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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
 Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a “transforming church”. We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Since “Talking Points, Walking Points” is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to “dive deep” too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled “Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time”, are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why?**
- Read Matthew 22:15–22. The Pharisees sought to entrap Jesus: if he said "*No, don't pay taxes.*" he'd be in trouble with the Romans. If he said, "*Yes, do pay taxes,*" he'd lose favor with the oppressed Jews. But notice that Jesus segued away from the trivial issue of taxes to a much more profound issue (v. 21b). Since coins bear Caesar's image, they belong to him. But since people bear God's image, we belong to him. So, **exactly what** are we to "render to God"? What should that look like in our lives?
- **God is independent, we are dependent.** Look up both words at dictionary.com. What do you learn?
 What are some **evidences** that you **actually** believe that you are dependent on God? ...on others?
 In what ways do you still find yourself living **as if** you actually have the right to make your own decisions?
- **God is perfect, we are imperfect.** Look up both words at dictionary.com. What do you learn?
 What are some **evidences** that you **actually** believe that you are flawed, and in need of growth?
 How often do you admit your failings to others? Tell about a recent occasion when you asked for forgiveness.
- **God is eternal, we are mortal.** Look up both words at dictionary.com. What do you learn?
 What are some **evidences** that you **actually** believe that your days are finite and numbered?
 In what ways do you find yourself living **as if** you will **not** have to give an account of your life to God?

Sermon Summary

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Here, in the opening line of the Bible, we have God creating everything. This is the most fundamental truth which exists: there is a God who predates everything else, who is not part of creation, who is distinct from everything else...and then there is everything else. On the most fundamental level, reality is binary: there is God and there is non-God. There is God and there is everything else. Or, as the Bible says, there is God and there is creation. Reality is binary. But things haven’t always been that way. Before God created the universe, there was just God. Forever, eternally, uncreated, without beginning or end, there was—or, more correctly—there is, God. That is why God’s name, Yahweh, when translated, means “I AM”. God is, always has been, and always will be. But the eternal un-created God decided to create, and ever since then reality has been binary: God and non-God. God and creation.

But then, even within creation, there are binaries. God created physical, non-living structures—land, water, and sky—and then he created living things to inhabit and populate those physical spaces. Again, all of creation is binary. And within those living creatures, God created a further binary. God created two categories of living things: human beings and everything else. This is a binary: humans and non-humans. Just two categories. A binary. Genesis chapter 1 repeats the word “let” 15 times. All of creation was dark, shapeless and empty, and then in v. 3, God said “Let there be light” and there was light. Now there’s a binary: dark and light. Verses 4-5 continues this way: “God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night.” Another binary: night and day.

Genesis opened with the most important, most fundamental binary: God and non-God. The second most important binary: people vs. everything else. Humans are utterly different from every other created thing: we’re “made in the image and likeness of God”. Genesis 1:27 says that God created “man...him... male and female God created them”. Do you notice the binary—one very special creation, people, come in two—and only two—categories: male and female. Together males and females compose mankind. And mankind is “in the image and likeness” of God. What does that mean? What doesn’t it mean? And how does “imaging God” inform our thoughts, desires and actions?

In Genesis 3:1-7 we encounter a confusing situation: the devil tempted Eve to try and be “like God”. What’s going on here? Weren’t they created in the “likeness” of God? Yet here they are being tempted to become like God—through sinning against God! What’s going on here? It’s that binary thing again. Satan was tempting Eve to try to cross the binary and try to become something she never could be. Although Eve was the pinnacle of God’s creation—distinct from all the other “non-God”, created things, she and Adam still were in the “other” category: “not god”.

Eve was deceived into trying to reject her God-given creature-ly limits, and to desire to be like God in a realm reserved only for God. This is the confusing thing about imaging God: on the one hand, it is what we were created for. But the ultimate binary is “God vs. everything else”—and we are part of the “everything else”. Adam and Eve attempted to reject that binary and become something that was off-limits to them. As a result, instead of elevating themselves to godlike status, they became mangled human beings. Now we all are mangled human beings; they passed their condition onto us. Welcome to the human condition: still the pinnacle of God’s creation, but bent and injured. Still “made in the image of God”, but that image has dimmed. And yet God still intends to use us as his image-bearers. How are we to understand this, and how is it now to be achieved? What are some of the things which are “off limits” to us? In this “God vs. everything else” binary, where is the boundary we must not crave to cross? What are some attributes to which we must not aspire?

1. God alone is independent. Only God is “Lord”. But Adam and Eve wished to be boss. God put them in a delightful situation, but Adam and Eve craved more. The consequences have been catastrophic. God is a category of one. One self-sufficient, self-existing being vs. billions of dependent

beings. We owe our existence to God; there's no such thing as a "self-made man" or woman. (Of course, God isn't "God-made"—God is unmade!) God is the uncreated Creator of all. God, by his very nature, has life within himself. God simply "is". On the other side of the binary, everyone of us "wasn't" until God made us, giving us life. God's life will never end. Our life is temporary and dependent. We have it as long as God gives it to us—and no longer. Adam and Eve crossed a boundary—and it cost them their lives. Since then, every human being has been mortal. We all die. But it wasn't supposed to be that way. Adam and Eve sought to live independently from God, to not be under his Lordship, but it didn't work. It couldn't work, because God is categorically unique. Adam and Eve were free to try to live independent of God but they weren't free to escape the consequences of their choice. So, humans are made "in the image of God", but attempting to be God is the essence of evil.

2. God alone is perfect. A "perfect" being is incapable of improvement. God—and God alone—is perfect. He cannot advance, develop, increase, progress or upgrade. A "perfect" being is incapable of decline. God alone is perfect. He cannot decrease, deteriorate, diminish, regress or die. We are not perfect. We all decline, deteriorate, diminish and die. We all need improvement, advancement, and development. God doesn't. Adam and Eve were not content with their human limitations. Are you? Are you content with the limitations God has placed on you? If you lust after perfection, as Adam and Eve did, you won't escape the consequences of that choice. Yes, you are made "in the image of God", but attempting to be perfect, like God, is the essence of evil.

3. God alone is eternal. God's name is "I AM"— not "I was" or "I will be". His name is "I AM". This is not bad grammar; it is good theology. God always is. The Bible compares humans to temporary fog and to wilting flowers. God alone is eternal. He never began; he never ends. Humans have a beginning and an end. In between our beginning and our end, we change. To aspire to be like God in his eternity is the essence of sin. Do you resent the fact that you age? Do you resent increasing wrinkles and decreasing abilities? Do you refuse to contemplate the fact that you will die? Are you expending inordinate sums of money, energy, focus, and time on delaying physical and mental decline? Are you aging gracefully—or are you clawing desperately away from the precipice of aging, of wrinkles, of frailty—of the grave? If so, you are aspiring to be eternal, like God. And that is the essence of sin.

But, when Adam and Eve sinned, our gracious God made a way. If you're hearing these things and feeling the guilt of trying to be God he's made a way for you, too. If you are a believer, then God is your dwelling place and you have the God-given ability to live your short earthly life in a way that will have eternal impact (Psalm 90:1-6, 12 & 17). The earthly portion of our lives is only a vapor which burns off by noontime. But keeping within our own creaturely domain and living according to the limitations God has placed on us, is the pathway to permanence.



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Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any topic.
Let's use it to explore the roots of human pride to "be like God"...*

Monday—Read about Satan's fall into sin in Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:14–15.

Tuesday— Read about Adam and Eve's fall into sin in Genesis 3:1-24.

Wednesday— Read about the danger of pride in Proverbs 11:2; 16:18; 21:24 and 29:23.

Thursday— Read about pride which almost prevented a healing in 2 Kings 5:1-14.

Friday— Read about pride which brought down a great king in Daniel 4:1-33.

Saturday— Read about repentance which restored him to sanity in Daniel 4:34-37.

Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]