

Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions

Nature as a Source of Health

Lesson #12 for March 19, 2011

Scriptures: Genesis 1:27-2:25; Genesis 3; Jeremiah 10:12,13; Psalms 19:1-7; Matthew 6:25-34; Psalm 104.

1. Adam and Eve were placed in a perfect environment after having received the perfect heredity (and free will). What more could they possibly have asked for? And yet, as we know, they ate fruit from that one tree which was forbidden. And before that, Satan sinned while living in heaven—in the very presence of God. (Revelation 12:1-3) As a result, we have come down to a world full of jealousy, hatred, bitterness, murder, lying, cheating, and every kind of perversion you can imagine. When we choose to sin, in effect, we are saying, “God, I think that right now, what I want to do is better than what You want me to do!”
2. Things deteriorated so rapidly that in a few generations, it was necessary for God to send the flood to prevent completely losing contact with the human race.
3. But despite all of that, much that is beautiful and good remains in our world—the birth of a baby, a beautiful sunrise, a perfect flower, majestic mountains, and the fact that in general, our needs are supplied by the produce of the earth should bring joy and gladness to our hearts. And it should stimulate a worshipful attitude in our souls. Those of us who care for pregnant women also get to see the beautiful babies that come forth. It is always a reason for celebration!
4. Violent earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and naturally-occurring fires notwithstanding, the natural world can teach us many things about God. Were these things part of God’s original plan? Is global warming part of God’s plan? (Genesis 8:22) Who sends all of these destructive forces? Do these things demonstrate the power of God? Jesus calmed the storm on Galilee. (Matthew 8:23-27)
5. Considering the very best of what we know on our earth today, try to imagine what the Garden of Eden was like. The temperature was always so perfect that they did not need houses or even clothing. There were constantly new things growing, budding, or sprouting to delight the eye and the mind.
6. In the last 150 years, civilized society around the world has experienced a massive migration from the rural areas—and their natural surroundings—into cities, where crime, injustice, crowded asphalt streets, and cement walls are a far cry from the Garden of Eden.
7. What aspects of living among nature or even visiting a national park remind you most directly of God?—the clear air, a beautiful sunset, massive mountains, etc.? Are there things that remind you of the Devil?—thorns, animals killing other animals, cancer, Alzheimer’s disease? What things in nature are most meaningful to you?
8. Nature has within it many healing properties. A great deal of emphasis has been placed recently on the benefits of vitamin D which is produced naturally in our skin when we are out in the sunshine.
9. Ellen White reminded us that the true remedies are “pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, and trust in divine power.” (See *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 127) Modern medical science has confirmed much of this list. Are we taking advantage of these things every day?

10. In what ways can we make our own homes more Eden-like? More plants? More sunlight? The natural, calming music of a waterfall, birds singing, etc.? Among conservative Christians a great deal of discussion has taken place on the subject of the original diet. It is quite clear that apart from mother's breast milk, it was a vegan diet. Fruits, nuts, and grains—foods which could be harvested without killing the plant making the food—were the foods provided by God in the Garden of Eden. After sin entered our world, human beings were allowed to eat the wild plants that grew in the field (vegetables?). (Genesis 3:18) Much later, after sin had terribly corrupted our world and God had to send the flood, Noah and his family were allowed to consume flesh meat. (Genesis 9:3,4) But, they were still forbidden to eat the blood or the fat. (Leviticus 3:16,17) As a result, the lifespan of human beings plummeted. God at some point spelled out that some animals were “clean” while others were “unclean” and not to be eaten. (Genesis 7:2,8; Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14.3-21) Why did God promise the children of Israel a land flowing with “milk” (cholesterol) and “honey” (sugar)? (Exodus 3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; 14:8; Deuteronomy 6:3; 11:9; 26:9,15; 27:3; 31:20; Joshua 5:6) Or, was “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8; *KJV*) a figure of speech to indicate a “rich and fertile land”? (Exodus 3:8; *GNB*) But, consider how much walking and physical labor they did!
11. Today, we see many things in nature which clearly were not there in the Garden of Eden: Animals killing and eating other animals, earthquakes, floods, fires, and epidemic diseases could never occur in the Garden of Eden. Almost immediately after sin entered, Adam and Eve felt the chill, the loss of their robes of light, and God provided them the skins of animals to clothe them. They had to deal with weeds and thorns, and they began to blame each other. Guilt, fear, pain, and other unpleasant emotions were part of the mix.
12. Apparently, pain entered the picture for the first time. Women were specifically told that they would have pain with childbirth. Adam and Eve mourned over the first dead leaf that dropped from a tree. And they themselves were subject to death as well. Before long, there was hatred, jealousy, selfishness, arrogance, and then, murder. Polygamy and idolatry followed shortly thereafter. The universe must have been stunned to see how quickly things deteriorated.
13. For a number of years now, science has been involved in an expensive project to try to discover the existence of life outside of our planet. (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence or SETI) Giant radio telescopes are listening for any sign of intelligence coming from any direction out there.
14. At the same time, scientists are beginning to realize that there are many, many facts about our world that make it the perfect place for humans to live. A number of these variables are so precisely tuned that if they were off even one part in one million, life as we know it could not exist. This is known as the anthropic principle. It is hard for those who believe in evolution to explain this precision. Could it be that there are millions of other universes where life is not possible, and we just happen to be in the one universe where it is? Or, do we live in a universe created by a loving heavenly Father precisely to meet our needs? Do we express thanks to God every day for making this perfect environment for us? If creationists were as “evangelistic” as evolutionists are, we might be way ahead of where we are!
15. Unfortunately, our distant ancestors, not understanding many of the powerful forces controlling nature, looked up at the heavens and begin to worship the sun, the moon, the stars, and even the forces of nature instead of the Creator of all that. Despite all the

evidence they had for God's loving care, even the Israelites repeatedly were drawn away from worship of the true God to worship those false deities.

16. To what extent is Satan allowed to manipulate nature? Is Satan directly responsible for all the destructive things that happen in our world—earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, natural fires, etc.? Will these things continue to increase? And, will more people be affected?
17. Seventh-day Adventists recognize that there are two competing forces in nature. Our loving Father has tried to do everything within the limitations of freedom that He can do to provide us with a perfect environment. On the other hand, Satan is doing everything he can to misrepresent God, to destroy God's handiwork, and to get us to turn against Him and curse His name. Why do tsunamis and droughts occur? Is global warming a natural phenomenon caused by human behavior? Or, is Satan directly involved?
18. One of the puzzling things that has remained a significant force in our society and that is left over from the worship of these pagan deities is astrology. Astrology descends from the time when it was believed that the earth was the center of the universe. It was believed that the constellations and stars in the heavens determined to a considerable extent human behavior and the events in our world. In our day, some people still think that the month in which you were born may have some major impact on your life even years later. It is interesting to note that because the length of the solar year had not been calculated accurately in ancient times, the astrological calculations today are completely off of the true astronomical facts. It is all pure paganism!
19. In addition to evolutionists who believe that God had nothing to do with the creation of our world and perhaps does not even exist, there are theistic evolutionists who believe that God created our world by directing evolution.
20. There is another group that was very prominent even in the days of the formation of our United States of America. They are known as Deists, and they believe that God created everything in the beginning, set it running, and left it alone to be controlled by the natural cycles and forces of nature.
21. We know better. All through Scripture we are reminded that God is the Creator. Isaiah 40-55 repeatedly reminds us of the fact that God is our Creator. That is the most compelling evidence that He is the only real God. Other evidences suggested in those chapters include the fact that God can accurately predict the future far in advance. When appropriate, He can manipulate nature by producing such natural disasters as floods, but He can also perform miracles of healing, even the restoration of life. He also re-creates those who turn to Him.
22. Jesus encouraged us to look at the beauties of nature and turn with respect and worship to our Creator. What lessons about God come to mind when you spend time among the beauties of nature?

All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 58.

23. Read Psalm 104. Compare Psalm 139 and Job 38-41. It is clear that the psalmist believed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that God is actively involved in every part of our lives from before conception until after death. Ellen White put this in a very poetic way when she said, "Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God." *Review and Herald*, December 2, 1890, par. 15.
24. Paul agreed when he said, "For in Him we live and move and exist." (Acts 17:28, *NASB*) Each one of us will ultimately make the decision to join God or leave Him. Every one of us needs to find time to step away from our individual responsibilities and enjoy the beauties of nature. We need to do this not only for its remedial benefits but also to take time to commune with God.
25. Read Genesis 1:28. What does it mean when God said that man was to have dominion over the other living creatures? Certainly, in the Garden of Eden, this meant stewardship and not exploitation. Today, human beings abuse domestic animals in almost every possible conceivable way for their own benefit and consumption. Aren't you glad that we will be able to return to the Edenic diet in heaven? Do you wish you could visit the Garden of Eden? How could the humans living before the flood who had the privilege of actually going to the gate of the garden and looking in, still turn from God, even suggesting that He is not the One in control of our world?
26. Consider the following:

God placed Adam in a garden. This was his dwelling. The blue heavens were its dome; the earth, with its delicate flowers and carpet of living green, was its floor; and the leafy branches of the goodly trees were its canopy. Its walls were hung with the most magnificent adornings—the handiwork of the great Master Artist. In the surroundings of the holy pair was a lesson for all time—that true happiness is found, not in the indulgence of pride and luxury, but in communion with God through His created works. If men would give less attention to the artificial, and would cultivate greater simplicity, they would come far nearer to answering the purpose of God in their creation.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 49, 50.

What would it be like to live in such a place? Visit an orchid show. Look at the fields of poppies in Southern California in the spring.

27. What prevents us from trying to live as far as possible the Edenic life today? Wouldn't that be a good way to prepare to live with God for the rest of eternity?

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