

WEEK OF AUGUST 13



DAY
1

A High Altitude Look at Sin Genesis 3

To start the new week of devotions, read through the entire chapter one more time. Genesis 3 describes the worst day ever! It is the original sin. It is the first sin but not the final sin. Sin will quickly grow deeper and wider. It will infiltrate and infect every aspect of God's good creation.

Before there was original sin, there was original goodness. Or you could say: original virtue; original righteousness; original holiness, purity, and integrity. Before the introduction of shame, guilt, fear, and anger, there was original joy, peace, and love. There was original innocence.

When they disobeyed God and ate the fruit, Adam and Eve lost all their original goodness. They didn't lose it completely, but they lost every feature that was originally unsullied by sin and evil. They still possessed those things, but incompletely, intermittently, and with more difficulty. In addition, evil became easy, almost unnaturally so. Goodness diminished and badness grew stronger.

There is a long theological and spiritual tradition that sees the original sin as pride (hubris). By the 4th century, theologians and pastors identified the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, wrath, lust, envy, gluttony, and sloth. What the ancients called the seven deadly sins are today America's seven favorite pursuits. Another tradition developed that saw money, sex, and power as aspects of life that are terribly defaced and diminished by sin.

In last week's devotional, we said that sin is irrational (insanity), internal, invasive (it starts within but spreads everywhere), and inexcusable. This week's devotional will explore three more features of sin in Genesis 3: 1) the ultimate independence from God, 2) the idolatry and love of other gods, and 3) the irresponsible use of our freedom.

It is challenging to think about sin, and more so to think about your sin. Every day, ask God for the grace of self-awareness, humility, and honesty. Ask for forgiveness and transformation.

DAY
2

Personal Independence (From God) Day Gen. 3:1-7; Deut. 30:11-15

If there is one message that is abundantly clear throughout the Bible, it is that God is God and we are not God. God is the Creator God, all-powerful, sovereign, great and good, the source of life. In him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). In Jesus was life (John 1:4). The Father possesses life and so does the Son (John 5:26). Jesus says, "My words are life" (John 6:63).

We do not possess life on our own. Life is a gift. Therefore, as we are connected to God's life, we have life. In fact, every good gift of life has as its source God. God is the source of everything. To be apart from God is to be disconnected from the source.

And yet, on that worst day ever, Adam and Eve declared their own personal independence from God Day. We will no longer trust God, believe God, listen to God, or follow God. We will decide what we believe is good, true, and right for us. God said don't eat the fruit of one particular tree. We have decided that the fruit is good for us and we will eat. God said if we eat we will die. We choose to believe the serpent and not God.

You and I are completely, fully, constantly, and always dependent on God for everything. The worse thing we will

ever do is decide to be independent. Whenever we decide not to listen to God's words, not to believe the truth of what God teaches us in the Bible, not to obey the commands, not to trust the promises, not to have faith in God's character—at that very moment we are choosing death. Through Moses, God said to the people of Israel, "You have the option of life and death. Choose life." He said the same to Adam and Eve. They chose independence and, therefore, they chose death.

Ever since then, human beings, as much as we can, choose to be autonomous, self-sufficient, self-serving, self-determining, self-promoting, and ultimately self-defeating. The best prayer and best action you can ever do is to be continually dependent on God.

DAY
3

You Shall Be Like God

Genesis 3:4

The famous Reformer, John Calvin, said, "the human heart is a perpetual idol factory." To be human is, by nature, to be dependent on something. Bob Dylan sang, "You gotta serve somebody." To be human is to need to give our allegiance to someone or something.

The Bible calls all the false gods idols. There are two different ways the Bible talks about these false gods/idols. In one sense, they are real but impotent, weak, and foolish. In the second sense, they are not even real. They don't exist. There are no gods. There is only the one true God. But humans live as if there are many alternative gods for us to use. That is foolishness.

1. Whatever you turn to for meaning is your god.
2. Whatever you turn to for purpose is your god.
3. Whatever it is where you find your identity is your god.
4. Whatever you think about the most is your god.
5. Whatever you dedicate your life to is your god.
6. Whatever you turn to for help is your god.
7. Whatever matters the most to you is your god.
8. Whatever is your source of truth is your god.
9. Whatever is your great joy and happiness is your god.
10. Whatever gives you life is your god.

The list could go on. For each of the 10 statements, what does a careful examination of your life reveal is your God?

In Genesis 3, Satan, for a brief moment, becomes the false god. Then, as is always true for every person, we ourselves become the new god. We turn to our self, and we exalt our self, and we give our self the ultimate authority and power to define reality, make meaning, choose purpose, and arbitrate right and wrong, good and evil.

Think through the 10 statements and, as honestly and accurately as you can, answer them.

DAY
4

Irresponsibility Piles Up

Skim through Genesis 3–11

In July, as we talked about the image of God or the very nature of what it means to be human, we said that humanity was meant to be free and to be responsible with their freedom. We were given responsibilities and we were free to fulfill them or not. Being free and responsible are two aspects of our human nature. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve misuse their freedom and fail in their responsibility. But it doesn't stop there. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describes the four prominent stories in Genesis 3–11 in this way:

Adam and Eve both eat the fruit and both deny responsibility for what they did. This is the first failure. Both deny PERSONAL

responsibility.

In the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4), Cain kills his brother. Cain does not deny personal responsibility. But when he says, "I am not my brother's keeper," he denies MORAL responsibility.

Noah (Genesis 6–9) chooses to save only himself and his family. He failed to take responsibility for others. Noah's failure was that of COLLECTIVE or SOCIAL responsibility.

Finally, the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) is the story of humanity attempting to be god. They will reach to the heavens. It is a failure to let God be God. This is a SPIRITUAL or ONTOLOGICAL failure. The failure of Adam and Eve sets in motion a cascading series of failures. That is what sin does. It starts small and spreads.

To be human is to be personally responsible, to be morally responsible, to be socially responsible, and to be spiritually responsible. We were originally given freedom for responsibility. In Genesis 3, the fall into sin entails the corruption of freedom and the growth of irresponsibility. Fortunately, the words of Jesus are true: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). And with that freedom we begin to take up all the responsibilities that have been entrusted to humanity.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.

DAY 1: The Bible has a long list of words that describe the nature of sin and the expressions of sin. How many words you can think of? Make a list.

Look at the seven deadly sins. Today these things are no longer seen as sins. Our culture actively promotes them. Can you think of examples for each one that our culture encourages?

DAY 2: Are you dependent on God? How do you know? How do you support your answer? What are the signs or evidence that someone is depending on God and not on themselves?

When is it hardest for you to depend on God? When are you most likely to depend on yourself?

It has been said that a life of much prayer is a sign of dependence on God and a life of prayerlessness is a sign of independence from God. What do you think about this statement?

DAY 3: In the Old and New Testaments, the common idols were the false gods of the other religions. In our country, we have many counterfeit gods, but these gods are very different from the biblical examples. What are some of the common, alternative gods we worship today?

DAY 4: The misuse of freedom and the prevalence of irresponsibility seems to be common in our culture. Why is it so hard for people to take responsibility today?

What are your primary responsibilities? You will be accountable for all of them. How are you doing about those responsibilities and accountability for them?