

# Like a CHILD

Sunday 28th October 2018

Lisa Sharon Harper  
Guest Speaker

This week NewHope hosted Lisa Sharon Harper. Lisa is a prolific speaker, activist and the author of several books including “The Very Good Gospel.” She is considered one of the USA’s most influential voices on faith-based approaches to advocacy. She has also been a driving force behind “Freedom Road” –a ministry that helps organisations and communities practice biblical justice.

Lisa challenged us to think more deeply about the goodness of the gospel to people who are broken and hurting. She herself went through a deep time of searching for this truth as she confronted the injustice and oppression that many of her ancestors faced living in slavery in the USA.

Lisa outlined four Hebrew words that have dramatically shaped her understanding of the gospel. Tov (meaning good), Radar (meaning dominion), Tselem (shadow, or image of) and Demuth (likeness).

## 1 Tov (Good)

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

-Genesis 1:31 (NIV)

Lisa describes God’s plan for the garden of Eden as not just Good, but Very Good. The Hebrew term at the end of Genesis 1 is ‘tov meod.’ Lisa outlined the Hebrew understanding of ‘Tov’ or “Good” meaning the goodness ‘between things’, rather than the goodness ‘within things’. Furthermore, the term meod refers to ‘abundance, or forcefulness’ meaning that the world was created as ‘forcefully good’ or abundantly good.



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- Reflect on the Hebrew words *to v meod*. What might it mean that the world was created 'forcefully good' or 'abundantly good'?
- How does an understanding of goodness as being 'between things' help us understand God's creation?
- In what ways does this help your understanding of the creation story?

## 2 Tselem (the image of, a shadow of)

So God created human beings<sup>td</sup> in his own image.  
In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

-Genesis 1:27

From the very moment that God creates people, he creates them all in his own image. Not some people. Not most people. All people. If we are to understand the creation story correctly, then our understanding of God's good creation is a goodness of the created world, and the goodness of people created in it. Yet within 2 chapters of Genesis, sin, murder and war have entered the world.

- Does the world today see the image of God in each and every person?
- Why? Why not?
- When do you find it hard to see the image of God in people?
- How might we overcome these barriers to seeing people the way God sees them? What needs to change in our own lives?
- Lisa suggested that each time we fail to see the image of God in others, we declare 'war' on Him and his good creation. How does this make you feel?

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## 3 Radah (Hebrew word for Dominion)

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make human beings<sup>[b]</sup> in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,<sup>[c]</sup> and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

-Genesis 1:26

God’s plan was that the garden of Eden was to be cared for. When we examine the Hebrew text, the word Radah (have dominion over, rule) is used in connection with three other Hebrew terms: kabash (subdue), abad (till, or serve, or do service to, worship) and shamar (keep or keeper).

- **In your own words, how would you describe the meaning of the word ‘dominion’?**
- **How might your understanding of ‘dominion’ change in light of the terms abad and shamar?**
- **How might the translation “have dominion over” shape the way we view creation?**
- **How does an understanding of our role as people who ‘rule’, ‘subdue’, ‘serve’ and ‘keep’ creation differ from this?**
- **What might this broader definition mean for us today as we seek to live justly?**

## 4 Demut (Likeness)

We are all made in God’s likeness, but not the same as God. That means that to follow God means some of us need to step down from places of power, and others need to be lifted up. In Australia there are many ways that we need to confront injustice. The injustice experienced by our Aboriginal brothers and sisters is one example that Lisa highlighted.

Lisa’s message was that our role in living justly is to acknowledge the image of God in each other and together exercise dominion over the earth.

- **What are some practical ways that we can acknowledge the image of God in each other?**