, “All religions are essentially the same (thus, ‘there are many paths to God and heaven’)”? How well do you know the Bible?

PRAYER

Zoe International

Pray for protection and strength for Zoe staff members who face constant opposition and danger from human traffickers and their billion-dollar industry.



Read **Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Mark 12:28-31**

People naturally ponder life's meaning, wondering why we are here. Existentialists assert life's pointlessness apart from human-created meaning. Ancient mythologies portray life as the interplay among their "gods," jockeying for supremacy while delighting in manipulating earthly circumstances. Eastern systems emphasize becoming so "pure" and disaffected that nothing earthly matters, enabling one's eternal melding into the universe. Other religions stress appeasing their "gods" via merit, thereby gaining divine favor and "paradise."

Only the biblical God loves His creation and humankind, taking the initiative in establishing personal relationship and potential reconciliation. Judaism, however, defaults ultimately to performance-based "love" whereas Christianity alone recognizes the triune, living God who loves unconditionally.

Yahweh "*created [humankind] in His own image*" (Genesis 1:27). Why? God—eternally perfect and relationally fulfilled in His triunity—was not "lonely." But God's lovingkindness so abounds that He delighted in sharing it. The most generous, loving thing God can do is share Himself. Perfection allows something other than Itself to exist.

"Being made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), human beings have the ability to know God and therefore love Him, worship

Him, serve Him and fellowship with Him. God did not create human beings because He needed them. ... He needs nothing; [God is] ... not looking for a ‘friend.’ He loves us, but this is [different than] needing us. If we had never existed, God would still be God—the unchanging One (Malachi 3:6).” (GotQuestions.org)

Perhaps the following helps you with the ultimate “Why?” question. We were “*created for His glory*” (Isaiah 43:7) ... “*that [we] might declare [God’s] praise*” (Isaiah 43:21). Humankind was “[to] have dominion over ... [all animals] and over all the earth.” (Genesis 1:26). Those ultimately reconciled to God in Christ and regenerated by the Spirit are “*called into the fellowship of [God’s] Son*” (1 Corinthians 1:9), “*created ... for good works*” (Ephesians 1:26), “*not to be served but to serve*” (Mark 10:45). And when we “*present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice*” (Romans 12:1), we act as Jesus Himself did at Calvary. Why are we here? “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

QUESTIONS

How does the true and living God differ from the “gods” of non-Christian faiths? Why do you believe God “created [humankind] in His own image” (Genesis 1:27)? What does it mean “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever”? (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

PRAYER

Zoe International

Pray for protection and strength for Zoe staff members who face constant opposition and danger from human traffickers and their billion-dollar industry.



Read **Genesis 1:26-31; Psalm 8**

“Let [humankind] have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Genesis 1:26b). Yesterday we touched upon why God created us. Today consider an original responsibility God gave to humankind: caring for the earth and its resources.

The various animals in God’s creation have a few obvious purposes vis-à-vis humankind: like many plants, they are food sources; many (horses, oxen, donkeys, etc.) help with work; they can entertain us; and animals help manage and sustain God’s created environment and ecosystem. Given this week’s “community” theme, however, consider another key role animals play in the human condition: companionship. Those with a house pet, assistance dog, or service dog, or those who love horses or other animals appreciate this. A neighbor once said, “I prefer animal to human company.” I thought to myself silently, knowing them well, “Sadly, that’s probably true (given your personality).”

Radical environmentalist Christians may amplify Genesis 1:26b in justifying their extreme views. Unbelieving naturalists or pantheists sometimes deify creation, revering “Mother Earth” and/or using expressions like “The universe is telling you that ...” However, these

overlook that Yahweh is the Creator and humans alone (not amur leopards or other endangered species) were made in His image.

I've heard some Christians go to the other extreme, flatly dismissing environmental concerns and/or ethical treatment of animals with a "Humans are the pinnacle of creation and this will all burn up one day anyway" attitude. They discount that God placed Adam "*in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it*" (Genesis 2:15), and it's God's re-creative melding of the universe and heaven which reveals the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22.

God called humankind to steward His creation—nothing He's provided is truly ours. "*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it*" (Psalm 24:1). This is true of all that He blesses us with: time, income, abilities, intellect, circumstances, living things and the environment, even our relationships and families. Steward these faithfully, honoring their Provider.

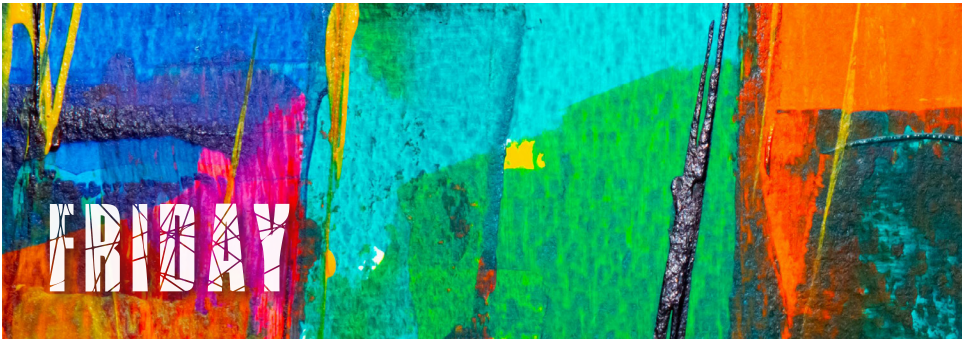
QUESTIONS

What is the original responsibility God gave to humankind? What are two extreme ways in which some misapply Genesis 1:26b? What does "God called humankind to steward His creation" mean?

PRAYER

Zoe International

Pray for unity and cooperation as Zoe staff work alongside government entities, law enforcement, and other organizations to find and rescue children who've been sold for sex and other forms of slavery.



Read **Genesis 1:27; Genesis 3:6-13, 21; Isaiah 26:7-9**

There is profound meaning in God’s having created humans “*male and female*” (Genesis 1:27). Men and women are equally, gloriously fashioned “*in the image of God*” (v. 27). This also reinforces that every one of us—at least in some fashion—is “incomplete” on our own.

“The ‘*image of God*’ refers to ... [what] sets human beings apart from ... [other creatures, enabling communion] with [God]. It is a likeness mentally, morally, and socially. ... [We were] created ... [able to] reason and choose, ... [originally] in righteousness and perfect innocence, a reflection of God’s holiness. ... Our conscience ... is a [remnant] of that original state. ... [We were] created for fellowship, ... [reflecting] God’s triune nature and His love.” (GotQuestions.org)

Our eternal God, being relational, created us also for fellowship. This accounts for our inclination to seek and worship the transcendent and immortal, along with our preoccupation with “What comes after death?” God built into us a desire for Him, though sin has distorted this. Spiritually, we are vulnerable and lost apart from God and the salvation and meaningfulness knowable only via a saving relationship with Christ.

We were made for community. Our personal and individual “incompleteness” shows up in our need for others, for relationships and for belongingness. Upon sinning, like Adam and Eve, we’re inclined to isolate ourselves out of guilt and shame. This is the worst course to follow—it pushes God away while separating us from His people, making us targets for Satan. This is a time for repentant and restorative prayer, for seeking the God who knows us and designed us for loving communion.

“Today, we still bear the image of God (James 3:9), but we also bear the scars of sin mentally, morally, socially, and physically ... The good news is that when God redeems ... He begins to restore [His] original image [in us ... In] Christ, we are made new creations in the likeness of God (2 Corinthians 5:17).” (GotQuestions.org)
You will sin; don’t let it drive you away from our loving God or fellow believers. Seek your completeness in Him and share it with others.

QUESTIONS

How does God’s having created humans “*male and female*” reinforce our individual “incompleteness”? What are some ways we were created “*in the image of God*”? What is the worst, least helpful course to follow upon sinning?

PRAYER

Zoe International

Pray for provision of the financial resources Zoe needs to continue its efforts in prevention, rescue, and restoration of these children, all in the name of Jesus, our compassionate Savior.



Sources

- John Davis' quote is from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1277844-just-remember-all-the-good-lies-have-an-element-of>.
- GotQuestions.org's quotes are from <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-did-God-create-us.html> and <https://www.gotquestions.org/image-of-God.html>
- The Westminster Shorter Catechism quote is from <https://thewestminsterstandard.org/westminster-shorter-catechism/>.

These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.

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