

The Center

*Set far apart, He*

*For our locked door, a key*

*Crying, "Enter!" to you and me*

The key to approaching this book is given in its first four words, "In the beginning God..." From the outset, God is uniquely set apart from all else. This is the book's proper starting point which allows the reader to approach the fifth word and beyond appropriately. From the book's opening, God is poised to be its star.

As a result, it's important to resist tendencies of supplanting the main theme with a supporting one—which, itself, was meant to point far beyond its own contribution. Whether the origins of the universe or the history of the human race, the uniqueness of masculinity and femininity or the institution of marriage, the meaning of the image of God in humanity or the fall of mankind, the global flood or the dispersal of the nations, or the many memorable characters that walk across its pages, *none of these* are meant to be *central* to the book. Though each is vital to its construction, they are only present to make a greater Presence known.

The book opens with God as the producer of all that's good, as well as the fixer of the one item which wasn't (Genesis 2:18). His Person is clearly prominent in the opening narrative, being mentioned no less than thirty-five times. Further, when His good creation takes a turn for the worse, He alone will be the one who sets out to redeem it—being the prime mover in bringing hope, time and time again, to situations that appear utterly hopeless. This is true to such an extent that near the very end of the book, one of its main characters, named Joseph, will offer a statement to his brothers which the Narrator likely intends to serve as an interpretation of the entirety of the book, "...you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive..." (50:20 ESV). God at the beginning, God throughout—working amidst humanity's evil to bring about life and joy for many people.

At times, His presence is felt in a thoroughly conspicuous manner, while at other times He's less visible—depending on the nature of the narrative. At one point, He'll be the main subject of the book's opening line, clearly present and active throughout the entirety of the Creation Narrative. Yet later, we'll find Isaac's crafty son, Jacob, receiving a perfectly crafted discipline that's unmistakably arranged by God, yet He won't be mentioned once as the narrative unfolds. Seen or unseen, from start to finish, He's steals the show.

In this way, Genesis both shouts and whispers, points and nudges us into His presence. Its ending point is the same as its opening point: God is the centerpiece. In this consistency, the book invites you and I to take it up on its offer: keeping God at its center, it strongly suggests that you and I do the same. Amidst all the heartache, angst and unrest surfacing in the book, due to its character's "best-made-plans," we'll be introduced to the way of faith that sees God behind and before. Walking with these eyes will be the road less traveled which few, in their finer moments, will venture upon from time to time. But behind the moments of unbelief and moments of faith, we'll find the faithful testimony of a God who is there, standing with His steadfast love, ringing without pause, beckoning our hearts to rest in Him.