

Week 2 Participant: The Gardens of God

Session 2: Week of March 16, 2025

The Garden of Betrayal – *Genesis 3:1-6*

Brewster Baptist Church

Introduction to the Gardens of God Week 2

The Bible is rich with imagery and symbolism, and gardens play a significant role in its narrative, reflecting themes of creation, love, betrayal, and redemption. Last week, we discussed the most iconic and well-known garden in the Bible, the Garden of Eden. *Genesis 1* tells us that in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth and everything that exists in all the universe, it was “very good” (*Genesis 1:31*); it was perfect. There were no flaws in the original creation, and everything lived together in perfect harmony and peace — what the Hebrews called “Shalom.” But as Pastor Nate shared in his sermon on Sunday, something radically altered that reality. Human beings, God’s privileged creation, made in His own image and likeness, betrayed God by desiring more — when they already had everything they could ever need. The world was good, God *is* good, and thus, humanity never experienced a reality void of His presence and divine goodness.

The account of the serpent deceiving Adam and Eve is one of humanity calling into question whether God had provided them enough. The serpent helped convince Eve that humanity was ***lacking*** something, something that God had intentionally withheld from creation’s design. And, like many of us, Adam and Eve fell into the trap of believing that lacking something must mean we don’t have enough. In this case, what they believed they were lacking was “the knowledge of good and evil” (*Genesis 3:5*) — the ability to see a world *with* God in it, and the ability to see one *without* Him. The tragic consequences of this decision will be fleshed out more next week, but suffice it to say now, we live in a broken world as a result of wanting more, and by not resting in the goodness of God. We seek abundance often at the expense of others, leading us down a road of violence, economic exploitation, and environmental disaster. God designed us

possessing everything we could ever need. We need a Savior to make right the choice we've made, to not let God's will be done, but ours.

Genesis 3:1-6 (NIV)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Questions:

1. What was your immediate reaction to the story of Alex and his father in Pastor Nate's sermon? Do you agree this is a good illustration representing God's character? Why or why not?
2. How does the voice of God saying to you, "I'm confused, because I don't know what I haven't already done for you" resonate? What emotions are generated as you reflect on this message and the state of your sin?
3. Walter Brueggemann says, "The destiny of the human creation is to live in God's world, with God's other creatures, on God's own terms." Do you agree with the premise that humanity has too often tried to experience life on its own terms, instead of God's? What impact do you think this has?
4. Pastor Nate laid out the "natural harmony of creation" before the Fall: God □ Humans □ Rest of Creation. What do you think living in harmony with this order looks like in practice? What sorts of choices or behaviors does it include? Which choices and behaviors does it not?

5. Pastor Nate claims, "The knowledge of good and evil is not the difference between right and wrong, but the difference between experiencing life with God and experiencing life without Him." Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

6. In what ways do you think you are guilty of saying to God, "My will be done, not yours"?

7. When you hear the phrase "resting in the goodness of God," what do you envision? How well do you think you practice being content with the abundance of what God has given you?

Praying for Each Other

Are there any joys to celebrate, any burdens we can share?

Closing Prayer