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Breathtaking Dust

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Read **Genesis 2:1-9** (NIV):

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 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.

8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 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.

1. What are some of the things that people tend to base their identity on? Discuss the reasons why each of these makes a poor basis for identity.
2. If there is an area of your life that you sometimes feel a pull toward basing your identity on, share about that.
3. In his book, *River Out of Eden*, atheist Richard Dawkins wrote: “*In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference*”

What would a person’s sense of personal identity be like if they believed this?

4. In Genesis 2:7 we see that humans are made both of dust and the breath of God. What does the fact that we are made of dust communicate about us? What are some implications of our being made of the same basic ingredients as the rest of creation?
5. God created a world that needed a gardener, and he gave humans the job being the caretakers who helped His world flourish. Why do you think God made the world in such a way that humans need to work rather than just relax? (This was already the case back in the Garden of Eden, even before sin came into the world.)
6. Some Christians don’t care much about the physical world, thinking they should only focus on the spiritual world. Why should the physical world matter to us as Christians?
7. We’re not just dust; rather, we’re also made of the breath of God. What was the effect of God breathing into man, and what does this communicate about us and our identity?
8. Read 1 Peter 2:9: *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

What does it mean that we are God’s priests here on earth?

9. How might this priestly role impact your daily life? Be specific about how you could live as a priest in the midst of your particular job, your daily responsibilities, and your other activities.

10. What did you sense God saying to you through this passage and this message?