



# Sermon Growth Guide

**August 13, 2023**

**Home**

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**Lead Me Home - Home**

**Genesis 2:4-17**

**Key Verse:** Genesis 2:15

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

**Big Idea:** God made a home for you because He loves you.



## Foundations

Home is a big concept, bigger than you first think. What does it mean to be at home? What is home? We all need that place where we truly belong, where we can never be rejected or put out, where we are truly ourselves. At home. We long for it but we don't find it. This is a universal human condition.

We all feel it. C. S. Lewis said when we feel not at home in this world, it is only evidence that we were made for the next. Blaise Pascal said there is a “God-shaped vacuum in the heart” we try to fill but can only be filled with God. St. Augustine, in his autobiography called *Confessions*, wrote, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.”

In our new series, **Lead Me Home**, we will be looking at the story of humanity being given a home, being removed from that home, and the process of restoration to be home together forever, with the Lord, with one another in Christ.

As you circle up this week, give thanks for your Life Group! Give thanks that you do not walk alone. Thank God that right before you is a kind of home, a gift.

Begin your time together in prayer, asking God's Spirit to guide and guard this hour.

## Understanding God's Word

Together, read Genesis 2:4-17.

According to verse 7, God uses dust and what other ingredient to give life to the man?

What do you notice in this passage about creation?

Best guess, why did God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden?

## Applying God's Word

God made a home for you because He loves you.

Do you believe this? What piece of creation helps you believe this at your heart level? How can you become even more convinced of God's goodness in the created world?

## Witnessing God's Word

Pastor Tim preaches: “How do you reach a lost world with the good news of Jesus? How do you communicate the hope and joy of the life of Christ with a world that resents Christianity and hates the church? Find common ground. Start conversations around shared experiences of life.” Who can you become a better friend to this fall for the sake of the gospel? How exactly will you be a better friend to this person?

Well, it is so good to be back. We missed you. Abigail and I are truly restored by travel. As she says, “A change of pace, a change of place, and you have a change in perspective.” We traveled a lot. We could share stories of meals, tables where we sat, people we met, dances, goats, beds, showers (hot and cold), and we love all of that, truly. But along the way also we worshipped in churches ranging from Westminster Abbey, to field gatherings in Kenya, to churches here in town. It is encouraging to see the Body of Christ so diverse, so beautiful and so strong. Each time we were encouraged by Christ-centered, biblical worship, but we were also, every time, wishing we could get home to First Pres. I love how we worship the Lord here. I love how our services honor God. It is good to be home.

Home is a big concept, bigger than you first think. What does it mean to be at home? What is home? We all need that place where we truly belong, where we can never be rejected or put out, where we are truly ourselves. At home. We long for it but we don't find it. This is a universal human condition. Karl Marx called it alienation, being separated from meaning and purpose. Sigmund Freud defined it as *das Unheimliche* the uncanny, universal feeling of not-at-home-ness. Why don't I feel truly at home in this world? Albert Camus wrote of existential angst, an inescapable tension searching for relief. We all feel it. C. S. Lewis said when we feel not at home in this world, it is only evidence that we were made for the next. Blaise Pascal said there is a “God-shaped vacuum in the heart” we try to fill but can only be filled with God. St. Augustine, in his autobiography called *Confessions*, wrote, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.” We feel it. As Christians, we feel it. Which we will explain in time, but do you know what? Everybody feels it.

How do you reach a lost world with the good news of Jesus? How do you communicate the hope and joy of the life of Christ with a world that resents Christianity and hates the church? Find

common ground. Start conversations around shared experiences of life. We are all, every one of us, not yet at home. In this series, we are going to walk all the way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, every verse (obviously not!), the whole story under this theme of home. **Lead Me Home.** My hope is that along the way we find some new phrases, new questions, new conversation pieces to open dialogue with our kids, our grandkids, our neighbors and friends who have, it seems, dismissed God and turned from Jesus, and frankly can't understand why we are still getting up on Sundays and driving down to church. **Lead Me Home.** We all want to get home. A while back I was talking to a friend, a mentor, about some trouble I was having with a particular relationship (I know that doesn't happen to any of you) and he said, “Tim, just be as kind as you possibly can. You won't regret that. This may sound silly, but I saw a little cartoon today with Winnie the Pooh holding Piglet by the hand and it said, ‘At the end of the day we are all just trying to help one another get home.’” Lead me home. Lead me home, dear Lord.

The great story begins with creation. God made us a home and put us in it to be at home. When you ask people what they think about origins, and you should ask, they fall into three categories. See, everybody asks, How did we get here? What are we doing here? These are questions that have to be answered on some level for the human psyche to function. Everybody has an answer. Some say we spontaneously auto-generated by forces of chance. It's not new. It's as old as Aristotle actually. We just popped up. Others say there must be a great intelligence driving it, a divine principle within the universe. Stoics called it the Logos, the great rationality. People today refer loosely to ‘nature.’ Other religions call it other things, but it is at root either pantheism (all is divine and divine is all) or panentheism (the divine is within all things). The Bible says something different. God is the Creator God. God is separate from what



He has created. There is a great divide between the Creator and the creation, a great distinction. And the Creator God chooses freely to be in active relationship with what He has made. God made us.

Surveys tell us most everyone believes there is a god of some kind, but most everyone lives as though there is not. Get it? Most will say, "Yeah, there's a god out there," to the tune of 85-90%. But when it comes to morality, ethics, a way of life, the predominate attitude is to live as though we were autogen-erated accidentally. Materialistic Naturalism. Why? It is obvious. If God made us, we belong to our Maker. If God created us and the universe, God gets to decide how things work. God did decide how things work. And in our pursuit of ultimate freedom and autonomy, what sociologist Robert Bellah and philosopher Charles Taylor call "expressive individualism," where the greatest good and the highest value is the freedom to define ourselves however we choose and then demand that the world see us that way, well, that way of life just can't have a demanding and all-powerful Creator involved. Here's the point. The non-believer you are talking to thinks one way and acts another, believes one thing (there must be a god, there must be a higher power) but acts as though there is none. My hope is that we, who by grace and not by any merit of our own, we who have met Jesus and know Him and love Him, my hope is that we can help.

Genesis 2. "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." (Genesis 2:4) We were created. The Lord God made. Creation is told twice in Genesis. First it runs through seven days (which, maybe you know, are not best interpreted as 24-hour periods, particularly because the sun and moon weren't even around for the first three. The word *yom*, day, can mean era or period of time). But you get one creation account, then, in our passage, it zeroes in on the making of mankind.

What we read in Genesis 1, "So God

created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) we now get filled out in the expanded version. "Then 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." (Genesis 2:7) Understand, this is not yet Adam. The Hebrew is very clear on this. This is "the Man," *ha-adam*, the human, made of *ha-adamah*, the soil. The soil-human, the raw material pre-human. God made this human of the materials of the earth and breathed life into it, then put it to sleep and split it up (not one rib but the side) and made Adam and Eve, male and female, man and woman in perfect complementarity. So, what Adam says of Eve, Eve could equally say of Adam, "this is flesh of my flesh," and the foundation for family, for society, for procreation of the human species all rest on the immovable definition from God the Creator: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Jesus quoted that too.

But can you see how at home they are? First, they are at home in their own flesh. They were naked and unashamed. They were integrated beings. It can sound like God breathed a spirit into mud, and the spirit and the mud are two things. This is one of the earliest and most pervasive heresies. It used to be called Gnosticism, but it goes by a hundred names now, including expressive individualism. What is it? It is the lie that you and your physical body are somehow separate and distinct. "I am me, a spirit, trapped inside, or occupying a material body as an instrument." What you need to hear and understand is what was made by this process, what God made, out of the materials of earth and of His living Spirit and breath, is a third thing, a full human being, "a (singular) living being." In biblical terms, in God's eyes, a human being is body and soul, flesh and spirit, together. One thing. This is important because when you separate the two, then someone says, "Well, the real me is not expressed by this body I happen to be inhabiting," and a host of horrors follows. They were at home in

themselves body and soul, and with one another, and with God.

They were at home in the world. “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The 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.” (Genesis 2:8-9) The garden is a fitting place, suitable for life and flourishing. The trees are not only good but beautiful. They are good for food and beautiful to see. The rivers, representing life, flow to the four corners of the world in endless abundance. There is gold and aromatic resin, which is always nice, and onyx. And God said, “you are free!” “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden.’” (Genesis 2:16) Except one. We’ll come to that next week. But they were free and at home in the world.

They were at home with their purpose and meaning in life. Notice, God did not start the production, agriculture, up in verse five, because “there was no one to work the ground,” no human being yet. We are not some foreign element impinging upon a pure and untouched ‘nature.’ We are part of this system. Mankind is part of the created order, and we are supposed to have an impact on it. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15) This has huge implications you will have to talk about on your own as to how we view work, culture, and the environment. But they were at home. They had meaning. They had purpose. They were at home. What a gift.

It is home. As a kid, I had a wall in my bedroom wallpapered with a picture of earth from the moon. Our home. It is a gift. Sometimes we don’t feel at home. We were in Phoenix last weekend. It was 117 degrees! Sometimes we feel that we are not home yet, not fully at home. There is a reason for that and we will get into it next week. But God made us a home. When my kids were little, I had a little back and forth with them in the

car when they were strapped into the car seat in the back. I tried to do it for all four, although recently they said they didn’t remember it. Anyway, if we saw a sunset I would say, “Who made that sunset?” They would say, “God.” Then I’d ask, “Who did they make it for?” My kid would say, “For me.” “That’s right! And why did He make it so beautiful?” “Because He loves me.” Because He loves me. Creation is a gift. How do you respond to a gift? The proper response to any gift is gratitude and a commitment to care. Can you receive creation today as a gift? Every breath. Every bit of goodness and beauty. Can you give thanks? And can you commit to care? I want to give you a challenge this week in your conversations with those around you who may not believe. Try this. Just try this. Say, when it’s appropriate, “Didn’t our Creator make that beautiful?” See where that leads. Maybe nowhere. But maybe in a direction that helps.

The Lord God made the heavens and the earth. He made us at home. And He didn’t leave it behind, He didn’t just wind it up like a divine watchmaker and leave it to run its course. What does it say? “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:15-17) Jesus holds it all together. Jesus, who once was stretched out in four directions on the cross like the four rivers of Eden, died to give life. Jesus holds it all together. He presents it to us all, to you. Home.