

chapter 5

by Elizabeth Swenson

When was the last time you read the Creation Story in Genesis? Or actually the two creation stories in Genesis. As I started my Intro to Old Testament class this semester we naturally began at the beginning, spending a week studying Genesis 1-11. I was amazed to really notice that we are told that even before God creates the Sun, there is light and dark. Where did the light come from? What would that kind of pre-darkness have been like? Oppressive darkness? Calm darkness? I realize that of all there is to unpack in the first several chapters of the biblical narrative this is hardly the place to spend much time, but it struck me as surprising that I'd never noticed that before. It is easy to overlook and underestimate the darkness.

In this chapter I enjoyed Barbara Brown Taylor's detailed description of the Blinderkuh Restaurant and the "Dialogue in the Dark" exhibit. Not only did I find the experiences fascinating, I appreciated the perspective of "seeing" (our english language is so limiting!) the world through our other senses. I have been guilty of assuming that folks who are vision impaired are missing out on something. A gravely inaccurate assumption on my part. After this chapter, I believe that I am the one who is missing out on something. Since I don't have a Blinderkuh or Opaque restaurant nearby I set out to see if I could experience a small taste of what that might be like. I wear corrective lenses, glasses or contacts, all the time. Colorful blurry shapes, like someone spilled water on a painting, is all that I can see without them. As I was preparing dinner this week I took off my glasses. First off, I want to mention that I am fully aware that blurry vision is not blindness and I would not assume to compare the two, but I hoped by taking off my glasses I might shift my reliance on visual cues and trust my other senses.

My kitchen is a space I am keenly familiar with and I was preparing a recipe I had made many times. I wanted to see if my limiting my sight if I might notice something new. By taking off my glasses I was forcing myself to trust that my hands knew how handle a knife even though I couldn't see my fingers and that I could follow a recipe simply by taste. I found that I was better able to focus. I wasn't checking my phone, or trying to start a load of laundry at the same time. I was just cooking. As a perpetual multi-tasker it was a nice break and almost relaxing to focus on only one task. It was an interesting experiment, dinner turned out just fine and all of my fingers remained intact. If I am ever feeling overwhelmed by life I think it might be a good idea to just take off my glasses for a while. Limit my perspective to what is in front of me and focus.