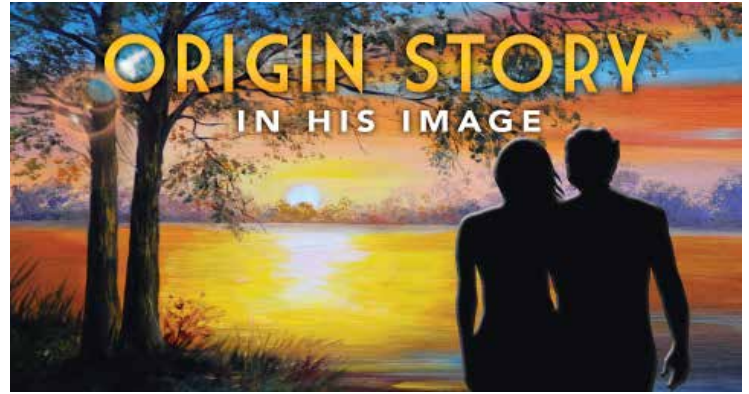


## WEEK OF AUGUST 6



DAY  
1

### The Worst Day Ever! Genesis 3

In June you studied Genesis 1 and God the Creator, maker of heaven and earth. In July you studied Genesis 2 and the pinnacle of God's creative work—women and men, made in the image of God. Now in August you will study Genesis 3—the worst day ever. The day Jesus died for our sins was just as terrible, but at the same time it was beautiful and powerful, as the sacrifice of God made the forgiveness of sin possible. Genesis 3 is the original sin that launches all ongoing sin.

Today you will read the entire chapter to get the big picture and see all the details of the story. You will study and reflect on the details all throughout August. In many ways it will be a difficult and painful month. It is a challenge to be honest and humble about our sinfulness and brokenness. As soon as Adam and Eve knew they had done wrong, they covered up, hid, and when exposed, they shifted blame.

It is difficult to talk about sin because we are all broken and damaged by our own sin and by the sins of others against us. Still, we face the reality of sin every day. Every worldview or Big Story must answer these crucial questions.

1. What's gone wrong? Or what's wrong with the world?
2. Why have things gone wrong and continue to go wrong?
3. What can be done about what is wrong to make it right?
4. Are people basically good or bad or a combination?

All these questions must be asked, not in an abstract or theoretical way, but in a personal and practical way. We are not the way we are meant to be. Something is wrong with us, with me! For all these questions Christianity as worldview and story have the most profound answers you will find.

DAY  
2

### The Irrational Insanity of Sin Genesis 3:6-7; Romans 7:14-8:1

For the remaining days of this devotional you will also do a longer reading in the Book of Romans. The Apostle Paul provides a deep understanding of what's gone wrong.

Perhaps the first question is simply WHY? Why did it go so wrong? Why were Adam and Eve so easily duped about what God said (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-5)? And where did the serpent (Satan) come from? Why did God allow that evil entity in the Garden to begin with?

First, there are some answers to these questions, but let's be honest, every answer is partial and incomplete. There is just so much we don't know. We make some educated guesses. We have opinions. Theologians debate the options and come to possible answers. Which leads to the second thought: It is ultimately a MYSTERY.

At the time, Adam and Eve were without sin. They had a personal relationship with God their Creator. A talking serpent appears out of nowhere and accuses God. We think they should have known better! Yes, they should have known and they should have listened to God, but they didn't. It's a mystery. There is something irrational about their

thinking. It is sheer insanity (folly, foolishness, lunacy, madness, senselessness, absurdity, ridiculousness ... the list of synonyms is long).

It is part of the nature of sin—irrational insanity. And it is true of our own sin. I know you have experienced for yourself, or heard from others, the words “What was I thinking when I did that?” We are stupefied about why we did the wrong we did. We are startled and shocked by our own irrational behaviors. In other words, before we sin we are BLINDED by sin, but after we sin, our eyes are OPENED because of it (Genesis 3:7).

The Apostle Paul is spiritually wise enough to see the internal struggle and the lies of sin, and even so he gives in and does what is wrong. To paraphrase Paul’s words: *What a wretch I am! Who will save me from myself? Thanks be to God—it is Jesus* (Romans 7:24–25).

## DAY 3

### **It Starts Inside and then Invades Everything** **Genesis 3:6; Genesis 6:5–6; Romans 1:18–32**

Why we sin is a mystery and the nature of sin is a mystery as well. What is sin? Answers abound. The words used in the Bible to describe sin itself and then the ways we sin can be overwhelming. Read the Romans 1 passage to see just a few of these words.

Genesis 3 (and Jesus in Matthew 15:10–20) reminds us that sin begins as an internal experience. But it does not remain internal. It erupts outward in speech, choices, decisions, and actions. Sin winds its way into relationships. It weaves its way into communities. It worms its way into systems and structures of society. Sin is INVASIVE. It is like a spiritual virus (a contagion) that cannot be contained. It mutates and evolves. It finds new manifestations and unexpected platforms.

*The Madness of Crowds* was a book published in 2017 that illustrated how the social manifestations of sin are much more severe and sustained than individual sin. Once sin has soaked into the very structures of culture and society, those sins become natural, easy, acceptable, and perpetrated.

Genesis 4–11 is the story of the social spread of sin to infect every aspect of life. Genesis 6:5–6 describes sin as so widespread and so wicked that God regretted making humanity. Still, God persevered with redemption through a man named Noah. In Genesis 12 God would activate a radical plan to redeem and bless our fallen world through Abraham. In John 3:16 we see just how far God will go to rescue us.

Sin is serious. It is tenacious. It is subtle and it is blatant. It is hidden and it is out in the open. It is destructive. It vandalizes the SHALOM of God (Michael Goheen). It destroys the FLOURISHING of the world.

The message of the entire Bible is to be alert and vigilant about sin. Stand strong against temptation. Actively resist all that is wrong. Grow in grace and virtue. Receive the forgiveness of Christ and pursue holiness.

## DAY 4

### **No Excuses (Stop the Blame Game)** **Genesis 3:8-13; Psalm 51; Romans 3:9-24**

The Genesis passage is short and powerful. Adam and Eve are exposed and confronted. *What have you done?* Immediately the blame game starts. Adam blames it on Eve, and actually on God. Eve blames the serpent. This is the original “the devil made me do it” answer.

This too is the nature of sin. Sin will not take responsibility for what it is and does (more on this theme next week). Sin passes the buck, finds an excuse, and blames someone else. Sin always has a reason, no matter how pathetic. In part, these responses are due to the experiences of both guilt and shame. They are so painful we will go to great lengths to suppress them, when Christ wants to save us from them.

This denial of responsibility is insidious because that denial prevents us from the essential pathway of forgiveness and restoration. What is needed is not excuses but humility, not fault finding but contrition, not blame shifting but confession. Humility, contrition (a sorrowful and genuine regret for what one has done), and confession are the pathways God has established for forgiveness, reconciliation, and change. Read Psalm 51 and see how David experienced guilt, shame, pain, fear, anxiousness, and then the needed humility, contrition, and confession.

Sin is strong, but God’s love is stronger. Guilt is strong, but God’s forgiveness is stronger. Shame is strong, but God’s mercy is stronger. Moral and spiritual evil are strong, but God’s GRACE is greater. Therefore, sin/guilt/shame will do everything they

can to keep you from God's redemption. This is the powerful theme of Paul in Romans 3:9–24. God begins the redemption of fallen humanity in Genesis 3, and long centuries later the Apostle Paul will lift up Jesus Christ as God's final answer to all that is wrong in the world—and all that is wrong in you.

## 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:** Consider these questions:

1. What's gone wrong? Or what's wrong with the world?
2. Why have things gone wrong and continue to go wrong?
3. What can be done about what is wrong to make it right?
4. Are people basically good or bad or a combination?

Take a few minutes and talk about how non-Christians might answer these questions.

What are some of the major issues facing the world? How is sin affecting us now? Then, make it a little more personal. What are the major issues you are facing? How is sin affecting your life right now?

**DAY 2:** Why do you think we can be so blinded by sin before we sin, but then have eyes that are so opened about it after we sin?

Why do people seem to struggle with the same temptations and fall into the same sins, year after year?

Why do so many people become addicts? What are the most common addictions of our time?

**DAY 3:** Sin is everywhere. And all kinds of sins are everywhere. What do you feel and think as you read the Romans 1 passage?

Talk about Genesis 6:5–6. These are serious words about God. Imagine how bad things must have been for God to feel this way.

**DAY 4:** Blame shifting and excuse making! It is so hard for us to take ownership of what is wrong with us. It is so easy for us to see and complain about what is wrong with others and with other groups who are different from our group. What are some of the things the church of Christ in 2023 should experience contrition and remorse over? How often do you personally practice the discipline of confession?