

WEEK OF AUGUST 27



DAY
1

God is Love **John 1:1-18; 3:16-21**

As our summer series comes to an end, you are now aware of just how much theology and spirituality are in Genesis 1–3. We have only scratched the surface of these formative chapters. Creation–Fall (into Sin)–Redemption all have their origin in this biblical story. All these themes will advance up to the final chapter of the Bible—Revelation 22.

Even though the word LOVE is not used in Genesis 1–3, these chapters are full of God's love. In love, God created the universe. God did not need to create it. His love led him to create a finely tuned universe where life could exist. In love, God created a perfect environment for Adam and Eve. It was the Garden of Eden—a place of flourishing. In love, God created Adam and Eve. In love, God gave Adam and Eve a life of meaning and purpose; a life of partnership and companionship (and love for each other).

In love, God invited Adam and Eve into his creational purposes, to work alongside him to build and develop all of creation. In love, God's presence would be with them in the garden and they would know, enjoy, serve, and worship the Lord, their Creator and Friend.

God is love. God is life. God is light. God is joy. God is wisdom. God is power. God is holy. And God is good. Created by a God like that, Adam and Eve, in that image and likeness, would participate in all those moral qualities.

Life itself was the greatest of all gifts. The Breath–Spirit–Life of God was “breathed” into Adam, and he (and Eve) became living beings.

We have used this passage over and over through this series: “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). In him who is love, life, light, joy, and so much more—we share in all those things and, therefore, we also live in LOVE. That is the message of the Origin Story. That is the story we find ourselves in. It is the Greatest Story Ever Told and the Best Story Ever. God is love and we are meant to live in that love.

DAY
2

Love Seeks Redemption & Restoration **John 21:15-17**

God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, created everything out of love. Then the fall into sin took place. What God had made and declared to be very good now became bad, and soon, some of it would be very bad. Even so, God's love is the main feature of Genesis 3.

Because God is love, even though Adam and Eve sinned against God (rebelled, turned away from, rejected) and set themselves up as gods, God did not abandon them. Genesis 3 shows the way God's love now moved in response to their sin.

God's love was still there because God's presence was still there (3:8). God's love was searching after them (3:9). God knew what had happened. God knew what they did. God did not leave them alone in their sin, but God pursued them. That is what love does. While sin wrecks relationships, love seeks reconciliation and healing of broken relationships.

Love asks hard questions. Where are you (3:9)? Who told you that you were naked (3:11)? Have you eaten from the tree (3:11)? What is this you have done (3:13)? Love does not shy away from the hard but vital conversations that are needed about wrecked relationships. God speaks the truth in love, God starts truthful conversations in love, and God

asks the painful but necessary questions—always in love. And always for the purpose of restoring the relationships and lives that have been wrecked and broken. Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?”

The poet T.S. Eliot said: “Oh my soul, be prepared for the coming of the Stranger. Be prepared for him who knows how to ask questions.” As you read through the gospels, Jesus ALWAYS asked questions. He asked questions on the things that mattered. He asked questions to start new discoveries of self-awareness. He asked questions that would make faith, hope, and love possible. What questions is Jesus asking you? Does he need to ask, “Do you love me?” How would you answer Jesus?

DAY 3

God's Love Is . . .

Genesis 3:14-19; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13

Do you notice how honest and real God's love is in Genesis 3? Love does not pretend all is well when it is not well at all. Love does not overlook what is wrong. Love does not ignore sin and evil. Love names those things for what they are. The qualities of love in 1 Corinthians are the qualities of God's love for us.

But love engages sin and evil in the right time, in the right way, and for the right reason. God's love is a forgiving, healing, redeeming, transforming love. Love cannot ignore the damage of sin and the wreckage of evil. Love cannot leave the causes of pain and hurt unaddressed.

Love permits the consequences of sin and evil to be what they are. To simply negate the consequences of sin and not deal with the root of sin is to allow sin to become even worse. Therefore, God deals with sin directly, justly, and always for the purpose of redemption and restoration. That is why the words of Genesis 3:14-19 are so painful. Sin always has consequences (read Galatians 6:7-9). While a holy love allows consequences, holy love goes into action to deal with those consequences.

In Genesis 3:15 there is the promise of a Redeemer. The early readers would have had no real idea of what this promise would involve. We now know it meant Jesus dying on the cross. The apparent victory of the serpent turned out to be the utter defeat of the enemy.

In Genesis 3:21 God's love provides a sacrificial covering for Adam and Eve. Whereas they had tried fig leaves to cover their nakedness (and guilt and shame; v. 7), God provided a sacrifice to do that.

God's love also had to protect Adam and Eve from further spiritual damage. Genesis 3:22-24 are complicated, hard-to-interpret verses. But at the least, God took steps to limit the damage Adam and Eve would do if they had unlimited access to the tree of life.

DAY 4

God's Love Wins in the End

Revelation 22:1-5; Galatians 3:10-14

The Big Picture theological pattern in the Bible is:

- CREATION, then FALL
- The FALL into sin, then REDEMPTION
- REDEMPTION, leading to CONSUMMATION or the RENEWAL of all things

Our focus has been on Creation–Fall–Redemption because this is the Origin Story of Genesis 1–3. If you turn to the final chapter of the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, you will find the Ending Story (or Destination Story). In Revelation 22, God's Creation is fully restored, humanity is fully redeemed, and we are back in the garden—only now, the garden is in the middle of the City of God.

Life began in a garden and it ends in a city of God. In Genesis 4, fallen, sinful humanity builds the first city. In Revelation 22, the city is also redeemed and restored. The City of God is blessed with the river of life flowing from the throne of God, down the center of Main Street. On each side of the river is a tree of life—not just one tree, but two trees—and each tree has 12 crops of fruit. Endless fruit and endless life.

There is healing for the nations (they are divided and antagonistic throughout the Book of Genesis). Now, the nations are

united and healed. There is no more curse—it has been undone and canceled. What Jesus made possible on the cross is now complete.

The presence of God is, once again, fully present with us (Revelation 21:3, 5; 22:3-5). And 22:5 even refers back to Genesis 1 and the creation of light. Between Genesis 1—3 to Revelation 21—22 are thousands of years of redemption. But one day Jesus will return, and the good work he is doing right now (John 5:17) will be completed (Philippians 1:6). And to that, all of God's people said, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people [and with YOU]. Amen" (Revelation 22:21).

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: Above all else, the most important thing is that you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus is the love of God for you/for us to save us, heal us, forgive us, restore us, and transform us. Ask Jesus to do all those things. Ask Jesus to come into your life as your Savior, as your Lord, and as your Friend. Ask Jesus to do what Adam and Eve neglected to ask: "Jesus forgive me, God save me." If you have done that now, or during our Genesis series, please let us know. We would love to help you explore and grow into your Christian faith.

God is the Giver of all good gifts. Make a list of the good things God has given you (James 1:17). For each thing you write down, be thankful and say, "Thank you."

DAY 2: Jesus loves to ask us questions, and those questions launch conversations, provide opportunities for self-awareness, and advance his purposes in our lives. What questions is Jesus asking you right now? Write down your thoughts: If Jesus were to ask me THREE questions, what are those questions and why do I think he would ask them?

DAY 3: How do you respond when you reap what you sow? What are some of the consequences you are facing right now from past sins? How are you able to experience the love and justice of God in the midst of those consequences?

DAY 4: It is hard to respond to the message of Revelation, but we do need a response. After you read through Revelation 21—22, what feelings do you have? Are you living right now with faith, HOPE, and love?