

Man and His Maker

Session One Introduction to Genesis

1. Overview and Objectives

a. **Appetite** for God's word

*"How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"
Psalm 119: 103*

The bible is a book that demands more than a cursory reading. The further you go beneath the surface, the richer it gets. This is particularly true of this *book of beginnings*. Genesis is not just Hebrew narrative; it is a masterpiece of Hebrew narrative. It's an ideal place to grow our appreciation for the treasure of God's written word.

b. **"Big Picture"** Perspective

It's good to step back from time to time and consider life from a "big picture" perspective. Men, in particular, are prone to get caught up in the demands of everyday life- our careers, the responsibilities of family life, church & civic duties. We get overwhelmed and swept along with the current. It's often helpful to find a fixed point and stop to ask ourselves (or re-ask ourselves) those foundational questions:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- What are the real issues that I need to come to grips with? (The issues that will have eternal consequences)

Genesis is that fixed point. It takes us back to the beginning and helps us find answers to those foundational questions.

c. **Relevant** to Men Today

It is not too difficult to be biblical if you don't care about being relevant; it is not difficult to be relevant if you don't care about being biblical. But if you want to be both biblical and relevant in your teaching, it is a very difficult task indeed.-Howard Hendricks

Understanding scripture is a two step process:

The first step is to examine the “**then and there**”. What was the context? What was the author’s purpose and what was he trying to communicate to the original audience?

The second step is to consider the “**here and now**”. What are the legitimate implications and what significance do they have for us today?

2. Structure and Content of Genesis

- Genesis is the first part of a five chapter work referred to as the **Pentateuch**. It was not written at the times the events describe but rather in the period after the exodus as a prehistory.
- There are two basic parts to Genesis:
 - **Prehistory** (chapters 1-11) – Consists of creation, human origins, the fall of humanity, and the progression of evil.
 - The Beginning of Redemption Through God’s **Covenant** People (chapters 12-50)
- Consist of a **prologue** (1:1-2:3) followed by ten episodes or **accounts** (*toledot*). (“the account of the line of ...”) Each account focuses primarily on the descendants rather than the titled ancestor. For example; *the account of the line of Terah* is really about Abraham.

3. The Author

- a. Most scholars believe that **Moses** did in fact author the body of not only Genesis, but the entire Pentateuch.
 - The Pentateuch attributes large portions of its contents to Moses. [i.e. the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the cultic laws of Leviticus]
 - Jesus and His followers recognize Mosaic authorship (Matt 8:4, Luke 16:31, John 1:17, Acts 3:22)
 - Writers of the balance of the O.T. recognize Moses as the author. (Josh 8:31, 1 Kings 2:3, 2 Chron. 23:18, Nehemiah 8:14)
 - Moses’ training in Pharaoh’s court would have given him the skills to write such a masterpiece as well as unique access to ancient Near Eastern myths which show an interesting correlation to Genesis 1-11. (More about that later)
 - As the prophet who is given the divine call to establish a new theocratic order (thru the Covenant of the Law) in God’s chosen people; he would makes sense to be God’s selection as the one who would provide a written historical background for Israel.

- b. While evidence is strong that Moses played the central role in the composition of Genesis, there is also strong evidence that he is **not the only contributor**.
- Moses clearly used previous sources for information. For instance in Gen 5:1 he refers to “the written account of Adam’s line”. In Numbers 21:14 he cites the Book of Wars. It was common for ancient writers of the day to use sources to compose their work.
 - It is also likely that there were post-Mosaic additions. For instance how could Moses have written the account of his death in Deuteronomy 34? Also there are a number of anachronisms. (i.e. the reference to Dan in Gen 14:14 even though we know that Dan was named after Abraham’s great-grandson; the reference to Ur of the Chaldeans when this named people actually came after Moses in the first millennium B.C. Most scholars attribute these supplements to post-exilic redactors who were charged with updating the scriptures for the people of Israel.

4. Historical Authenticity

Did these events really occur? Is Israel’s faith based on historical fact or fiction? As Christians, we believe all scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16). This alone is enough to establish the reliability of Genesis. (God cannot lie) However there is other evidence that points to the historical truth of the account:

- The narrator of Genesis presents himself as a **historian** presenting events in a chronologically coherent manner.
- The narrator **validates** his material as much as possible- through location (2:10-14); through genealogies (5:1-32); by citing sources (5:1). His reference “to this day” is method of adding personal testimony in order to confirm that the received and recorded information was true.
- There is **archeological** evidence. The religious practices of the patriarchs agree with practices of the early 2nd millennium as supported by a variety of Middle Bronze Age (1950-1550 B.C.) texts which have been uncovered. The fact that the practices of the patriarchs did not agree with the religious practices of God’s people after the establishment of Mosaic Law gives further credence to the accuracy.

Although the narrator’s evidence will not satisfy the demands of modern historiography, it does demonstrate that he intended to write real history and not myth or legend. However, the purpose of biblical narrative is not merely to recount history but to retell stories in a way that gives meaning and direction to God’s people. While not discounting the historicity of the accounts, it is important to remember that these stories are primarily theological literature. In simple terms it is history with a purpose.

5. Genre

The book of Genesis is considered by scholars to be a masterpiece of **Hebrew Narrative**. In order to better appreciate its writing it is helpful to be aware of some important points.

Keys to interpreting Genesis:

- The determining factor in understanding the meaning of any passage in scripture is the original **author's intent**. For instance, it is helpful to realize that Genesis 1-2 was probably a polemic against ancient rival creation accounts. It certainly was not an argument against modern scientific understandings of the age of the universe. An attempt to use Genesis 1-2 to argue specifics about the how and when of creation is going beyond the purpose of the author.
- The writer and original audience are distant from us, not only in time, but in language and culture as well. For this reason it is helpful to consult the work of **professional commentators**. It will take committed work but the reward is well worth the effort.
- Hebrew narrative is seldom **wordy**. The words that are used are typically pregnant with meaning. Close attention to details is required as significance is often found in a single descriptive word or even the omission of a word where it might be expected.
- The teaching in Hebrew narrative is often **implicit** rather than **explicit**.
- It is helpful to be familiar with the basic grammatical techniques and devices (**poetics**) used by the narrator. Examples include:
 - Key Word- a word or root word that is intentionally repeated within the text. These words provide focus, meaning, or emphasis in a text.
 - Refrain- repeated phrase or sentence that emphasizes a point and also is often used to divide material. (i.e. "The account of the descendents of...")
 - Contrast/Comparison- association or juxtaposition of dissimilar/similar things in order to make a point
 - Structural Patterns- author's use of patterns to invite comparison or contrast.
 - Climax/Intensification- the author's use of escalating action.
 - Foreshadowing- the inclusion of something in one part of the narrative to prepare the reader for what is still to come
 - Inclusion- the repetition of features at the beginning and the end of the unit.

Reflection

1. Take the time to introduce yourself to the other men in your small group and talk briefly about how you would like to benefit from this first semester of Men's Fraternity.
2. Describe a time when study caused you to re-evaluate a portion of scripture that was previously misunderstood; or perhaps wrongfully applied.
3. What points, if any, caught your attention or surprised you in this introduction to Genesis.

Suggested References for Further Study

How to Read Genesis
Tremper Longman III
InterVarsity Press (2005)

Genesis: A Commentary
Bruce K. Waltke
Zondervan (2001)

Genesis
The NIV Application Commentary
John H. Walton
Zondervan (2001)

Genesis 1-11:26
The New American Commentary
Kenneth A. Matthews
Broadman & Holman Publishers (1996)

Session Two The Prologue Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Psalm 19:1

In them He has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat. Psalm 19: 4-6

1. The Summary

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Gen 1:1

Verse one is a summary statement and not meant to be taken as the first step of creation.

- a. *In the beginning God...* **Elohim** is the Hebrew word that represents His transcendent relationship with creation. Unlike the rest of creation, He is without beginning. The prologue is the only story in biblical narrative with only one character in the plot. God has no peer, no accomplice, and no opposition.
- c. *Created...* **Bara** is the Hebrew word for create that is used exclusively of God. It denotes an intentional completed action of immeasurable power.
- d. *...The heavens and the earth.* This is a **merism** (two extremes to represent completeness). In all its uses found in the Old Testament (Deut. 3:24; Isa. 65:17; Jer. 23:24), it serves as compound phrase that refers to the complete organized universe.

2. Setting the Record Straight

Understanding the author's intent is a key element to correctly interpret scripture. It's important to realize that written accounts existed prior to Moses' day from three different cultures- Egyptian, Canaanite, and Mesopotamian. Most scholars now believe that Genesis 1-2 is written, at least in part to refute these accounts. Reading Genesis 1-2 in light of these rival accounts will enrich our understanding, mainly through contrast.

The commonality of rival accounts:

- All contain **multiple** gods/goddesses
- Most begin with a **theogony**- a record of the birth and generations of the gods
- Creation is typically the result of **incidental** or **capricious** action by the gods.
- Mesopotamian and Canaanite accounts feature **conflict** as the center of creation.
- None explain the creation of the **cosmos**. Parts of the cosmos (i.e. the sun, moon) were actually deified.

3. Six Days

The use of day is a literary device of the narrator designed to frame the story into organized segments. Each frame begins with *Then God said, "Let there be..."* Each frame ends with a day.

The Structural Pattern:

- The first three days God created **realms**.
- The second three days God created **inhabitants** of these realms.

Day 1

Light/darkness

Day 2

sky/water

Day 3

land

Day 4

Sun/moon/stars

Day 5

birds/fish

Day 6

animals/humans

Implications:

- a. Creation is the result of **God's deliberate will**. (Creation doesn't simply emanate from God.
- b. God is **intentional** and **systematic** in his design. He creates with the end in mind.
- c. **Separation** is a repeated feature. God's creation is one of order, boundaries, distinctions, and absence of conflict.

4. The Climax of Creation

Intensification is a literary technique used by the narrator to reflect a sense of movement from lesser to greater. In the creation story, the action escalates progressively from the simpler to the more complex. This not only points to the systematic nature of God's work, but to the pinnacle of God's creation-man.

The narrator highlights the creation of man in a number of ways:

a. God announces His intention **beforehand**. "Let us make man..." rather than the impersonal "Let there be".

b. Verse 27 is the first **poem** of the bible. Bara (create) is repeated 3 times.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1: 27

c. We are uniquely crafted to bear the **image of God**. We only reach our design potential when we begin to be a reflection of God.

d. Man is given the **authority to rule**. By assigning man dominion over creation, God demonstrates His ultimate authority and at the same time sets the stage for the ultimate mutiny which in turn sets in motion the greatest story of all human history- The story of redemption.

5. The Epilogue

By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. Genesis 2: 2-3

Seven-day periods were well known in the ancient Near East and other cultures. Israel, however, uniquely sanctifies the seventh day for rest. Having this knowledge we can point to some likely answers:

a. God willingly accommodates himself to finite **understandable** terms. God is certainly not bound by time yet he creates time and works within it.

b. Introducing the Sabbath at this point establishes the fact that the God of creation and the God of Israel are **one** in the same.

c. God's work in one week becomes stamped upon his people as a **blueprint** for their **sanctification**.

Reflection

1. Obviously, we have more knowledge today concerning our universe than the original audience of the narrator. Does this additional knowledge diminish or enhance the glory of God as seen through his work?
2. Describe a time in the past when you were captivated by the beauty and/or vastness of God's creation.
3. With all its complexity, have you ever viewed creation as somewhat random? How has this study in chapter one of Genesis affected that view?

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Session Three

Exploring Our Unique Design

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1: 27

1. Foundational Truths:

- a. God **made** us.
- b. We bear our Creator's **image**: The "**Imago Dei**"
- c. We have inherent **value** and **dignity** because of the **image** we bear.
 - Our value is independent of:
 - Our **gender** or **ethnicity**
 - Our **position** or **power in society**
 - Our **success** or **profession**
 - Our **wealth** or **poverty**
 - Our **family** or **ancestors**
 - Our **age** or **infirmities**

Being made in the **image** of God confers on us **dignity**, entrusts us with **responsibility**, and implants in us a certain **potential**, namely the capacity to **mirror** our Creator.

2. How did God design you?

- a. God made each of us unique and wonderful. (Psalm 139:13,14)
- b. God recreated us in Christ and focused our purpose. (Ephesians 2:10) *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which he prepared in advance for us to do.”*

Summary

God has uniquely designed us in His image and prepared good works for us to do.

3. What are your strengths?

Strengths are both natural abilities and learned skills that tend to emerge in your relationships, occupations, hobbies, and family life.

Self-Reflection – most people are a fairly good judge of their strengths. With a little self-reflection you can begin to identify some of them. Let’s take a few minutes and answer the following questions.

- Imagine that you’re offered three different jobs.
 - HEAD: requires skills such as thinking, accounting, organizing, planning, and writing.
 - HANDS: requires skills such as constructing, cooking, repairing, building, and cleaning.
 - HEART: requires skills such as entertaining, counseling, praying, caring, and decorating.

Which job would you excel at the most? _____

- Consider some of the tasks that your life consists of, whether at work, at home, or with friends.

- What task do you look forward to?

- What task do you perform and time flies by?

- What task do you feel fulfilled afterwards?

- Consider your occupation (or how you spend your day). Are you good at your job? In what area especially?

- Do you ever say to yourself, "I could do better at this than he or she is doing"? If so, in what areas?

- Circle three areas that you think you are naturally gifted in.

the arts

athletics

business

construction

cooking

counseling

decorating

entertaining

mechanical

medical

multi-media

musical

office work

teaching

writing

Others' Opinions – you can get an even better indication of what your strengths are by seeking the opinions of others.

- Ask three people who know you well, and are from different arenas in your life, what your top three strengths are.

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

- Have you been complimented more than once about a particular strength of yours? If so, which one?

- Are people amazed at how you do something that you find comes relatively easy for you? If so, what is that something?

Three Strengths – in light of the questions above, what would you say are three of your top strengths?

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

Why Are They Important?

Strengths with a Purpose

God intentionally designs and utilizes the giftedness of his church to continue his mission of **restoring** the world. Each believer's unique strengths play a vital role in **equipping** the church for this purpose.

Strengths Point to a What

Identifying your strengths is important because they give you a general idea of what **tasks** and **skills** you bring to God's project. You offer the most in the pursuit of God's kingdom when you bring your best—your unique strengths.

4. What Is Your Personality?

Personality is one's unique, God-given behavioral style, which involves distinct ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

List some adjectives that describe your personality.

Why Is It Important?

Personality with a Purpose

God does not create each individual with a certain **personality** just for fun (though it is fun), but rather so that each **individual** can fulfill God's mission of redemption in a way **unlike** anyone else.

Personality Points to the HOW

Identifying your personality is important because it gives you a general idea of **how** you will offer your **strengths** to enhance the kingdom of God.

Suggested Resources

- *Maximize Your Effectiveness* by Aubrey Malphurs
- *Go Put Your Strengths to Work* by Marcus Buckingham
- www.youruniquedesign.com (fee)
- www.outofservice.com/bigfive (free)
- www.onlinediscprofile.com (fee)
- www.myersbriggsreports.com

Reflection

1. Talk within your group about what it means to you to bear God's image.
2. Name one of your top three strengths that you wrote down. Why do you consider this one of your top strengths?
3. As a part of the body of Christ, how have you or could you in the future use this strength to advance the kingdom of God in Jackson?
4. What is something you're not very good at—a weakness? Why is it important for you to know both your strengths and weaknesses?
5. How would you describe your personality?
6. Recall the strengths that you identified earlier. How does your personality affect how you offer these strengths?
7. What aspects of your personality can be harmful? How can you guard against this?
8. What would happen if you surrounded yourself with people who had a similar personality as your own? What are the benefits of surrounding yourself with people who have different personalities?

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Session Four

The Garden

Genesis 2:4 – 2:25

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. Gen 2:4

1. Overview

a. *Structure*

This is the story of what was brought forth from the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is the most foundationally important account of the entire bible because it sets the stage for everything that follows. If you consider the bible as a drama written by God, these first four chapters of Genesis introduce the characters as well as establish the plot.

- i. ***The Prologue*** (Gen 1:1-2:3)
Establishes God as the protagonist
- ii. ***The First Account*** (Gen 2:4-4:24)
 - God's **Provision** (Gen 2:4-2:25)
Introduces Adam and Eve as the agonists
 - Man's **Disobedience** (Gen 3:1–3:19)
Introduces the serpent as the antagonist
 - The **Corruption** of God's Creation through the Escalation of Sin (Gen 4:1-24)
- iii. ***Plot Summary***

God creates a people to be His image bearers and stewards over the earth which was created for their benefit. An adversary enters the picture and persuades the people to bear his image instead, thus breaking their relationship with God and corrupting the order of his creation.

The rest of the bible consists of the plot resolution- the process undertaken by God to rescue his people and restore them to their intended condition in a new heaven and earth. This process is called redemption.

b. Style

The style is **artistic** rather than scientific.

Scenes are painted as an artist might envision them. God is depicted as a potter (forming man) and a gardener (designing a beautiful garden).

c. Theme (Chapter Two)

God is revealed as **compassionate** and **immanent** in his provision for man.

The first chapter of Genesis reveals God as being omnipotent and transcendent in his work of creation. The combination of these two natures of God was essentially foreign to the pagan myths. You cannot read and accept Genesis 1 and be a pantheist (God permeates all of creation and is therefore not differentiated from creation). Likewise, you can't read and accept chapter 2 and be a deist (God has created the world in a way that allows it to operate on its own).

d. The creation of man

The story begins by letting us know that there was “no shrub..., no plant...and no man to work the ground. Right away we see a hint that this relationship will involve man fulfilling a role. God is going to delegate responsibility to man.

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Gen 2:7

- *Lord God* (Yahweh Elohim)- Elohim is the creator God; Yahweh the covenant God who initiates a relationship
- *formed* (yasar)- This denotes artisanship
- *breath of life*- Humans are sustained by the very breath of God
- *a living being*- Traditionally translated as soul. This is meant to emphasize the uniqueness of man among other animals.

2. God’s Provision for Man

a. *Now the Lord God planted a garden...*

“Garden” comes from a Hebrew root word that means enclosed or protected and it refers to a park like setting with exotic trees and landscaping. The ancient audience would be familiar with the concept. It was common for kings and nobles to have these garden sanctuaries that adjoined their palaces or temples. What was novel about the Genesis Two garden is that it was not reserved for the king. It’s a space uniquely created for humans to enjoy; not only creation but the presence of God as well.

This initiative of God to create a space where his people can have access to him is consistent throughout scripture.

Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

Lev 26: 11-12

In whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. Eph 2:21-22

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them. Rev 21:3

Specifics of the garden;

i. Every tree that is pleasing to the **sight** and good for **food**...

This garden was aesthetically pleasing as well as practical. God's provision for us goes far beyond meeting our basic needs.

ii. In the middle of the garden were the **tree of life**...

This is not necessarily a tree of immortality. More accurately, it was a tree that sustained and enhanced life at a level beyond the natural.

Solomon referred to it as the fulfillment of longing:

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Prov 13:12

iii. And the tree of the knowledge of **good** and **evil**.

This is a merism meant to communicate all moral knowledge. The fact that God places a restriction on this tree implies that only God has the capacity to appropriately create a system of ethics and moral judgments

iv. A **river**...to water the garden

An abundant supply of water flowed from Eden to water the garden and then branch out to the four corners of the earth. Life is sustained through a divine source.

d. God places man in the garden- to work it and take care of it.

Having a role and responsibility is another provision from God. Being before the fall verifies that work is a gift from God, not a curse.

e. I will make a helper suitable for him.

Suitable (neged), meaning *adequate* or *corresponding to*, indicates a mutual dependency.

“He took one of his ribs”- This is a poetic way of describing God’s intent for women to serve beside her man.

“The woman is not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved”. Matthew Henry

“For this reason” (man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife) indicates the archetypal intent of the story. The bond of marriage has priority over the bond of procreation.

3. God’s Ambition for Man

God gives Adam a tremendous amount of freedom but it doesn’t come without expectations. Understanding those expectations as presented before the Fall helps us to see God’s true intention for our lives and focus our aspirations on the things that really matter.

a. Living in trust of God

God doesn’t spend a lot of time explaining why the tree of knowledge is forbidden. He just gives the consequences. God expects us to trust in the goodness of his character and truthfulness of his word. Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God and a prerequisite for enjoying his presence.

*b. Living with a **purpose***

Responsibility is one of the greatest blessings that God bestows. Work, as God originally intended it, is inherently fulfilling and productive.

*c. Living in **relationship** with others*

The gift of the bride represents the ideal of marriage before the Fall and provides a basis for roles within the home. Later it serves as a metaphor for Christ's relationship with the church. On a broader note, God expects us to live in relationships with others rather than alone. These relationships should be mutually dependent and complimentary.

Reflection

1. Chapter one describes God as all powerful and separate from the rest of creation. Chapter two describes him as compassionate and involved in creation. How does combining these characteristics change your perspective of what God is really like?
2. Why would God, who is all powerful, elect to delegate responsibility to man? Looking back at chapter 2, what are some of the freedoms granted to man and in what ways is God's sovereignty maintained?
3. If fruit from the tree of knowledge was forbidden by God, why do you think he included it in the garden? How can it be considered a provision from God?

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Session Five

Taking Inventory

Last week we saw how God situated man in a unique environment. Placed in the garden he was set up to pursue some primary endeavors that would define the quality of his life. While we no longer have access to Eden, we still have the same objectives as Adam. By evaluating our performance in these areas, we can determine how well we are doing in regards to God's plan for our lives.

1. Pursuit # 1

Building a relationship with God by faith

a. Faith is a response to God's initiative.

- The entire biblical story is one of relationship between God and his creation. Because of sin, that bond is shattered and needs repair. While we sometimes assume responsibility for this restoration, it is always God who is taking the initiative. Whether it is in Eden, or at Sinai, or at Calvary, it is always God who moves first. God moves towards us and makes a relationship possible. Our responsibility is to respond to his invitation. This response is called faith.
- Faith is the willingness to trust God's provision and comply with his wishes. Adam was given guarantees by God and his confidence in God made the relationship sustainable. If we are to continue in a relationship that God has initiated, we must learn to trust him.

b. Faith is the means by which we experience God's provision.

- Exercising trust gives us the opportunity to experience God's provision. Adam had every need met, and as long as he complied with God's rule, this provision would continue.
- Abraham is a great example of faith. He excelled at trusting God and proved it in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac as an offering. It wasn't until Abraham acted in obedience that he was able to receive God's provision of the ram in the thicket.

- Unfortunately, we are inclined to deviate from God’s will and pursue our own provision. This pursuit always ends in regret; faith is always the better option. If we desire to live by faith, we must learn to practice it. Trust is only an abstract concept until it is practiced. We must chose to follow God’s leading even when it means that we have to surrender **control**.

2. Pursuit # 2

Building a relationship with **creation** through **work**

a. Work is a **gift** from God.

- Most men are stuck in a vocational malaise. With only 20% of the workforce actively engaged in their work, most workers view their labor as drudgery. But work is not meant to be a curse, it is a blessing given by God. Adam was placed in the garden to cultivate and keep it, and this arrangement was made before sin corrupted the earth. Work was designed for good; it was not a consequence of evil.
- If we love God then we must work because God is a worker. In Genesis 1 God creates everything and in Genesis 2 he calls it work, and God continues in his work. Jesus said, *“My Father is working until now, and I myself am working. (Jn 5:17)”* We must recognize our work as a partnership with God—God planted the garden and Adam cultivated it. Therefore I do not work for status or to build a reputation but to direct attention to the real artisan.

People sin in their vocations, and they sin against their vocations. And in not being aware of what their vocations are—and that there is a spiritual dimension to work—they are plagued by a lack of purpose, confused as to what they should do and how they should live and who they are. Gene Veith

b. Our occupation should be a reflection of our **vocation**.

- We are inclined to treat vocation as a synonym for occupation, but it originated as a theological term. Vocation has a Latin root that means, **“to call”**. Our vocation is our calling. In Matthew 22 Jesus teaches that the whole duty of man, the whole moral-spiritual law, can be summed up as “love”. This responsibility gives meaning to what we do.
- Our work is not in addition to our Christian vocation but an expression of it. Occupation emanates from vocation. This means that the principle business of our livelihood is not merely devoted to profit, but to demonstrating love. We need to consider how we can use our occupation, regardless of what it is, to contribute to the good of others.

3. Pursuit # 3

Building a relationship with a woman in love

a. Love begins with affirming a woman's worth.

- When Eve is presented to Adam, he blurts out poetry. Woman is his cherished gift, and he is very grateful for his companion. But one of sin's immediate effects is that it erodes the respect and appreciation between the man and the woman. Too often, the relationship between men and woman is characterized as one of derision and disdain. Men sin against women when they dismiss them as emotional and sentimental, for in many ways they act like God.

It's easy to scorn women, and most men do. We see women as physically weak, easy to intimidate, bound to the menial tasks of motherhood, emotional, illogical, and often petty. Or we see them as temptress; in desire we idolize them and parade them across the pages of magazines, yet we scorn and hate them for their commanding sexual power over us. Male scorn for women affects every aspect of our lives: our relationships with our mothers, our girlfriends, our secretaries, our wives, our children, the church, and even God himself. Dr. John Barger

- Love begins with an appreciation for a woman's design. They are significantly different from man and this makes them a mystery; it does not make them inferior. Too many men scorn women and miss their chance at love.

b. Love is expressed in taking initiative.

- Just as God initiated a relationship with man, Adam took the initiative with Eve. He provided a suitable environment for their relationship to grow by showing leadership. Even today, male initiative is necessary for a godly relationship to exist between a man and a woman. Paul, in writing to Timothy, states that men must lead the home for, "Adam was formed first and then Eve."
- Servant leadership of the home is a declining phenomenon. With increased rates of fatherlessness, many men have never seen an example of masculine initiative leading to an excessively passive male population. Men need to lead their homes with a strong resolve and a gentle touch.
- When a man leads his wife well, he is able to shape a household that is distinct from that of their parents. Defining the relationships and accomplishing independence is the responsibility of the man and is essential in building a marriage that will endure.

Reflections

1. In which pursuit are you experiencing the most progress? What accounts for this growth?
2. In which pursuit are you struggling? What is your status—are you losing ground or have you stalled? How can you improve the situation?
3. What role does God play in your performance in these endeavors?

MAN AND HIS MAKER

Session Six

The Fall

Genesis 3: 1-24

Why did God plant a tree and then forbid access to it?

Why doesn't he forbid access of the garden to the snake?

Review from last week

God gives mandates that are based on building relationships:

- Relationship with wife in love.
- Relationship with creation through work.
- Relationship with God by faith.

God expects for us to trust him. But words like faith and trust are only abstract concepts until they have been exercised.

Faith is just a word until it has been put into **practice**.

Chapter 11 of Hebrews lists some of the great men and women of faith through the O.T. They all have one thing in common- they all acted on their faith. The teaching that belief and obedience are tied together is consistent in the N.T. as well. Jesus concludes his encounter with Nicodemus with this statement:

"But he who [practices](#) the [truth comes](#) to the [Light](#), [so](#) that his [deeds](#) may be [manifested](#) as having [been wrought](#) in [God](#)." John 3:21

In planting that tree and giving a pass to the serpent; God has provided Adam and Eve an opportunity to exercise their trust.

God expects for us to relate to him in trust.

We should expect that God will **test** that trust.

4. The Temptation

The story begins abruptly with the appearance of a new character- the serpent who we soon find out is the antagonist of the story.” We know from N.T. revelation he is identified with Satan. (John 8:44, Rom 16:20, Rev 12:9) But the narrator and the original audience had very limited knowledge about the serpent. In the text of Genesis 3, the origin of the snake is attributed to God but nothing is revealed about the origin of evil. The fact that so little is given on the background of the serpent is a good indication that the text is more concerned with his speech and motive than explaining who he is and how he came to this adversarial position toward God.

a. The Introduction of the serpent

- The serpent was **crafty**...
Often translated as shrewd or cunning, this word alerts the reader to weigh the actions and speech of the serpent carefully. The Hebrew word arum (crafty) is actually a play on words with a similar word arom (naked) that is used in the preceding verse. It is used to link the shrewdness of the serpent with the vulnerability of Adam and Eve.
- The serpent was one of the animals the Lord God had **made**.
 - This statement dismisses any notion of dualism. There is no equal but opposite force that opposes God; no Yin and Yang as Chinese philosophy would have us believe. As a creature he owes his existence to God.
 - The snake is not a mythological figure to be taken as symbol of evil. This is a real historical figure.

b. The motive

- Did **God** really say...?

Dropping the title Yahweh from Elohim is a clue to the audience about the motive. Yahweh is the title of God that refers to his covenant relationship with his people. The snake is intent on severing the relationship between God and his people.

c. The approach

- Not to eat from any tree of the garden.

The temptation comes in the form of **subtle alteration** of God's word.

Here we see the beguiling tactics of the tempter which should not be a surprise. He emphasizes God's prohibition and downplays God's provision. This is a crafty creature. He may have been granted access but he was not granted authority.

"Error never shows itself in its naked reality, in order not to be discovered. On the contrary, it dresses elegantly, so that the unwary may be led to believe that it is more truthful than truth itself"- Irenaeus

Eve's first mistake was to engage the serpent. Her response lets us know the ploy was at least partially successful.

"From the tree in the middle of the garden we cannot eat from or touch it."
Her attention has been diverted to God's prohibition.

- You will surely not die.

The next step is to **remove the fear** of consequences by directly contradicting God's word.

- You will be like God, knowing good and evil.

The final tactic is to convince the woman that God has been **holding back**.

People sin because they are duped into believing they will reap a benefit.

Humans seem to have an insatiable appetite for more.

5. The Sin

In warning his church about the world, the Apostle John wrote:

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 1 John 2:15-16

When writing that warning he seemed to have the original sin episode in mind. Eve's decision to eat the fruit gives priority over the word of God to each of those areas.

a. She saw it was good to eat.

The lust of the flesh is a desire to **feel** pleasure. (sensual passion)

e. And that it was a delight to the eyes.

The lust of the eyes is a desire to **have** something. (ascetic appearance)

f. And it was desirable to make one wise.

The boastful pride of life is a desire to **be** important. (personal advancement/status)

...she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her; and he ate. Gen 3: 6b

Adam is equally culpable. He stands passively by and then chooses to follow the lead of his wife rather than the word of God. The immediate effect of sin is shame as they sew fig leaves together in their loss of innocence.

6. The Judgment

Verse 8 begins with the Lord God walking through the garden and the couple hiding from his presence.

d. God's Inquiry

“Where are you?” “Who told you...?” “Have you eaten...?”

God's questions demonstrate **righteous** judgment. He is omniscient but he invites confession.

e. The Couple's Response

Adam- The **woman** you gave me...”.

Eve- “The **serpent** deceived me...”

By distorting the truth and accusing one another, the couple demonstrates their allegiance to Satan (the ultimate deceiver and accuser).

f. God's Decree

- **The Serpent**

“Cursed are you...and dust you will eat”.

The perpetrator is not given the benefit of questioning. Dust symbolizes **humiliation** and defeat.

“All the days of your life” informs the reader that Satan is not subjected to immediate destruction but left to test future generations for their willingness to walk in obedience to the Lord.

“Enmity between your seed and her seed”

God graciously introduces a **state of conflict** between her offspring and the serpent's offspring.

The serpent's seed is figurative and meant to represent natural humanity in its rebellion against God. The woman's seed should be taken both in a collective sense and in a single sense. From this point forward all humanity is divided into two communities: those that love and trust God; and those who demonstrate self-reliance and disobedience toward God.

- **The Woman**

“Greatly multiply your pain in childbirth”

“Your desire will be for your husband”

In this judgment, the woman will be **frustrated in the home**- first in childbearing, and second in insubordination to the husband. What was originally design as a complimentary role has now become a competitive role.

- **Adam**

“In toil you shall eat of it”

What was originally intended as a **blessing** will now become **hard labor**. Adam’s pain and toil will be increased in his work just as Eve’s in her childbearing. Rather than the earth submitting to Adam, it will resist him and eventually swallow him. Thorn and thistles paint a picture of the spiritual struggle that is in store for Adam.

7. Conclusion

In providing garments, God does for the couple what they couldn’t do for themselves. He covers their shame. Man is driven out and denied access to the tree of life. Death serves as both a judgment and a release from living forever in their fallen state.

If Adam and Eve are found to be unfaithful before the fall how will Israel be found in the wilderness; or when surrounded by the Canaanites?

*How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness And grieved Him in the desert!
Again and again they tempted God, And pained the Holy One of Israel.*

Psalm 78: 40-41

We, of course, are no different. The only hope for humanity to be restored to God is to call on him to provide a rescue from ourselves. He has made that provision in his Son.

Reflection

1. Describe a point in your life when you were confident in your own ability only to be humbled when circumstances revealed a weakness.
2. The first step of temptation is to allow yourself to become engaged. What are some specific ways this is true in your own encounters with temptation?
3. To which of the three areas of sin are you most likely to be drawn? (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, boastful pride of life) Discuss why it is appealing on the surface and yet harmful in reality.

MAN AND HIS MAKER

Session Seven **Temptation**

1. Life is a sequence of **tests**

- The biblical idea of temptation is not limited to the idea of seduction, but has a broader range of meaning that speaks of putting a person to the test. This means that the test may be **benevolent** or **malevolent**.
- The temptation experienced by Adam and Eve was clearly malevolent; its intent was to trap them in wrong action. Clearly, Adam and Eve failed the test and succumbed to temptation.
- Temptation is **common to all**. It is a universal experience (1 Cor. 10:13) and was even inflicted upon Jesus (Mark 1:13). Because of this experience Jesus can sympathize with our struggles.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.^{Heb 4:15}

- Those who repeatedly fail life's tests ultimately make a shipwreck of their lives. Success in life depends, to a large degree, on one's ability to overcome temptation.

2. The **origins** of temptation determine the responsibility for sin.

a. **God**

- God tests his people in an effort to strengthen their patience and mature their faith. This loving trial is always benevolent and is intended for our purification. Those, like Abraham, who remain faithful during times of trial, become approved in God's sight.
- God never seeks to seduce his people into acts of evil. To do so would deny his holy character and sabotage his mission of redemption. God is never responsible for our sin.

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.^{Jas 1:13}

b. Satan

- Known as 'the tempter' (Matt. 3:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), Satan seeks to harm people and offend God by luring people into deserting God's will.
- Persistent in his efforts, the devil is always working to cause Christians to fall, either by urging them to enjoy sinful pleasures or by leading them into complacency.
- Satan's ability to manipulate life's circumstances is moderated by God which means that we are never tempted beyond our endurance. We cannot blame the devil for our wrongdoing—'the devil made me do it' is not an adequate defense.

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 stand up under it.^{1 Co 10:13}

c. Self

- While Satan presents an external stimulus, he finds an ally in us. We are sinful from birth and are by nature inclined towards evil. Our desire is oriented towards those things that are forbidden by God.
- Most lapses into sin happen when we succumb to our sinful appetites. In these occasions, temptation is little more than opportunity; the motivation to transgress is internal (James 1:14). We are culpable for our sinful behavior.

3. Playing temptation forward

- James, the brother of Jesus, gives a very helpful synopsis of sin. It is an abbreviated timeline that shows how sin begins and how it ends.

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.^{Jas 1:14-15}

- **Unchecked appetites** blind people to God's ideal.
 - Sinful desire becomes a **personal ambition**.
 - **Godless ambitions** become sinful behavior.
 - Sin results in **death**.
- In every occasion, sin follows this pattern. It was Eve's desire for visually appealing fruit that caused the fall, and we all stumble in the same way. Likewise, we all receive the same sentence.

4. Combating temptation and overcoming desire

a. **Resist the devil.**

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.^{1 Pe 5:8-9}

- While Satan is presented as a formidable foe he is not omnipotent—he can be resisted. When he shows his hand and seeks to entice us away from God, we must refuse his invitations.
- Jesus provides us with the perfect example when he was tempted in the wilderness. His knowledge of Scripture and his closeness to God enabled him to dismiss Satan.

b. **Flee temptation.**

But you, man of God, flee from all this (temptation), and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.^{1 Ti 6:11}

- Increased exposure to temptation increases the likelihood of sin. Most tragedies begin with misplaced confidence.
- When temptation comes, the prudent thing is to make a quick getaway. Joseph's escape from Potiphar's wife is an excellent model of godliness in action.

c. Deny yourself.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.^{Tit 2:11-12}

- Those who are new creations in Christ are helped by grace to supervise their desires. In an effort to avoid ungodliness, we must become accomplished in self-denial.
- Paul viewed his life as a competition between good and evil, and believed that by disciplining himself he was assured of victory (1 Cor. 9:25-27). If we follow his example we can have the same assurance.

"No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because he was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows *to the full* what temptation means—the only complete realist."

C.S. Lewis

Reflection

1. What is the most persistent temptation in your life?
2. Who do you hold responsible for your failings? Historically, who has been blamed?
3. What strategies have you implemented to help you combat temptation? Have they been effective?

MAN AND HIS MAKER

Session Eight

Sin, Redemption and Bloodlines

Genesis 4

1. Falling forward

In the previous chapter we learned about Adam and Eve's rebellion towards God and their resultant expulsion from Eden. As contemporary readers we understand this event as the fall from grace, and while it was that, there is more—the fall continues. In chapter four we discover that humanity is bound to repeat the same mistakes of its first parents. In an effort to illustrate this pattern of sin, the author draws some parallels between Adam and Eve and their sons.

Cain and Abel are the participants in the first recorded violent crime. Incensed with his brother, Cain kills Abel and so the sins of the parents are perpetuated by their son. Here are some common elements found in both crimes:

Fruit and failure

1. When God placed Adam in the garden, he forbade Adam from eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was their defiance of this instruction that displeased God.
2. In verse 3 of chapter 4 we read that Cain brings God some fruit of the ground as an offering to God—once again fruit plays a pivotal role in the sin of man. As readers, we are expected to see this parallelism as a connection between the son's actions and that of his parents.

2. Intimacy lost

1. In the fallout of the first sin, Adam refers to Eve as that “woman” (3:12). This designation is very different from ‘wife’ that was previously used to express intimacy and union. Clearly, their sin has resulted in alienation and isolation creeping into their home.
2. In chapter 4 the writer uses the phrase “his brother” to emphasize the closeness of Cain and Abel. Cain did not kill some alien or enemy; it was his own flesh and blood. The writer places so much emphasis on the fact that Abel was Cain’s brother because he wants to emphasize how terrible the murder was. Once again sin has robbed a family of intimacy.

3. Avoidance and denial

1. When Adam and Eve sinned, their shame pressed them into hiding. When God finally confronted them, they sought to defer guilt by passing off blame. Sin resulted in their desire to avoid God and the truth.
2. In a scene much like the one in Eden, God seeks out Cain to confront him about his actions. Cain cannot pass the blame, but he tries to deny any responsibility towards his brother: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (4:9). Even with blood on his hands, Cain tries to refuse responsibility.

4. Alienation from the ground

1. From the start, Adam’s relationship with the ground was important. He was made from the dust of the ground and was instructed to tend to it. Part of God’s judgment against Adam was that the ground would be cursed, and it would require hard labor in order for Adam’s family to eat (3:17-19).

2. Cain receives a similar punishment: the ground would not respond to his care and he would be driven from the face of the ground and condemned to the life of a **vagrant** (4:11-12).

2. **Bloodlines of curse and redemption**

The hostilities in chapter four should not surprise us since they were predicted in chapter three. In her judgment, Eve is told that her seed (**offspring**) will have enmity with the seed of the serpent (3:15). The seed of the serpent is not literal since the snake is merely a disguise for Satan, and he does not father demons. Rather, the seed of the serpent refers to **worldly humanity** that wars against God. Humanity will be divided between those who love **God** and those who love **self**. These competing forces are represented in Cain and Abel and their descendents.

1. **Cain**

1. Cain is the elder son. Like his father he is a tiller of the fields, and so it is expected that he would offer grain as an offering to God. His tribute fails to please God. Not because it was the wrong substance, or the wrong quality, or an inadequate quantity, but because he presented it. God rejects the sacrifice because he has rejected the **worshipper** (4:5). Cain's character is displeasing and it taints his offerings. His angry and violent response to God's rebuke is evidence of his hardened heart. Cain is the seed of the serpent.
2. Cain's descendents prove themselves to be bad seed. The chapter continues with a genealogy of Cain and the conduct of his progeny. His lineage is not without accomplishment—the first metallurgy, poetry and cities are all traced back to Cain. But **violence** and **rebellion** against God are their most notable achievements.

3. Lamech is presented as the inevitable result of this moral slide. Demonstrating a progressive hardening towards God, Lamech embraces polygamy and violence (4:23).

Cain's identity which was marred by violence, engenders his progeny's identity, which is marked by violence. Bruce Waltke

2. Abel

1. The second son bears the symbolic name of Abel which means "breath". In Gen 2:7 we read that God breathed into man the "breath of life" and so Abel's name hints at the promise of **new life**. A keeper of flocks, Abel brings the fat portions to God as an offering and his gift is received by God. Once again, it is Abel himself who God regards kindly and that is why his tribute is acceptable. Abel is the seed of hope.
2. Since Abel is murdered, it would seem that hope dies with him, but we discover that it is **reborn** in the birth of Seth. Through his birth, God is providing a lineage of godliness that will overcome the efforts of the serpent's seed.
3. Seth's son is named Enosh, which means "weakness," and in his weakness he turns to God for aid. His frailty leads him to depend on God and in so doing he leads others to praise God. In contrast to Lamech, Enosh and his seed resort to prayer instead of violence (4:26).

3. Theological considerations

1. **Worship**

Cain and Abel's tributes are the first recorded acts of worship. While Cain was rejected for

simply discharging a duty, Abel was rewarded for his faith.

People with a living faith make it their desire to please God. They come before God with their gifts, not because it is their duty to perform or because they think that God needs it, but because they know they need God...It is not so much what they give, but how they give themselves in worship, for the proper attitude in offering anything to God must be one of submission to the Lord. Allen P. Ross

2. Guarding against **sin**

Cain is referred to by Jude and John as a warning to Christians. Cain is an exemplar of the capacity for rebellion in every person. Willing to embrace a lie to preserve himself, Cain finds many imitators in our own day. We must be aware of our own depravity and not provide sin an opportunity to make us stumble.

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it. Ge 4:7

3. **Death** and **life**

Even though the good seed (Abel) is killed by the bad (Cain), God brings about new life through the birth of Seth. Just so, God uses the death and resurrection of Jesus as the means by which he brings about new life.

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Jn 12:23-24

4. Finding **strength** in **weakness**

Again and again, Scripture challenges the notion that the strong flourish and the weak fail. God makes a mockery of the "survival of the fittest". It is Paul who reminds us that it is in our weakness that we find strength in Christ (2 Cor 12:10).

Abel, signifying insignificance, by faith offers an acceptable sacrifice; Enosh, signifying weakness, by faith offers an acceptable prayer. These two together are the expression of true religion. Bruce Waltke

Reflection

1. How has your heritage informed your life? What impact has your family history had on your relationship with God?
2. Consider the state of your worship. Are you approaching God in faith or is it just ritualistic performance. What can you do differently?
3. Why are we so averse to recognizing our weakness. How are you weak? How can you take strength in God?