

## GENESIS 2:5-9 NAS

Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. 9 Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

*In Genesis 2:5 we are introduced to a barren landscape of dirt and rock that is devoid of life. But God breathes into the lifeless dirt to create life. This is a fundamental image in the Bible, that God's personal life-giving presence is what sustains all living creatures. Apart from God's own life-presence, there is only disorder and death. But when God's Spirit is in the mix, the impossible suddenly becomes possible and life can come from non-life.*

### QUESTION 1

God's life-giving Spirit is the one who provides and sustains life in the world. Where do you see life emerging and flourishing around you?

### QUESTION 2

The Spirit is in the business of breathing life where there is hopelessness. Where do you sense a need for new life in or around you? Prayerfully ask God through his Spirit to bring life.

## ISAIAH 10:33-11:10 NAS

10:33 Behold, the Lord, the God of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash; Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down And those who are lofty will be abased. 34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

11:1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; 4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. 10 Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

*In this poem God is depicted as a lumberjack, cutting down Israel's leaders who have arrogantly elevated themselves. And in their place, God will cause a new branch to sprout from the lineage of Jesse (David's father!). He will be empowered by God's Spirit to be the most wise, kind, and generous leader anyone could imagine. God's Spirit produces a messianic king who uses his power to serve the poor and confront corruption. And you know God's Spirit is involved when the signs of Eden begin to emerge, when the powerless are no longer in danger because "the land will be filled with knowing Yahweh like the waters cover the sea."*

### QUESTION 1

What do you notice about what the Spirit does in and through this leader?

### QUESTION 2

Where do you need wisdom in your own life? Set aside some time to ask God's Spirit to give you wisdom and reflect on how to move forward.

## JOHN 13:34-35 NAS

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

## JOHN 14:16-26 NAS

16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) \*said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. 25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

*The night before Jesus was arrested and executed, he washed the feet of his closest followers as a rich symbol of his love for them. This was a foretaste of his ultimate act of love on the cross. And this love was supposed to multiply as his followers shared that same self-giving love with each other. When Jesus later promises to send "the Spirit of truth," he makes it clear that his own presence, comfort, and love will come to take up residence "inside you." And if the life and love of the servant-king is truly in you, it will lead to further acts of self-giving love, or in Jesus' words, "the one who has my commandments and keeps them, this is the one who loves me." The logic is fairly simple. When our lives are characterized by others-centered love, that's when we know that the Spirit is working through us.*

### QUESTION 1

Read John 13:34-35 again and take a moment to prayerfully ask God, by his Spirit, to fill you with the others-centered love that characterized the life of Jesus.

### QUESTION 2

How has God uniquely made you to extend love to others? Where do the needs of others and your Spirit-empowered characteristics and gifts align?