

**Making Sense of Life**  
**in**  
**GENESIS 1-3**

**A unique, verse-by-verse,  
life-application commentary  
by Terran Williams**

## Introduction to Genesis 1-3

Despite all of the intellectual and scientific progress the human race has made, three questions still perplex us: 'Where do we come from? What is the meaning of my life? What is wrong with the world?' Until we have solid answers to these questions we're truly in the dark.

Wonderfully, Genesis 1-3 is God's answer to these questions. It shines a bright light, helping us to understand our lives and world. That should motivate us to deeply explore these chapters.

There is yet another major reason to delve into Genesis 1-3: until we understand it, we can't understand the rest of the Bible. This portion of Scripture is the backdrop not only of our own story, but the unfolding drama of God's story.

## A personal approach to going through Genesis 1-3

- 1) Make time every day. Allocate as much time as you need to really hear from God for your life. Read until you are full - don't just *snack* on the Bible, rather enjoy a *solid meal*.
- 2) Take your time as you go through Genesis, starting at chapter one, verse one. It doesn't matter if you do the whole Bible in a year, or in five years, just as long as you're *steadily* moving through it.
- 3) Trust God to speak to you every time you read the Bible. Expect to receive just what you need for each day. Invite the Holy Spirit to be your primary teacher as you read.
- 4) Keep two questions in your mind as you read: 1) What do these verses mean? 2) What do they mean for my life now? If you can't find solid answers to either of these two important questions then refer to this commentary.
- 5) Carry into your day what you sense God saying to you. Perhaps write down the main things you sense God telling you each day. Pray to God about what he has just said to you. Make any needed adjustments in your heart and life as God reveals more and more of his Word, will and ways to you.

## Small Group Guide ...

Why not work through Genesis 1-3 as a small group for three or four weeks?

In preparation every week, everyone in the group needs to explore the allocated section of Genesis 1-3, using this commentary for increased insight. When you come together, re-read the allocated portion of the Bible, and then

have a conversation where people answer two questions: ‘What did you find most interesting?’ and ‘What has God been saying to you through these verses?’ Then end the conversation by getting everyone to briefly complete the sentence, ‘One way I want to change my life in light of these verses is ....’. Then pray together in response to God’s revelation in his Word.

Week 1: Genesis 1            Week 2: Genesis 2  
Week 3: Genesis 3:1-6      Week 4: Genesis 3:7-24  
(Optionally, you can shorten it to 3 weeks by doing Genesis 3 in one week.)

## You may own a Bible, but does your Bible own you?

It’s not enough to own a Bible. Our Bible should own us. After all, it is the main way God speaks to us. Did you know that God put every verse in the Bible so that your mind could be totally renewed, so that your life could be deeply changed, and so that your calling could be fulfilled? (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17 if you’re not persuaded.) That’s why reading the whole Bible again and again is one of the most important things we can do.

Sometimes, however, the Bible is hard to understand. That’s why commentaries are so useful. Most commentaries help you understand the *technical* meaning of each verse. This commentary helps you do a little of that too, but more than that, it focuses on the meaning of each verse *for our lives now*.

What’s unique about this commentary? Most importantly, it helps you to find *the meaning for your life now* in every single verse of Genesis 1-3. It is written with 21<sup>st</sup> century everyday people in mind. It builds on the scholarship of brilliant theologians and commentaries, but doesn’t focus on the exhausting technicalities that fill most commentaries.

## Major sources used

- Michael Eaton’s ‘Preaching through the Bible: Genesis 1-11’
- David Guzik’s ‘Commentary on Genesis’ (*available on [www.enduringword.com/commentaries/01.html](http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/01.html)*)
- Dr Peter Pete’s ‘The book of Genesis, Tablet 1 and 2’ (*available on [www.geocities.com/genesiscommentary](http://www.geocities.com/genesiscommentary)*)

## Outline

*Genesis 1 - God's amazing creation, part 1*

*Genesis 2 - God's amazing creation, part 2*

*Genesis 3 - Humanity's terrible fall*

## Genesis 1 - God's amazing creation, part 1

Read 1:1
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**This simple verse tells you about God, yourself and everything.**

- Think of the implications of this simple verse.
- **1) *It tells about God.*** He is all-powerful, supremely brilliant, infinitely creative. As great and magnificent as the universe is. God is still greater and more magnificent. God is large and in charge. Notice also that this verse makes it clear that God is separate from creation - which is in stark contrast to the two eastern assumptions of pantheism (which says that God and the universe are one, and that the universe is therefore divine) and panentheism (the belief that God inhabits the universe in the same way a person's spirit inhabits a body). But these are both not true. Because God created the universe he is not dependent on it for his own existence. He is self-sufficient. The universe and all within it needs him, but he doesn't need it. More than that, this verse tells us that God is in control. Surely the one who made it all is in control of it all.
- **2) *It tells us about ourselves.*** We are created beings, and surely the most important thing is to find our reference point in our creator. We are meant to find our identity, our bearing, our source in him. Surely, we're meant to honour and heed, love and worship our creator? This also helps us to understand what sin is. Sin is the failure to find our bearing, our identity, our source in God. It is the failure to honour, heed, love and worship him. Yet sin is insanity - it spits in the face of the one who made us; it refuses God his creator rights over us.
- **3) *It tells us about everything.*** Everything is created. For this point let's unpack the verse itself. The phrase *in the beginning* tells us that God existed before the beginning. It separates God from everything else - he can be described as the Uncreated One. Everything else is created. The word *God* takes its meaning from this verse. It refers to the all-powerful creator-God. Whenever the word *God* is used in the Bible we should understand it to mean that. The word *created* means to create out of nothing. Interestingly, in the Bible, the word is only used of God himself. Although we can create out of something, God alone creates out of nothing. The phrase *the heavens and the earth* is the Bible's way of saying 'absolutely everything' - from the

tinest quark in the subatomic world, to the greatest galaxy in the universe, from the smallest insect to the greatest mountain. It all comes from God. He made it.

### Read 1:2

#### **The Spirit of God is ready to give your life shape and meaning.**

- Although verse 1 speaks of the whole universe, verse 2 with its mention of earth, narrows it down to refer to what God was doing with our planet. The phrase *the earth was formless and empty* simply means that the planet was at one stage uninhabitable by humans and uninhabited by humans. The reason is given: *darkness was over the surface of the deep*, which means that there was no light and there was no solid ground. It suggests a liquid world in darkness.
- The whole flow of Genesis 1 is of how God gave the world shape, making it wonderfully inhabitable for humanity. The sentence *the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters* tells us that God was creatively involved in shaping, developing, directing and preparing the earth for us. He was doing this by the Spirit, which means 'breath'. God was breathing on the planet (much like he breathed in the nostrils of Adam to give him life). The word *hovering* gives us the picture of the Spirit as a mother-bird incubating her eggs until they burst into life.
- We must remember that the original creation described here is a picture of the new creation that is available to us in Jesus. The ministry of the Spirit is still the same. He does now what he has always done: he hovers over a formless and futile life - and he gives it meaning, shape, direction and life. He does this at the moment of salvation when we are born again by the Spirit (see John 3:3-8). But then he continues to work in our lives shaping us into the image of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 3:17,18).

### Read 1:3-31

#### **It is my conviction that Genesis 1-3 should be read as parabolic history, not as a scientific textbook - but Christians are divided on this issue.**

- Some people believe that Genesis 1-3 is completely mythological and parabolic. But that would mean that the New Testament can't be trusted because it teaches belief in a literal first couple who were created by God, became the progenitors of the entire human race, and who plummeted humanity into sin. But does this mean that we must swing to the other extreme and say that Genesis 1-3 is completely literal. This becomes important when we repeat a commonly asked question ...
- *Did God create the world in seven literal days?* In answering this question, people have come up with several different answers. They are 1) yes, he created the world and the universe at the same time; 2) yes, but a created

universe and an undeveloped planet preceded these six days; 3) yes, but there were long time gaps between each day, 4) no, the days refer not to days of creation, but to days of revelation, where God revealed different aspects of creation to the writer on different days; 5) no, each 'day' in these verses probably refers to an indefinite period of time (this is called the age-day theory, and was taught first by Augustine).

- Over the years I vacillated between some of these views in my attempt, on the one hand, to believe the Bible, which is God's word to us, and yet on the other hand, to not dismiss clear scientific discovery.
- Although some of these five answers have their strengths, I have decided to not embrace any of them. Through exposure to Michael Eaton's view, I now see one problem with all five of them: *they all read the details on Genesis 1-3 in an overly literal way*. I believe Genesis 1-3 should not be read in an overly literal way at all, since this portion of Scripture presents itself as a kind of literature that is both parabolic (or figurative) and historical at the same time. After all, one of the main rules of properly interpreting different parts of the Bible is to be sensitive to what kind of literature it is.
- So what kind of literature is Genesis 1-3? It does not present itself as pure history. And it does not present itself as pure parable. But it does appear to be a combination of both: *parabolic history*. Let me explain...
  - It certainly is history as the rest of the Bible speaks of a literal Adam and Eve. But it is history written in a parabolic style. It is full of symbolism - a woman is made out of a bone, a snake talks, a tree determines the history of the human race, another tree can keep humankind alive. The bone, the trees, the snake - they all represent something real and historical, but in the form of parable.
  - Another proof that Genesis 1 is parable is that it does not put much weight on chronology. It seems the writer puts things in groups rather than in strict chronology. For example, day and night is created on the first day - whereas the sun and moon (which create the experience of day and night) are only created on day four. Another example of grouping is seen in the parallels between day 1 and 4 (light, and light-bearers); day 2 and 5 (water above and below the sky, and birds and sea creatures); and day 3 and 6 (land, water and vegetation, and animals, reptiles and humankind).
  - Another evidence that Genesis 1 should not be taken literally is that Genesis 2 describes in detail the events of day six described in Genesis 1 - and these events clearly take longer than a day. Besides day 7 is, according to the Bible itself (see Hebrews 4:10-11) still happening. A straightforward reading of Genesis 1-3 therefore suggests that we should not read it in an overly literal way.
  - An example of parabolic history elsewhere in the Bible is when Nathan tells king David a parable of a rich man taking a poor man's sheep (here the rich man refers to David, and the poor man to Uriah, and the sheep to Bathsheba) - it speaks of an historical reality (i.e. David's adultery with Bathsheba) but in a parabolic form. Parabolic

history was a very common form of literature in ancient Mesopotamia (where undeniably real events and people are spoken of in parabolic ways) - so it should not come as a surprise to us Genesis 1-3, written in an era when and an area where this kind of literature was common, employs the same kind of genre.

- Eaton sums up his view by writing, 'We are surely not meant to press the details of Genesis 1 into harmony with science. Genesis 1 is like a vision (maybe - and we cannot know for sure - Moses received it as a vision). We miss the point if we treat it like a scientific textbook ... I agree with John Calvin who said, 'Let him who would learn astronomy go somewhere else.'
- For those who believe that these verses should be read in a completely literal way, two arguments are usually given. Firstly, Exodus 20:11 speak of six literal days followed by a Sabbath. In response, I say that the seven-day week is certainly based on Genesis 1, but this doesn't mean the days have to be literal days. They can serve as a pattern without having to be literal. Secondly, some say, 'If you don't take these verses literally then at what point do you take the Bible literally?' In response, I say that good interpretation requires that we take different parts of the Bible according to their genre - so parabolic history, pure parable, poetry and apocalyptic writings for example should never be interpreted in an overly literal way - that would be a misuse of Scripture. Genesis 1-3 reaches back into the unimaginably distant past - so it does not come as a surprise that the writer of Genesis employs a partially figurative genre.
- However, as said before, I am not saying that Genesis 1-3 is pure parable, or myth. Not at all! It speaks of real events that happened in the unimaginably distant past: God created the world and life with a series of interventions and creations; God created a real couple, who are the ancestors of the whole human race; and this couple, tempted by the devil himself, disobeyed God. This I believe without reservation. But I do not believe that Genesis 1-3 seeks to tell us exactly, with scientific and detailed factuality, what happened. Rather the historical events are shrouded in parable and picture - and these pictures powerfully communicate *theological* meaning.
- Of course, you're free to disagree with me. Although every Christian is called to carefully think through the issues, we need to give each other the freedom to think differently on this *non-essential* aspect of Christian doctrine. To become familiar with the more literal ways of reading Genesis 1, for example, see these two websites which reflect the two most popular views: [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org) (which defends the view that the world was created in six literal days) and [www.godandscience.org](http://www.godandscience.org) (which challenges the literal six days view and in its place suggests the age-day theory, thereby backing the common scientific view that the universe is fifteen billion years old, the earth about four billion years old, with the human race coming about at a very late age in the history of our planet.)
- So if these verses do not tell us, as I believe, the specific, scientific details regarding how the world and life came about, what do they tell us? They tell us much ...

### **God, the only creator, alone is worthy of your worship**

- Most ancient people were polytheistic - they believed in many gods. Some worshipped the sun, or the moon. Some worshipped animals, or the sea. Some worshipped the rain (or the fertility gods that were seen as the source of the rain). Then along comes Genesis 1 which says to these people, 'There is one God - and only one God - who alone made everything. The things that you worship as gods are created by the supreme and unique creator. He alone deserves your worship.'
- Still today, humanity tends to worship created things rather than the creator - who alone is worthy of worship (see Romans 1:25). We tend to take good things - like money, children, careers, pleasure, security and education - and elevate them to ultimate importance in our lives. Instead of finding our identity and significance in God, we find it in lesser, created things. These verses remind us that the wonders of creation point to a reality greater and more glorious than themselves - God. We need to renounce the worship of anything created, and worship the creator instead!

### **Creation is meant to be valued by you, and to bring you joy.**

- Verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31 repeat the refrain: 'And God saw that it was good'. God made a good world. This tells us that all of creation is valuable to him - and therefore should be valuable to us. It tells us that all of creation brings him joy - and it should bring us joy.
- Philosophers and various religions have often taught that matter is either an illusion (and therefore of no real value) or intrinsically evil - and that instead the world of spirit is the only real, good reality. This leads to neglecting the environment, hating our bodies, treating physical sins as though they are not real anyway, and ascetically avoiding pleasures as though this is something noble to do. These verses destroy that line of thinking.
- This also tells us that evil is a foreign invader of God's good world. We know that creation is fallen, but we must affirm that evil was not originally built into the world. Somehow, something good God created became corrupt (more about this in Genesis 3).

### **Creation is a window into the gloriousness of its creator.**

- God created an ordered world. God created the world according to scientific and natural laws. There is a pattern in his world. We notice how light and darkness can't co-exist (v5), how life reproduces after its kind (v11-12), how the sun and moon create predictable cycles and seasons (v16,18), and how God creates in stages - one stage building upon another. Today, we can give ourselves to the study of science, biology, astronomy, genetics and more simply because God created an ordered world. We're meant to study creation to discover what God has built into it. *What an intelligent and brilliant God!*

- God created a world of variety and wonder. The world may be ordered, but it is also infinitely beautiful. Think of how God creates vegetation, birds, animals, sea creatures, stars, the moon, the sun, water, sky, light, darkness, food, pleasure, sex (as implied by verse 28). We're meant to experience life in a way that inspires wonder and awe. *What an imaginative and beautiful God!*
- God created the world with humankind in mind. Day 1-5 is preparation for day 6 when humankind is created to enjoy a world that is habitable - all because God created the world with us in mind. The reason that humankind has thrived on this planet is not because our species accidentally prevailed over previous species (as many assume), but because God created the world with us in mind! The world is God's gift to us - although it is our responsibility to steward it, not abuse it (v28). *What a loving and purposeful God!*
- God created the world by the sheer power of his word (v3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). The recurring words of God which utter, 'Let there be' or 'Let the...' is followed by the sentence, 'and it was so'. Whatever God says, goes. He is totally sovereign, and free to create and do whatever he pleases. His power is absolute. His sovereignty is unrivalled. His authority is unmatched. And notice that God speaks - this is something personal. God is a personal being, not an impersonal force. He thinks, he imagines, he acts, he chooses, he appreciates, and he speaks. *What a powerful and personal God!*
- Psalm 19:1 tells us that creation declares the glory of God. Reading these verses, and experiencing creation, should lead us to the same response - with all our hearts we should declare, 'God is glorious!'

<b>Read 1:26-29</b>
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### **You bear the image of God.**

- There is so much similar between humankind and animals, but three differences surface: 1) God speaks to humans but not to animals (v28), 2) God puts humans in charge (v28), 3) God created humankind in his image (v27). It is for this reason that humankind can be described as the crown of creation. Animals are also highly profiled in these verses (see verse 30 for example), but still are secondary in importance next to humanity.
- *So what does it mean to be an image-bearer?*
- **1) It means that we, in some ways, reflect aspects of God** (as he had been described in the previous 25 verses). Like God, we are personal. We choose, think, imagine, speak, feel, act and more. Humanity alone experiences all these capacities. Like God, we are moral. This is seen in our conscience. God affirms that which is good (and by implication rejects that which is not good) - and we're made to reflect his moral nature. Like God, we are creative. We have the ability to imagine, and to create. We are aesthetic, productive creatures.

- **2) It means that we - our bodies included - mysteriously reflect the 'shape' of God.** Eaton challenges the translation 'in the image' - and says it should be translated 'as the image'. And the word image can also be translated to mean 'shape'. This means that we - our bodies included - are the shape of God. This is interesting, since we know that God is Spirit and has no body. But, whenever God does reveal himself in a 'shape' (and the shape is not God, but merely represents God) he does so in the form of a man (see Judges 13:21,22 and Ezekiel 1:26,27 for example). We - our bodies included - correspond to God's shape. This proved to be important later in history - when God literally became a man in the birth of Jesus Christ (see John 1:1,14).
- **3) It means we are designed to reflect God's character.** This is the insight given by the New Testament usage of the word 'image'. We are image-bearers but that image has been corrupted without totally being eliminated (see James 3:9). Jesus alone is the perfect image of God - and as we fellowship with him, we are increasingly transformed into his likeness (see Colossians 3:10 and 2 Corinthians 3:18). Ultimately redeemed humanity will reflect Christ's image entirely (see 1 Corinthians 15:49). In the mean time, we need to affirm that which still reflects God's image in a person, and grieve over the defacing of God's image in a person. Our unique role as the church is to call people to faith in Christ, who alone can restore them to God's original intention, and to develop them to their true and full potential as an image-bearer.
- **4) It means that we are meant to represent God's loving leadership in the world.** Kings in those days would often set up images of themselves in cities, temples and conquered lands - the image would represent the king. In a similar way, God has given humanity the responsibility to represent him on the earth. This is why humanity is put in charge of the whole planet (v28). God is in charge, and he delegated rule of his planet to humanity. It is our responsibility to care for, to subdue (not in the sense of domination, but in the sense of leadership) and to develop the planet and its creatures. Notice that both men and women are equally image-bearers (v27) - and that it is not a solitary person, but humanity collectively that is given this responsibility. This is one reason that humanity was originally commissioned to multiply in number (v28).
- **5) It means that we must cherish and protect all people.** Since God has placed this value in every person, all life is sacred. Murder, for example, is wrong because every person bears God's image (as Genesis 9:6 reveals). Inequality and injustice are wrong for the same reasons. Every person, no matter what age, gender, socio-economic level, race, culture or level of education matters to God - and should matter to us! As we seek to help the most vulnerable in the world, we should not be motivated by a culture of 'human rights' - which is too low a motivation - but rather be motivated by the reality that all people, being image-bearers, matter deeply to God.

## Genesis 2 - God's amazing creation, part 2

Read 2:1-3

God's example of rest on the seventh day has major implications for your life.

- God rested on the seventh day. What does this mean for us? A brief biblical overview reveals that it means three things....
- **1) It calls us to celebrate.** The seventh day is the continuation of 1:31 where God rejoices in his creation, and the result of his work. He does not just carry on without reflection, but pauses to appreciate the goodness of his creation. He makes it a special or holy occasion. Today, we also need to learn how to pause and enjoy the works of our hands. God hard-wired the capacity for joy - in this case as a result of meaningful labour - into us. But has God stopped working? Notice that the seventh day has not ended. Unlike the other six days that all describe a night-time following - the seventh day continues still. That's why the New Testament speaks of it as an ongoing reality (see Hebrews 4:11). Although some of the Jews in Jesus time believed that God had stopped doing anything, Jesus assured them that God was still at work (see John 5:17). So whatever this rest is, it is not idleness. It is simply God's rejoicing in what he has already done. *God's example calls us to regularly celebrate all that God has done for us, and all that we have done.*
- **2) It calls us to rest.** Later, the nation of Israel would keep the Sabbath day based on God's example (Exodus 20:8-11) - it was a day of rest (Exodus 23:12). It was a sign to the world that they were a special people. However, we must note that Genesis does not mention this Sabbath at all - it comes much later. Eventually, in the new covenant established by Christ the Sabbath is no longer required. However, the principle of embracing a rhythm of rest should be applied. A productive life without a rhythm of rest built into it is unsustainable, and unwise. *God's example calls us to routinely (but not legalistically) rest.*
- **3) It calls us to enjoy Christ's finished work.** Hebrews 4:1-11 reveals that as Christians we are meant to 'enter God's rest'. What does this phrase mean? It builds upon the picture of how God rested from his own work on the seventh day (Hebrews 4:4,10). And it builds upon the picture of the Israelites entering the Promised Land that God was giving them by grace - but which they needed to enter by faith (Hebrews 4:10,11). Similarly, Christ, through his death on the cross, accomplished salvation for us - and all we need to do is to enter into that glorious salvation through faith in Christ. Much like the first humans who celebrated with God his finished work of creation, as Christians we get to celebrate with Christ his finished work of salvation. God and Christ have completed the work - and we get to live in the privilege and benefit of it by sheer grace! This is reason to celebrate!

## Read 2:4-7

### Human beings are physical and non-physical at the same time.

- Verse 4 serves as an internal heading to show there is a new section starting within the book of Genesis. The word translated in the NIV as ‘the account’ should be translated as ‘what arises from’. So the writer is, in effect, saying, ‘This is what arises from the heavens and the earth being created ...’ This new section is specifically about the creation and role of humankind.
- The world was at one stage not habitable (v5) - but then God, through natural processes, brought into being a more habitable environment (v6). Once the world was ready to sustain human beings, God created us - starting with one man (v7). Interestingly, the Hebrew for *man* (*adam*) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground* (*adamah*); it is also emerges as the name *Adam* later on.
- But what is a human being? Verse 7 reveals that we consist of two elements: a body that is made of the natural elements of the earth, and a spirit or soul or personality that comes from God. This summarizes the biblical teaching - human beings are physical and non-physical at the same time. It is not that we have a soul or spirit; rather we are souls or spirits. And it is not that we have a body; rather we are a body. We are an integrated whole. The tendency to misuse verses like 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (which refers to spirit, soul and body) and take it to mean that we consist of three parts is not biblical. No, we are one being, with a physical and a spiritual dimension. We are not made of parts at all - not according to the biblical worldview. Verses such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 should be taken to describe three aspects of who we are. Also that words like heart, soul, spirit are not technical terms in the Bible and are used to mean different things according to the context. To summarize, we are physical, and non-physical beings both at the same time. There is a mystery about us - after all, we are made in the image of God, who himself is a God of mystery. One the one hand we come from this first man, an earthly father. And on the other hand we come from a heavenly creator, the ‘father of spirits’ (Hebrews 12:9).
- This means that we are meant to, by our very nature, live on God. He is our source. And it means that we can’t minimize the importance of our bodies - nor our identity as physical beings. We’re meant to offer our bodies to Christ (see Romans 12:2). Sin may attack us so often through our bodies (see Romans 8:23), but by God’s grace we’re meant to glorify God in our bodies (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- When we die, there will be a separation, but biblically speaking, the life here after for the Christian is far more than the immortality of the soul (which is a Greek idea rather than a biblical one) - rather it is the gift of a new resurrection body (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-55).

## Read 2:8-9

**God lovingly and lavishly provides for our physical, aesthetic and spiritual needs.**

- God planted a garden - not a garden like we now understand one - but a protected and habitable place with lots of vegetation and water. The word 'Eden' means 'delight'. It was a delightful garden, a garden made for 'the man'. God provided for this man in three ways: 1) he provided for the man's physical needs (with the shade of the trees, and with food, 2) he provided wonderful beauty (notice the phrase 'pleasing to the eye') and 3) he sustained the man's spiritual life and liveliness (that is what the 'tree of life' symbolizes).
- Still today, God wants to provide for humanity. Although sin has ruined so much of God's original intention for us, it is still God's desire to provide for our physical needs, our aesthetic needs, and our spiritual needs. God cares. Not only does he look after creation (notice how verse 9 tells us that not only did God make the garden, but he sustained its growth) - but he longs especially to look after humankind. Interestingly, in the new heavens and the new earth God will satisfy all our physical, aesthetic and spiritual needs - but already now Jesus tells us to trust our heavenly Father to lavishly provide (see Matthew 6: 25-33).
- We will speak more about the tree of knowledge of good and evil when we get to verse 17, but what is the tree of life? Firstly, we must remember that this is parabolic history. The tree symbolizes God's loving ability to nurture and sustain the eternal life with which the man was created. The point is that eternal life was not automatic, but was supernaturally sustained by fellowship with, and obedience to God. The tree represented God's life-giving and life-sustaining ability.

## Read 2:10-14

**God wants streams of living water to flow into and from your life.**

- Many people have tried to locate this river and its four flows of water. However, to read these verses literally is problematic because we know that rivers don't divide into two or more rivers - rather they converge. Also this river apparently waters both Assyria (in Middle East) and Cush (in Africa). However, if we take the view that Genesis 1-3 is parabolic history we have no problem.
- For example, two of the rivers are the Tigris and the Euphrates - which were mighty rivers well known at the time. The other rivers - Pishon and Gihon - are made up rivers meaning 'spring up' and 'burst out'. Great areas - such as Cush and Assyria - are watered by these rivers.
- The question we should ask is 'What does all this symbolize?' It speaks firstly and most obviously of God's ability to water and provide for the whole earth. Later in the Bible, a second meaning emerges however - it

speaks of God's ability to pour out his refreshing and life-giving Spirit to all people everywhere. As humanity falls from God and is removed from the garden, the experience of God's supernatural sustaining presence is lost. But then prophets start to speak of how a massive river of life will one day flow, and bring healing and provision to the world (see Ezekiel 47:1-12). The source of the promised river of God's life turns out to be Jesus himself (see John 7:37). In turn the believer and the church - as they put their faith in Christ - become a derivative source of this flow of living water (see John 4:14 and John 7:38). God wants spiritual life to bubble up within us, and burst out in streams of living water. God wants to release his refreshing, sustaining and healing 'water' in us and through us! Ultimately, the new heavens and the new earth reveal a river flowing from the throne of God and Jesus (Revelations 22:1-2).

- Interestingly, the mention of gold, resin and onyx speaks of the sheer beauty and wealth of God's creation. And not surprising, Revelations describes the heavenly city as a city of pure gold, decorated with precious stones (Revelations 21:18-19).

#### **Read 2:15 and 2:19-20**

**God wants you to be involved in meaningful, creative work.**

- God intended that we would be involved in meaningful, creative work. God created a world that needed some participation from the man as it became increasingly ordered and developed. God did not create a complete, perfect world, but a world in process. Still today God wants us to work. We are hard-wired by God to find meaningful employment, to work to see the world increasingly developed and ordered.
- Notice in verses 19-20 that part of the man's work was the naming of animals. Names in the ancient world were descriptions of a thing's nature. He was studying them. And he was being creative in his naming. Fascinatingly, God watched to see what they would be called - it seems that God delights in our work, as we use the capacities he has given us for good. The main thought is that God created us as intelligent and creative creatures - no doubt this is part of what it means to bear his image. Still today, we are meant to be involved not just in physical work, but in intelligent and creative work too.

#### **Read 2:18 and 2:20b**

*Note: we will come back to and comment on verses 12:6-17 when we get 3:1.*

**Community definitely, and marriage probably, is God's intention for you.**

- Genesis repeated the refrain, 'And God saw that it was good.' So far, everything in the world was good. Surprisingly, God said that one thing was not good at this stage - and that was that the man (whom we'll start to

describe as Adam from here on) was alone. Yes, he had relationship with God, and he had contact with all kinds of animals - but it seems that God hard-wired into him a longing for relationship with someone like him.

- God created in us a need for companionship and partnership. This need is not a sign that we are sinful, but that we are human. God has hardwired it into us. There are exceptions in the Bible where marriage is not possible, or at certain times not wise (see Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:39-40 (which must be understood in terms of 'the present crisis' (v26))). However, the norm is that God desires us to marry. Marriage is good. The rejection of marriage is a 'doctrine of demons' (see 1 Timothy 4:1-3).
- But this verse speaks about more than just our need for marriage - it speaks of our need for community. We are meant to live our lives in the context of rich, vibrant relationships.

**A married couple is called to team together in the work God has for them, with the husband being the team leader.**

- The word 'suitable' means someone who corresponded to him, someone who was like him. The word 'helper' reminds us that Adam had work to do - and God wanted him to partner with someone in doing it. Notice that God gave Adam the work he needed to do - and then he gave Eve to help him in it. They are to team together. This echoes 1:28 where both the man and the woman are commissioned by God to raise children, and to subdue and rule the earth. Similarly, in this verse she comes alongside him - and shares the call on his life, which now becomes the call on her life. That is why a marriage is team, a partnership in the work God has given them.
- But notice that Adam is clearly the leader of this team. Although no doubt Adam would be willing to help Eve, the point made here is that Eve is sent to help Adam. This implies that when it comes to a married couple teaming together in the call of God on that marriage, there is a line of authority. The husband is the head (as Ephesians 5:23 will later put it). He is the team leader. Of course they are equals! There is no superiority or inferiority implied. All that is implied is that as the couple team together in the work, the husband should take the responsibility of being the team leader, while the wife joyfully embraces and encourages his leadership.

**Read 2:21-22**

**A marriage partner is a wonderful gift to be cherished.**

- Eve is a gift from God to Adam. Fascinatingly, all that Adam contributes to God's formation of a wife is to sleep. Still today, when God gives us a marriage partner we should thank God for his act of grace.
- Matthew Henry famously comments on this verse by writing, 'She was not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.'

## Read 2:23

### **A marriage partner should be tenderly appreciated.**

- This is the first love poem. Adam delights in Eve. The word 'now' can also be translated 'at last'. Adam had become aware that there was something missing - and that something was *someone*. And at last he found her.
- The Hebrew word used for 'man' here is 'Ish' and the word for woman is 'Isha'. He recognizes that she is an extension of himself. She is bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. He appreciates her as an extension of himself. Ephesians 5:28-29 makes the same point: 'In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, people have never hated their own bodies, but they feed and care for them ...'. That's why married partners need to respect, appreciate, cherish and protect one another.
- But notice that despite the fact that she is similar to him, she is different to him - there is a mysterious component to the marriage here (which is why Ephesians 5:32 calls it a 'profound mystery'). Although a male and female have so much in common, there are differences that are created by God himself. These differences are meant to be celebrated - and are part of the mystery of attraction and partnership between a man and a woman.

## Read 2:24

### **Men and women need each other.**

- Part of the mysterious dimension of the relationship between Adam and Eve is that it is not so much a union that is described - but a re-union. The two become one - but not so long before the one became two. Genesis 1:27 makes a similar point: that only together do males and females fully reflect God's image. All-male company will lack something. And all-female company will lack something. Homosexual relationships will lack something. 1 Corinthians 7:11-12 makes this point beautifully: 'Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.'

### **Marriage is God's invention.**

- Marriage is God's idea. It is not a cultural invention. It is a timeless creation ordinance. That is why so often in our culture, where belief in God and belief in absolute values is rejected, it is not long before the marriage institution is undermined.
- When two people marry they start a new family unit. This is what is implied by the mention that a man must leave his father and mother to be married. And notice that it is not the presence of children, but the presence of a

covenant between a man and a woman that constitutes the family. When children come, they do not make the family - they are added to a family that already exists - a family of two.

**Married couples need to pursue oneness and intimacy.**

- Another implication is that the marriage relationship is the closest bond possible between humans, closer even than the relationship between one and one's parents. That is why marriage should be protected and celebrated. It is such a precious gift from God - and it such a special bond to be nurtured and protected. That is why divorce is so damaging. It severs something that was meant to last a lifetime. A divorce is a kind of amputation of two people who have become one.
- This verse speaks of being united to, and becoming one with. This refers to more than just sexual union. It refers to the meshing together of two personalities, two sets of dreams and hopes, two sets of values and experiences into one. Of course, individuality is not lost - but it is radically redefined in the marriage relationship.
- The goal of marriage is intimacy and oneness. Sexual oneness. Emotional oneness. Affection intimacy. Verbal intimacy. Intellectual oneness. A sharing of values. A deep heart-felt partnership in the same call of God. This requires work. It must be made a priority.

**Sex is the celebration and consummation of the marriage covenant.**

- Obviously, one major purpose of sex is procreation, but notice that this verse says nothing of procreation. Sex is, first and foremost, a celebration and a consummation of the marriage covenant.
- The phrase 'one flesh' refers to more than just the joining of bodies. It refers to more than skin on skin. It is the joining of hearts and spirits. This is why (as 1 Corinthians 6:16 will say it) sex is such an exclusive act. It is a life-bonding act. It bonds two lives together in a kind of, to use a made-up phrase, 'soul-tie'. It is such a powerful bond that it needs an enduring commitment. Sex is the life-uniting act that follows marriage, which is the life-uniting commitment. Without the context of intimacy, commitment and exclusivity sex is not safe. As difficult as it is to resist sexual temptation, the cost of compromise is too high. Sex is worth the wait!

**Read 2:25**

**God wants your relationships to be marked by transparency and intimacy.**

- This verse captures the rewards and the wonder of intimacy. They are naked - not only physically, but emotionally - in each other's sight. They have nothing to hide. They enjoy total vulnerability and transparency. They have no shame, no secrets, no fear of being found out, and no fear of rejection or judgment.

- This verse describes the way relationships were meant to be. Sadly, in a fallen world where sin has done its damage, we *hide* - from God and from each other. But Christ wants to set us free to, firstly be intimate, vulnerable and transparent in our relationship with him, and secondly to be intimate, vulnerable and transparent in our relationships with each other (see 1 John 1:7). Our need for Christ's transformation in our lives is great. The reward is enduring, joyful and deep relationships with God himself and with some others.

## Genesis 3 - Humanity's terrible fall

### Read 2:16-17

These verses from chapter 2 are the background on which chapter 3 happens.

#### **God is in charge, and there are consequences if you forget that.**

- God had created the man in a righteous state - but it was an untested righteousness. The tree of knowledge of good and evil represented the authority of God - as confirmed in the phrases 'God commanded the man' (v16) and 'you must not eat' (v17). It also represented the consequences of either obeying or disobeying God. Eaton writes, 'The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given that name because man was under a test. He will experience good if he obeys the command. He will experience evil if he disobeys the command.' The great consequence of disobedience is 'death' - which we will only be able to define from 3:7 onwards, when we explore what happened after they sinned.

#### **'The man' represents you.**

- One of the fascinating things in Genesis 1-3 is that it speaks of 'the man' (with the Hebrew word being 'adam'). We are not sure at what point it is correct to translate the word 'adam' as the name 'Adam'. Is it Genesis 3:17 or 3:21? Certainly by 4:25 it is a name. The point I make is this: although Adam definitely is a literal person (as the New Testament will confirm in verses such as Luke 3:38), the use of the word 'the man' shows that he represents all of humanity. The startling thing about the fall in the garden (as we will read of in chapter 3) is not that it happened, but that it happens.
- It is for this reason that Paul in Romans 5:12-21 will show that we are 'in Adam'. His disobedience is our disobedience. We are born with his broken image as sinners (notice, for example, how Genesis 5:3 tells us not that his son was born in the image of God, but in the image of Adam himself). Romans 5:12-21 tells us that precisely because of God's willingness to let another represent us in disobedience, he was willing to let another represent us in obedience - Jesus himself. Although all are born 'in Adam', the opportunity is given to all to be born again 'in Christ'.
- Humanity was once sinless. God did not create us sinful. In 3:1 we see that sin came from outside of humanity through Satan - who lured us into sin. The wonderful promise in the New Testament is that if we move from being 'in Adam' (in whom we were born) to being 'in Christ' (in whom we are born again) that we will be made sinless again (see 1 John 3:2 for example).

### Read 3:1

#### The devil is real and dangerously deceitful.

- The snake represents Satan - as the New Testament later makes clear (see Romans 16:20, and Revelations 12:9 for example). Given the fact that these verses have a parabolic aspect (although they speak of real events) I doubt we're meant to believe that a literal demon-possessed animal spoke to Eve. But certainly the devil did tempt Eve. Although it would be sad to see all snakes as representing evil (and many cultures have done just that) - the snake can depict aspects of Satan's character - his ability to slowly move into a situation without us realizing it, his ability to semi-hypnotize us with his 'stare'.
- The writer comments that he is crafty. The devil is a super-intelligent being who seeks to deceive us, like he did Eve. Later Paul would write, 'But I am afraid that just as Eve was led astray by the serpent's cunning, your minds may be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ' (2 Corinthians 11:3). Satan hates God, and hates humanity (those who bear God's image). Nowadays he hates the church too (see 1 Peter 5:8-9).
- Where does the devil come from? Jesus tells us that Satan was cast down to the earth like lightning (Luke 10:18). Satan was the first of God's creatures to fall - not humanity. Satan was once good, but for some reason fell. Although the Bible does not definitively explain this, many theologians have become convinced that God has put a second layer of meaning into Ezekiel 28:11-19, which at surface level speaks of the king of Tyre - but at a deeper level describes the fall of Satan, who is brilliant and beautiful (Ezekiel 28:12), was once sinless (Ezekiel 28:15), was an inhabitant of Eden (Ezekiel 28:13), is a cherub-angel (Ezekiel 28:14), and fell to the earth through proudly and vainly being corrupted by his own beauty (Ezekiel 28:17). Isaiah 14:12-13 can be read similarly.

### Read 3:1-5

#### Make sure that Satan does not turn you away from God.

- Satan wants to get us to turn away from God. That is his goal. He seeks to lead the whole world astray (see Revelations 12:9) and he wants to lead Christians and the church away from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11:3). And he uses deception - particularly, he seeks to undermine in our minds the trustworthiness of God himself. He uses doubt. There are four things we can do to resist the devil.
- **Never doubt God's word.** Notice how the devil asks, 'Did God really say...'(v2). He tries to make us doubt the Word of God. Or at least to neglect it, or forget it. We, as individuals and as a church, are in danger when we neglect, or challenge, or distort the clear teachings of the Bible. I am not saying that we should not challenge wrong interpretations of the Bible, but we must never challenge *the clear teaching* of the Bible. Rather

we should humbly and joyfully embrace it as God's Word to us. It is the way of life, and the way of freedom. It is still the main way that God speaks to us. Yes, he may speak to us in other ways too, but we must always check what we believe God may be saying to us against the Bible. If what we believe God is saying to us through other means contradicts the Bible's teachings, we must reject it.

- ***Never doubt God's power.*** God made the world, and he has power over and knowledge of all things, both now and in the future. He had made it clear to Adam that if he eats from the tree of knowledge they will *certainly* die (2:17). But then Satan blatantly challenges God's power over and knowledge of the future by saying that they will *not* certainly die (v4). Still today God has both the first word and the last word when it comes to all things. God is the controller of our destinies. What he says goes. He is sovereign.
- ***Never doubt God's goodness.*** Satan suggests that God was trying to withhold some real blessings and knowledge from them (v5). This makes it sound like God does not have their, and our highest interests in mind. But this is not true at all. God is good, and he really does want to lead us in the path that will bring the greatest joy and goodness into our lives, both now and forever.
- ***Never doubt God's authority.*** Satan invites them to 'become like God' (v5). In the preceding verses he had deflated their view of God and inflated their view of themselves! Still today this is what Satan does. He suggests that we, not God, should have the highest authority in our own lives. And most of the world has bought this lie. But how blasphemous - that the creature (that's us) could know more about itself, and be able to look after itself better than its creator! There is a throne at the centre of every human heart - and God alone is worthy of that place of honour and authority.
- The best thing we can do is to cling to God. In James 4:7 we're told that the most proactive way to overcome the devil's attack on our lives is to submit to God. We should proactively and daily affirm our whole-hearted faith in God's Word to us, God's power over us, God's goodness to us, and God's authority over us!

**Whenever you disobey, distrust or dethrone God, you sin.**

- What is sin? In verse 6 we see that the eating of the fruit of a forbidden tree is the sin. But this fruit is merely symbolic of something else -it symbolizes sin itself. So what is the sin it symbolizes? There are three answers:
- ***1) Sin is disobedience to God.*** God had commanded them not to eat of the tree. He had made his will for their lives clear. Whenever we do something that we know God does not want us to do, or whenever we don't do something we know God wants us to do, we sin (see James 4:17).
- ***2) Sin is distrust toward God.*** The essence of Satan's temptation to the woman was to undermine her trust in God's word, power, goodness and

authority. Whenever we fail to trust God we sin. 'Anything that does not come from faith, is sin' (Romans 14:23).

- **3) Sin is dethroning God in our lives.** Satan persuaded the woman to dethrone God in her own life, and to sit in the throne herself. This sin of dethroning God quickly leads to idolatry - which is replacing God with something else, whether that something else is ourselves, our career, money, pleasure, financial security or whatever. 'My people have committed two sins against me. They have rejected me as the spring of living water, and they have begun to drink of broken cisterns' (Jeremiah 2:13).

Read 3:2-3 and 3:6

**There are things you can do that will guarantee your defeat.**

- Satan wants to deceive and defeat you. Eve was defeated and deceived. Pondering how this happened can help us avoid the same danger of being deceived and lured away from God. So let us answer this question: 'What must we do to be defeated?'
- **1) Focus on what's forbidden.** God gave the couple an unlimited supply of wonderful foods to eat from thousands of trees and plants. But he forbade them from eating *just one tree*. Still today, God allows and encourages us to indulge ourselves in an almost-unlimited amount of pleasures and opportunities on this vast planet. But there are a *few things* that are out of bounds. If we focus on the millions of permitted pleasures we will be so busy that we will hardly notice the few forbidden ones. Satan got Eve to focus on the one thing she couldn't have, and to forget about all she could have. And he still does this today.
- **2) Converse with 'temptation' and the devil.** When Satan tried to tempt Jesus, Jesus responded by simply quoting the Scriptures. He refused to get into a conversation with the devil, or the temptation for that matter. Yet, Eve listened to the devil, tried to rationalize with him, and even listened to his counter-response. We're in danger when we begin a conversation with the devil, and with temptation. We are not to talk with temptation or the devil at all. The best response is to cling to God and the Bible.
- **3) Fail to protect each other.** God had told Adam not to eat of the tree (2:16,17). It was Adam's responsibility to pass that on to Eve. Satan tempted Eve precisely because she had received the revelation from God second hand, and was therefore more likely to turn from it. Shockingly, it seems that the whole time Eve was being tempted, Adam was there (v6) *doing nothing!* Perhaps the first sin was not Eve's sin of commission, but Adam's sin of omission. He failed to lovingly protect her. Still today, it is our responsibility to watch out for each other, to do what we can to help each other not to be deceived.
- **4) Let the voice of people be louder than God's.** Eve offered the fruit to Adam. Partially because she really thought it was good for him, and partially also because sinning with an accomplice is easier on one's

conscience - after all, the person can say 'we did it' not just 'I did it'. But if the first sin of Adam was to fail to protect Eve, the second sin was to put her wish and voice above the wish and voice of God. When we are more eager to please people, especially people close to us, than we are to please God we are in great danger.

- **5) Act independently.** Although Adam certainly should have protected Eve, notice how she did not reach out for it either. Surely she should not have dealt with this temptation on her own. She should have turned to her husband for help and advice - the one from whom she came, and the one for whom she was made, and the one with whom she was united. But she did not. She acted independently. Today, we're most vulnerable when we're isolated, and when we're in the habit of making decisions without referencing those people who are responsible to care for us - such as spouses, those believers we are accountable to, parents and pastors.
- **6) Rely on legalism.** Instead of relying on God to overcome this temptation, Eve relied on some rules that she made up. God had forbidden eating the fruit, but he had never said that she could not touch it - yet this is what Eve claimed. Still today, there is the subtle temptation to try overcome sin by relying on man-made rules, rather than on God himself. Legalism is powerless in the face of temptation as we see here. This does not mean that we cannot create some self-imposed rules on our lives to assist us in our battle against temptation, but we must never make those rules the standard of godliness, nor rely on them. Only a full reliance on God gives us the power to withstand.

#### **Beware of the three major ways that sin enters your life.**

- Verse 6 reveals the three 'means' of temptation, the three access points that sin usually enters into our lives through. It seems that John, in 1 John 2:16, rephrases this verse later in the Bible: 'For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful people, the lust of their eyes and their boasting about what they have and do—comes not from the Father but from the world.'
- **One access point of sin is our physical 'cravings'.** This refers to the way that temptation sometimes draws us in through our own physical appetites. These are sins that have to do with the pursuit of physical relief and pleasure. Eve was tempted because the fruit was 'good for food'. Still today, our physical appetites must be brought under control. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. We need to learn how to marshal our appetites. Instead of being governed by our cravings, we need to be governed by our obedience to God, and by wisdom. Eve let her body make a decision for her - she handed herself over to the longing for pleasure. Of course pleasure in itself is not wrong, but sometimes - when God has revealed it to be out of bounds - then it is wrong. Our desires for food, for sex, for ease, for stimulation - all these must be marshaled.
- **A second access point of sin is 'the lust of the eyes'.** The more Eve looked at the fruit, the more she wanted it. It was 'pleasing to the eye'. Eyesight has the power to strongly stimulate desires in us that may have

been dormant before then. David saw a woman bathing - and this led to adultery. Lot saw the riches of Sodom and Gomorrah - and this led him to move into the area. Laban saw the ring and the bracelets - and this stirred him to exploit Abraham. Achan saw a fine robe - and this led to theft. In our battle against sin, we must be very careful of what we look at. No wonder Job made a covenant with his eyes not to look at a woman lustfully. He understood that self-control begins with eye-control. If we lingeringly look at that which is desirable, the desire for it will grow stronger and stronger.

- ***A third access point of sin is 'the boasting of what we have and do'***. Eve perceived the fruit to be 'desirable for gaining wisdom'. This was an appeal to her ego. It was the sin of pride or self-worship (as opposed to worship of God), self-sufficiency (as opposed to God-sufficiency), and independence (as opposed to dependence on God). Pride makes us blind to sin. Only a heart that flames with a revelation of God is one that can overcome this sin. If we do not keep the eyes of our heart gazing on God's greatness and goodness, we will easily become overly impressed with ourselves - with what we have, what we do, and what we know - and the sin of pride takes root.
- *We must refuse sin to have access to our lives!* Temptation can be overcome. *We have an example of how Jesus refused sin to have access to his life.* In Matthew 4:1-11 the devil tempted Jesus in all three of these areas. The first temptation was to satisfy his hunger prematurely by turning stones into bread. This was an appeal to his physical cravings. The second temptation was to make him show off his powers. This was an appeal to pride. The third temptation was to show him the kingdoms of the world. This was an appeal to his eyes. The difference between Eve and Jesus is that Jesus overcame the temptation! Eve doubted the Word, whereas Jesus quoted the Word.

### **Refuse to let temptation lead you into sin.**

- At what point did Eve sin? There are two answers. One answer is that the moment she *believed* the devil's lies, she sinned. To be deceived does not just lead to sin, but is sin itself. The second answer is that the moment she *decided* to take and eat some of the fruit, she sinned. The moment desire became a decision, was the moment temptation became sin. Temptation is often unavoidable, but sin is avoidable!
- Three verses in particular help us to avoid the transition from temptation to sin. The first verse (1 Corinthians 10:12-13) tells us that temptation is inevitable and common, but that God will help us endure it so that we do not sin: 'So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to us all. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.' The second verse (James 1:14-15) helps us understand that if we do not actively resist the temptation, but instead passively entertain it, then it is very likely to transition into sin, which in turn brings about death

and destruction in our lives: 'Each of you is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.' A third verse (Ephesians 6:10-11) reminds us that we do not fight temptation in our own strength, but rather in the strength of Christ: 'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.' This means that we are to call on Christ's presence and strength when tempted.

### Read 3:7-13

#### **Sin brings death and destruction into your life and relationships - but Christ came to undo this!**

- God had warned that the consequence of sin is death (2:16,17). We cannot be *totally* sure that Adam and Eve would have physically lived forever in the garden even if they had not sinned, although it seems the tree of life may have sustained them (see 3:24). Although the mention of death *probably* included the reality of physical termination (see 3:19), we realize that death here refers to more than just physical death - it refers to all-round destruction and damage *in this life*. These verses show us *some* of the devastation that their sin brought into the world, and *some* of the devastation sin still brings into our world. The devastation comes mainly in the form of broken relationships, and the loss of peace ...
- **1) Sin causes a loss of peace within ourselves.** Adam and Eve had only known shame-free innocence (see 2:25). Now they were ashamed of their nakedness. This speaks of an experiential knowledge of evil and sin, along with the shame and guilt it brings. The reason they felt guilty is that they were guilty. They also felt afraid of being found out (v10). Similarly today, sin leads to feelings of guilt, shame and fear. Not surprisingly, *sin causes us to attempt to cover up our lack of peace within*. We see that not only did they feel shame, guilt and fear. They tried to cover it up. The fig-leaves represented their self-salvation plan. Still today, people try compensate for their sense of guilt with self-salvation plans like religiosity, good works, and the pursuit of mystical experiences. Somehow we believe if we just do good, or experience something supernatural, peace within will be restored. But our efforts are in vain. God alone can rescue us from the loss of peace within.
- **2) Sin causes a loss of peace with God.** Most tragically, they sought to avoid God himself. They ran and hid from God. Though they were made to enjoy fellowship and friendship with him, even walking with him in the cool of the day - yet they no longer sought his fellowship at all. The question, 'Where are you?' (v8) reflects the pain in God's heart at that moment - he had created humanity for fellowship with himself, but devastatingly they had spurned him. Ironically, instead of clinging to their creator, they cling to the trees (v8) - to creation. Still today, the sinful heart is an idolatrous

heart - we worship and serve created things rather than the creator (Romans 1:25). We have lost peace with God. We have rejected relationship with him. More than that, *sin desensitizes us to the horror of sin itself*. We see that neither the man nor the woman own up to their sin. The man blames the woman and God, and the woman blames the devil. This is one of the tragic consequences of sin - it has the ability to undermine our ability to own up to our actions before God. Once we have been deceived by sin, we tend to begin to deceive ourselves that the fault lies out there somewhere. We play the role of victim. At first we may be willing to call something a sin, but once we give in to it we tend to justify it and excuse it as though it was something unavoidable. 'We're just human,' we remind ourselves. All the time the separation between us and God widens. Proverbs 18:13 reminds us, 'He who conceals a sin does not prosper.'

- **3) Sin causes a loss of peace with others.** Before the fall, the couple enjoyed the sweetest fellowship imaginable - now they are torn apart in distrust and accusation. The man blames the woman, although he was clearly culpable (v12). It was his job to protect her, but now it didn't seem to matter if she came under God's judgment. He has failed to love his God-given soul-mate. Still today, sin devastates relationships between people. If we track back the cause of relational breakdown there is almost always sin at its root.
- *In conclusion, sin - our sin and the sin of others - is the root cause of so much of the pain and brokenness we experience.* The harmony of Eden was shattered by it. And still today it fragments, breaks and distorts our lives - and our relationships with God, with each other, and with our very selves. Tim Keller writes, 'God made a good, beautiful world filled with beings who share in this life of joy and peace by knowing, serving, and loving God and one another. Instead, we chose to centre our lives on ourselves and on the pursuit of things rather than on God and others. This has led to the disintegration of creation and the loss of peace - within ourselves, between ourselves, and in nature itself. War, hunger, poverty, injustice, racism, bitterness, meaninglessness, despair, sickness, and death all are symptoms of this 'divorce' from God.'
- What does this mean to us? 1) *It means that our need for a Saviour is great.* We need a Saviour who will forgive us, set us free from the power of sin, and even undo the damage of sin in our lives and relationships. Wonderfully, Jesus came as Saviour - and he is ready to save all those who call on him. 2) *It means we should avoid sin.* Next time we're tempted let's remember that temptation always over-promises, and that sin always under-delivers!

## Read 3:14-15

### Jesus came to save you from Satan, sin and death.

- When God tells the snake that he will eat dust it is a reference to his total defeat. Satan is beyond redemption. God first addresses Satan - and does so with a curse. But he does not curse the woman, nor the man (see verses 16-19). This means that despite the rebellion and the lack of repentance in the people at this stage, God still seems to hold the hope of redemption, but for the devil there is no hope of redemption. Elsewhere in the Bible, we're told that the devil is doomed (see Revelations 20:10).
- Verse 15 is a verse full of mystery. *It tells us of enmity between the woman and the devil.* Though the woman and the snake once had a friendly conversation (notice how open she was with it in 3:1-4), in the future she would be less open, and more cautious toward the devil. *It tells us that the devil would have seed or offspring.* This is probably a reference to all those who would be seduced by the devil's lies. It reminds us of how Jesus shockingly told the Pharisees that their father was the devil (see John 8:44). *It tells that the woman would have offspring who would be at enmity with the devil and his offspring.* The word translated offspring or seed can be a reference to either a singular person or many people. However, the last sentence in verse 15 suggests that the offspring referred to here would be a single person. *It tells us of how this person will one day defeat Satan, though being wounded in the process.* 'He will crush your head' means total defeat, whereas 'you will strike his heel' refers to mere wounding. We cannot recover from a crushed head, but we can recover from a wounded heel.
- Verse 15 is the first prophecy about Jesus. Theologians call it the proto-gospel. 1 John 3:8 seems to refer to it, '... the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.' Jesus came to this earth as the seed of a woman (perhaps there is a reference here to his virgin birth, since Jesus alone of all people was *not* the seed of a man). On the cross, Satan sought to destroy Jesus but he did not. He merely struck his heel. Jesus resurrected victorious. However, much to Satan's surprise his very attempt to destroy Jesus on the cross, was what made it possible for Jesus to destroy Satan and his work. Jesus made a public spectacle of him, triumphing over him on the cross (Colossians 2:15). The cross was God's method of redemption. The cross of Christ was the undoing of the sin of the garden. That is why Romans 16:20 tells us that as we trust in Christ we too will crush Satan under our feet. Jesus came to set us free from sin, and Satan, and death. What a wonderful Saviour he is! Best we entrust our lives to him entirely. There is no other means of salvation. Our self-salvation plans (think of the couple trying to cover themselves with fig-leaves) are futile. Jesus alone can save us from the three great enemies: Satan, sin and death. And not only that - he came to restore to our lives Eden's peace - peace with God, with each other, and within.

**The battle of the sexes results from sinfulness - but Christ came to undo this!**

- The fall of humankind has resulted in the intensification of pain. For woman, this pain is experienced with regard to birth and child-rearing (v16). But for the man, the pain is with regard to his work (v17).
- The phrase 'your desire will be for your husband' can mean one of two things. Firstly, it can be a reference to the tendency in a woman to find her identity primarily in a man. Although women are first and foremost image-bearers (see 1:26) who're meant to find their identity and security primarily in God, the sinful nature makes us find in a person what we're meant to find in God. Secondly, it can be a reference to the tendency in a woman to usurp her husband's authority. The word 'desire' is the same word used in Genesis 4:7 where it speaks of sin's ambition to control a person. Instead of willingly submitting to the man's God-given role of team leadership in a marriage, the woman would begin to try to take that role for herself.
- The phrase 'and he will rule over you' suggests that the husband, instead of lovingly leading her, would begin to unlovingly dominate her. It is noteworthy that this is the second way in which the man fails the woman - the first was in abdicating his responsibility to proactively protect her against the temptation (see 3:6).
- Across history, cultures have been marked by 1) women who sought to find their primary identity in a man, 2) women who tried to gain power and dominance over men, 3) men who have abused and dominated women instead of loving and protecting them, 4) and men abdicating their responsibility to lovingly lead their wives and families. This is all a result of human sinfulness. Instead of men and women teaming together as one, and husbands and wives intimately partnering (which is what God intended for us), men and women, and husbands and wives have battled *against* each other. Instead of wives submitting to the loving leadership of their husbands, they have sought to undermine it. Instead of husbands lovingly leading their wives, they have either abused their position of leadership, or have abdicated it entirely.
- There is no part of our lives and cultures that is untouched by sin's damaging effects. We are sinners in desperate need of a Saviour. Thankfully and wonderfully, Christ came to undo these damaging effects of the sinful nature in our lives and cultures!

### Read 3:17-19

**The loss of joy in work results from sinfulness - but Christ came to undo this!**

- Adam was born to work (see 2:15, 19-20). Work was meant to be meaningful, creative and joyful. God tells Adam that he will continue to work (in this case as a farmer) but that it will no longer be easy or greatly rewarding. The output (of food) will not match the input (of work). Work has lost its sweetness because of sin.
- Christ came to restore us, and to undo this curse of sin in our lives (see Galatians 3:13). He wants to restore to us some of the joy, meaningfulness and sweetness that comes from work - much like Adam experienced it before he fell. Since most of what we do with the hours of our lives is to work, Christ wants to help us find joy and meaning in our work. He is very interested in all of our lives - not just the so-called 'spiritual' components of church involvement, Bible reading and prayer. Until the aspect of our work has been positively impacted Christ, a massive part of our lives has not yet experienced the redemption that Christ brings.

**Creation fell with humanity in its sin - but Christ came to undo this!**

- Mysteriously, the very land was damaged by human sinfulness. It began to produce thorns and thistles (v18). The fall of humanity from God mysteriously led to the fall of creation into being 'subjected to frustration' and in 'bondage to decay' (as Romans 8:20-21 puts it). Although the Bible does not unpack this theme with much detail, it does offer a theological explanation for the diseases and ecological and natural disasters that regularly inflict great pain on humanity.
- Wonderfully, we're told that the redemption of humanity will also result in the redemption of all creation. Christ came to this planet not only to redeem and restore humanity, but to redeem and restore all things (see Matthew 19:28). It is not only Christ's mission to restore us, but to restore all things. Certainly, Christ came to first rescue humanity, but then also intends to rescue all creation (see Romans 8:19). This will happen when God, after purging the world of evil, will create the new heavens and the new earth (see Revelations 21:1-5). But already now, the church and Christians, are to be agents of the new thing God is doing in creation - we should be at the forefront of caring for, protecting and restoring creation to God's intended beauty.

### Read 3:20-21

**As you trust in Christ as your Saviour, God clothes you with his own righteousness.**

- As we have seen, Genesis 3:15 has been called 'the proto-gospel' by theologians because it speaks prophetically of Jesus, on the cross,

overcoming the enemy and undoing his works. These verses (v20-21) connect to that verse. They serve as a prophetic picture of two aspects of salvation. Let me explain...

- *Notice firstly that Adam indirectly expresses faith in God's promise of a Saviour.* Adam has just been told that he was going to die (3:19). It is then a strange response for him to immediately respond by naming his wife Eve, which means 'the mother who gives life'. A more likely response was to name his wife 'the mother of all dying'. Eaton rightly argues that the more likely reason he names Eve this is because he has just heard God's promise that one of her offspring will overcome Satan and his works of sin and death (3:16). As he names her Eve it is as if he says, 'Despite the mess we have got ourselves in, God is graciously going to bring redemption to this world through one of your descendants. There is hope.'
- *Notice secondly how God responds by clothing them.* Their nakedness depicted their guilt, shame and loss of innocence. They had tried to solve the problem of the guilt themselves with fig-leaves. But now God himself gives them the gift of covering their shame and guilt. He sacrifices an innocent animal on their behalf, and uses its skin to cover them.
- *Putting these two insights together, we have an amazing picture of salvation.* Firstly, salvation comes to us by faith in Christ as our Saviour. Like Adam, we say, 'Despite the mess we have got ourselves in, God has graciously brought life through Jesus Christ, who has defeated our enemies of Satan, sin and death.' Secondly, salvation is God clothing us with his own righteousness. Christ on the cross became our substitute and received the punishment we deserved, and now we have received his righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are clothed with it. Our sins have been removed, and in its place we are clothed with Christ himself (Galatians 3:27). What a wonderful gift of salvation! 'This righteousness from God comes by faith in Jesus Christ ... for all have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory, but are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus' (Romans 3:22-24).

<b>Read 3:22-24</b>
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**The loss of God's presence is the result of sinfulness - but Christ came to undo this!**

- In verse 21 we see that God wonderfully graced Adam and Eve, but it seems that this was his way of saying that he was not giving up on his plan for the human race - because in it is a picture of how he would redeem them through Christ. But now we see that sin had not yet been dealt with - and the consequences remain.
- It seems that the couple were not created immortal since they needed the tree of life to live forever (v22). It seems that fellowship with, and obedient dependence on God is what sustained them. Sadly, God told them that, in

light of their sin, eventually they would physically die (3:19) - and now we see how - he would forbid access to the tree of life (v22).

- These verses vividly depict the major consequence of sin - *it separates us from God* (see Isaiah 59:2). God had intended us to live our lives in God's presence, being sustained by his gift of eternal life (as depicted in the eating of the tree of life), enjoying relationship with him (as depicted in the way the couple used to walk with God in the garden (see 3:8)). We were made to live *on* God in the way our bodies live on oxygen. We were made to live *with* God in the way that Adam and Eve lived with each other. We were made to live *for* God's glory. Yet, devastatingly, Adam and Eve had an experiential knowledge of good (since they were once sinless) *and evil* - and as a result, though they still reached out for life (v22), he was banished from God's intimate presence (which is what Eden symbolized). The human race, despite all our apparent progress has a problem: Outside of Christ, we are 'darkened in our understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in us from the hardening of our hearts' (Ephesians 4:18).
- When we put our trust in Christ, wonderfully we have access to God, to his presence and his life. We can eat of the tree of life (see Revelations 2:7). We can walk with God in fellowship. We can experience his presence with us. Although, while on earth, our experience of God's tangible presence is limited, and we must still live by faith, yet the day will come when we will be with God forever in a glorious new heaven and new earth. Stunningly, our after-life is situated in a city *built around a garden* - we get to live in Eden again. Because of Christ, we're no longer banished from his presence - we're invited to come to him!