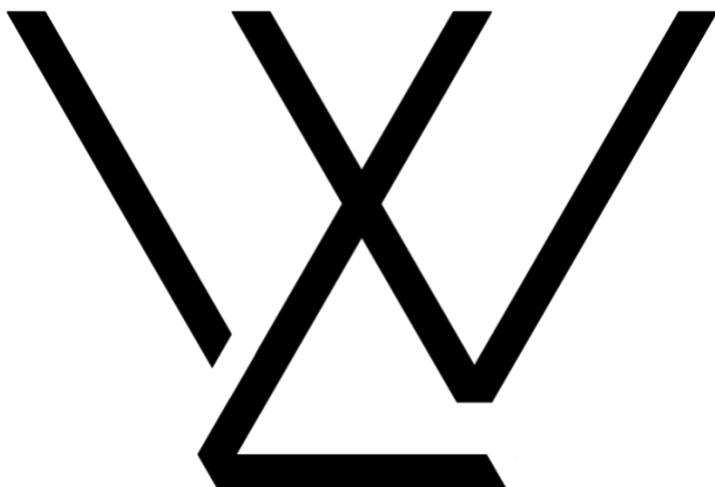




WORD TO LIFE

WEEKS 6 - 10





Word to Life's are sermon-aligned study guides, created to help the church dive even deeper into the passages we study together on Sundays.

Each week there will be five studies to help you prepare for the upcoming weekend sermon. This will also be a great discussion tool at your next LifeGroup meeting.

We hope you enjoy and grow deeper in your faith!

Contributors

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Week 6: Genesis 2:18-25

Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text

READ: Genesis 2:18-25 and Matthew 19:1-6

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time reading the biblical texts and complete the activities below.

- **Activity:** After reading through the selected passages, write down a few things that you notice.

- **Question:** Why do you think that Genesis 2:18-20 specifically tells the reader that nothing which was created prior to Eve was suitable for Adam? Why might that be an important detail to include?

- **Question:** Why do you think that Eve was specifically formed from the rib of Adam in vv. 21-22 and not in some other way?

- **Question:** What impression do you have of Adam's response in v. 23 after Eve was created and they met each other?

- **Question:** If you were asked to summarize this scene in only three words or with three descriptions, what words would you choose and why?

- **Question:** How would you compare the relationship of Adam and Eve before sin entered the world with relationships we now experience after human rebellion fractured God's good design?

Week 6: Genesis 2:18-25

Day 2: The Importance of Adam and Eve as Historic People

READ: Genesis 2:18-24 and Romans 5:12-21

EXPLORE:

Every so often, our study of Scripture will take us into complex questions that you may not have considered previously. To be clear, I (Stephen) am not trying to merely incorporate complexity into your reading of the Bible. Rather, it is my heart's desire to see the church thoughtfully study and winsomely engage tough questions which are being asked in the world today. It is quite possible that you have never considered whether Adam was a mythological or real person prior to today, but we are going to tackle that exact question and its implications briefly in this study.

In unbiblical scholarship, there is a perspective that considers Adam to be ahistorical. According to this view, Adam and Eve were not real people and they were created as a mythological representation of humanity. As we will find in a brief survey of Scripture today, there are good reasons to believe in the historic Adam and there are immense implications that follow.

First, the Hebrew Scriptures treated Adam and Eve as real, historical people. Throughout the Old Testament, the origins and historicity of Adam are theologically foundational. Both in Genesis 5 and I Chronicles 1,¹ Adam and Eve are treated as real people from whom genealogies were given throughout the generations of Israel. Additionally, Hosea 6 rejects a mythological understanding of Adam stating that he, like all of humanity, transgressed against God. Mythologizing Adam and Eve is not only unbiblical, it is fundamentally inconsistent with the later theological claims of Scripture.

¹ See Luke 3:23-38 for additional confirmation from the New Testament Scriptures about the historicity of Adam.

Second, the life and ministry of Jesus also reveal a commitment to the historic Adam. When Christ was being publicly tested by the Pharisees about the nature of marriage and divorce, He looked precisely into the directives which were given to Adam and Eve to ground God's good design for marriage.² When Jesus was given space to talk about God's creation prior to the sinful fall of humanity, he refused to mythologize Adam or Eve.

Third, the New Testament writings of both Paul and Hebrews are built upon the Adam and Eve not being mythological. The significance of Christ and his resurrection detailed in Romans 5:12-21 and in I Corinthians 15 is built on Adam being a real human.³ The historical trustworthiness of Genesis 2 is foundational for laws against adultery, models for marriage, the basis for government in the church, and it is a model for Christ's powerful love for His church.⁴ Ultimately, the case for the historic Adam and Eve is not only biblically founded, it is theologically essential.

BIG IDEA: The case for Adam and Eve as real, historic people is not only biblically supported, but also theologically essential.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Prior to today's study, had you ever considered or been exposed to the idea of Adam and Eve as mythological representations of humanity?
- **Activity:** Read I Corinthians 15:20-49 and write in your own words why the historic Adam is theologically important?

² See Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7 for reference.

³ Because of the close connection in Paul's argument, doubt concerning the historic Adam in Romans 5:14 would also necessitate doubt concerning the reality of Moses and other figures in the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁴ See Exodus 20:14, Hebrews 13:4, Matthew 19:3-12, I Corinthians 11:3-12, and Ephesians 5:21-32 for reference.

Week 6: Genesis 2:18-25

Day 3: Separated and Sacred

READ: Genesis 2:8-24

EXPLORE:

Several years ago, I (Cean) was introduced to what is referred to as 'easter eggs' by my teenage boys. They are hidden messages or hints within a movie or video game that point to something else. The Bible has hundreds of 'easter eggs;' however, since this term is too closely associated with the theft of the greatest triumph in history – the resurrection of Jesus - we will stick to the original terminology of foreshadowing. Thus far, God created, separated, and populated the heavens, the earth, and the waters.

Additionally, we are told that He planted an orchard oasis where He placed the most valuable and sacred of all His creatures, the man, *Adam*. The description of Eden and the surrounding garden serve as the first foreshadow that will weave its way through the entire Bible from bookend to bookend. The garden gives us a glimpse of God's heart and how He offers His presence, provision, and precepts to humanity from the very beginning to the end yet to come. Let's look briefly at these.

God's Presence: The garden served as the interface between heaven and earth. God separated it from the rest of earth as a sacred area where He came down to walk and talk with His beloved. God's desire was always to fellowship with humanity. Unfortunately, after the fall, humanity could no longer be in the presence of God due to the sin that marred the original creation. God did not give up on His desire to be with mankind, so He chose to reveal Himself to the specific Israelite people group. Although His people continued to stray, God's presence was with them in the wilderness, on mountaintops, in clouds, by fire, the

tabernacle, and eventually the temple build by King Solomon.⁵ The garden, tabernacle, and temple are archetypes or foreshadows of the promise that God wants to and will again dwell with mankind. The good news following the ascension of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit is that God's own presence would dwell among those who have repented and believed the gospel.⁶ As in the garden, but with a sense of newness and permanence, God's presence is with humanity again!

God's Provision: The description of the garden oasis in Genesis and Revelation is a picture of lush green land from which water flows and trees grow.⁷ This would be paradise for those living in agrarian or pastoral settings. Water is essential for life and here we are told that Eden, the residence of God, is the source of water that flows down and among a vast desert land. Please don't miss the imagery. Jesus calls Himself living water and He came to offer life to the lifeless, satisfaction to the parched, and relief to the weary. He provides peace, comfort, wisdom, and healing and invites you to come and take it.⁸ This principle is visible also in the Tree of Life which was placed in the garden. Humanity was removed from the garden due to sin, but because of the substitutionary death of Jesus, we can have life provided once more!

God's precepts: Genesis 2 is a powerful reminder that God has set boundaries and guidelines in order that all His creation will function according to its divine design.⁹ Man was told to protect and keep the garden against enemies, so too must a Christian guard against things that would disrupt or harm our relationship and intimacy with our heavenly Father. God still commands and

⁵ See 2 Chronicles 5:13-14, Exodus 16:10; 40:34 for reference.

⁶ See Acts 2:38 and I Corinthians 6:19 for reference.

⁷ See Genesis 2:9-10 and Revelation 22:1-2 for reference.

⁸ See John 7:37, 15:5 and I Corinthians 15:45 for reference.

⁹ See Genesis 2:15-17 for reference.

demands obedience as He rightfully should. If we keep these precepts and principals, then the natural result is abundant life, spiritual growth, and fruitfulness.

BIG IDEA: *God is with you; God is in you; God is for you.*

APPLY:

- **Question:** Christianity is rightly described as a relationship and not a religion. Examine your current mentality toward your relationship with Jesus. If it seems cumbersome, try to find ways to focus on the presence of God instead of the precepts.
- **Activity:** Set an alarm for 5 minutes and quietly sit before God picturing yourself with Him in the garden and meditating on the magnificence of His presence, provisions, and precepts.

Week 6: Genesis 2:18-25

Day 4: A Helper for Adam

READ: Genesis 2:18-25

EXPLORE:

In the creation account we have seen a recurring pattern that everything God has created is good. This is true, except one thing. Our text this week emphasizes that there was one thing which was not yet complete. That is, *it is not good that Adam is alone*. The Lord marches the animals in creation before Adam to be named. For each of the animals he sees a couple, both a male and female counterpart, bringing completion to their design and the ability to multiply as God intended. That is, except for Adam.

The text explains that *“there was not found a helper fit for him.”* At first glance, this terminology may be misleading and easily misunderstood. This term *“helper”* might conjure in our minds something like a child being mommy’s little helper, or that of a subordinate bringing aide to their superior. The Hebrew term used here for *helper* (*‘ezer*) does carry the connotation of support, but it does not carry the idea of inferiority. In fact, we often see the Lord Himself referred to as the *helper* of His people.¹⁰ Psalm 20:2, for example, says *“May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion!”* Furthermore, we ought to be reminded that Jesus promised His people would be given the Holy Spirit as their helper!¹¹

Though we see God extending help to his people, we would certainly never make the case that He is in any way inferior. We should recognize again that there was something *“not good”* with Adam being alone and that Eve was necessary for his completion. Adam needed Eve. Human relationship was essential. As we continue reading, we see that Eve was made differently than any other living being in creation. She was made from the rib of Adam. All else was made from the ground, but Eve was designed with special care and uniqueness. She was the first creature

¹⁰ See Also Psalm 121:1-2; 124:8; and Exodus 18:4 for reference.

¹¹ See John 14:26 for reference.

who was directly designed by God from another living creature. When Adam saw Eve, he marveled because finally there was now another like him.

After Adam relishes in the amazement of woman, we are introduced to yet another profound aspect to their relationship and God's design. Marriage. Again, we see this with nothing else in creation, that a man is going to *leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife*. The husband and wife become "*one flesh*." This language jolts us back to v. 23 where Adam declares this new life is "*bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh*." The one flesh sexual union between a man and a woman is a life creating union. In bearing children through marriage, Adam and Even will now be obedient to God's command to "*be fruitful and multiply*."

Therefore, we see in this text why Adam was incomplete in being alone. He needed Eve as his helper, that they might bring forth the full picture of bearing God's image through their marriage relationship and procreation. Though they are different in their design and roles, they are equal in their value as image bearers of the Lord. This "*helper*" is far from inferior to Adam, she was a vital part of making him whole.

BIG IDEA: Adam was alone, and it was not good. So, God created Eve as his helper to bring completion to His work of creating man and woman in his image.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How could the term "helper" be misunderstood and misused regarding the relationship between husband and wife?
- **Task:** In your own words explain what it means that men and women are different in their roles but equal in their value as image bearers of God.

Week 6: Genesis 2:18-25

Day 5: God Creates Woman

READ TOGETHER: Genesis 2:18-25 and Proverbs 12:4

***Instructions:** We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.*

EXPLORE TOGETHER:

Day six is the final day of creation. God has been building up to His prized creation, humanity created in the image of God. We have already been told in Genesis 1 that God created them male and female but here we are given the details of how it happened. If humanity is the crown of God's creation, the woman is the crown of man. Eve being created last is no slight to her but speaks to her nobility and honor. The Bible's beautiful portrayal of how Eve was created would have been profoundly unique in the ancient contexts. She was Adam's finest gift to be cherished and loved.

First, we can see God's great care and provision for Adam as He saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. Adam did not recognize this first, but God did. Out of God's goodness and care, He made him a helper fit for him. God then showed Adam his need for a helper. He does this by bringing the animals to Adam for him to name. This shows that Adam had dominion and authority over the animals to name them and this reveals to Adam that there was not a helper fit for him. Adam did not panic, but patiently trusted in God to provide.

Adam trusted in God, and He caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. It is implied that the deep sleep was caused so that Adam would not be wakened by losing a rib. God had his own potent and natural anesthesia. He then put Adam's flesh back in place, no doubt without leaving a scar. When Adam woke up, he did not feel as though he had lost something but instead with the appearance of Eve, he knew that he had gained something.

When God brought the woman to the man he responded in a poem of praise. "*This at last*" is an interesting phrase because Eve was created on the same day as Adam. However, this phrase communicates what an amazing gift she was to Adam. She came from Adam to be for Adam, not as an object, but as a crown to be cherished and loved. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother be joined fast to his wife. A man is only willing to leave his parents who are so dear and natural to him for someone (a woman) who is even better for him. As important as the parents are to an individual, the spouse is even more important. May we use great wisdom and prudence as we choose a spouse. May we also pray for our children and talk with them as they, in turn, choose a spouse as well.

BIG IDEA: Eve is the crown of Adam.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** If woman is the crown of man, how ought a husband treat his wife?
- **Question:** God could have populated the earth with many men or with many men and women without the need for birth. Why do you think God ordained the multiplication of humanity throughout the earth through marriage and childbirth? (*Hint:* the gospel)

Week 7: Genesis 3:1-7

Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text

READ: Genesis 3:1-7

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time reading Genesis and complete the activities below.

- **Activity:** Compare Genesis 2:15-17 with the conversation between Eve and the serpent in Genesis 3:1-6. What do you notice when you evaluate the two against each other?

- **Question:** If you were to summarize the crafty serpent's strategy to tempt Adam and Eve what would it be?

- **Question:** What similarities do you see between Genesis 3 and the way we are tempted to disobey God today?

- **Question:** After Eve took and ate the fruit in v. 6, we are told that she gave it also to Adam and he ate. Why do you think she chose to give it to him after eating it herself? Why do you think their eyes were opened after they both ate the fruit?

- **Question:** How would you explain the significance of Adam and Eve making their own clothes out of leaves in your own words?¹²

- **Activity:** Memorize Psalm 34:8 *“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”*

¹² See Genesis 3:7 for reference.

Week 7: Genesis 3:1-7

Day 2: The Predictable Framework of Temptation

READ: Read Genesis 3:1-7

EXPLORE:

This week's passage provides critical insight into the nature of temptation and sin. Understanding the principles in these verses pulls back the curtain on the exact structure of every temptation that has been used by the enemy since the Garden of Eden. In the exchange between Eve and the serpent, we see Satan use two different types of deceit. The first is the deceit of confusion. This tactic is seen in v. 1 when Satan knowingly misrepresents what God says.¹³ The second tactic of deceit is found in v. 4 when Satan tells an outright lie.

Regardless of the tactic, Satan's deceit is always aimed at undermining the character of God. This is made clear in v. 4 when Satan says, *"your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God."* In other words, the enemy tells Eve (and every person since) that she would make a better god than God. This is the reality at the heart of every sin.

Another way to think about this is that when we sin, we have believed the lie that we can make better decisions than God. Don't believe me (Lucas)? Think about the last time you sinned. Did you lose your temper? It's because you thought it would be better to indulge your emotion of anger than to practice grace, patience, and love. I know, I know, it all happens so fast! That is how quickly the enemy works. That is why we must work to identify his tactics right away.

Thousands of years after the Garden of Eden, God reminds us that the enemy's tactics have not changed since Genesis 3. The book of James is a letter written to believers in the first century, encouraging them to live out their faith even during difficulty.

¹³ compare Gen. 2:16-17 to Gen. 3:1

The first chapter shares insights that help believers move through trials with a godly focus. In vv. 13-15, we are told that temptation is always the result of our faith in God being challenged. Take some time to read it for yourself, but here is a brief recap: (v. 13) When you're tempted, don't blame God. He doesn't get thrown off course. He doesn't try to throw others off course. (v. 14) Temptation is always the result of our distraction (v. 15). Following temptation always leads to sin. Sin always produces death. In v. 16, James follows up this reality check by telling us not to be deceived (sound familiar?). Then, he explains that every good gift comes from God, and that God never changes.

In Genesis 3:1, Satan is described as craftier than anything else in God's creation. To put it bluntly, we cannot outsmart the enemy on our own. We must have faith in the One whose goodness never changes. Sin is the result of placing our faith in something other than our omniscient, omnipotent, and loving God.

BIG IDEA: Temptation leads to sin when we believe the lie that we can make better choices for our lives than God.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** The book of James is filled with practical steps for Christian living. Why do you think that temptation and sin are one of the first topics addressed in the five chapters that comprise the letter?
- **Activity:** The ultimate example in how to deal with temptation is found in the temptation of Christ. Take some time to read Matthew 4:1-11. Make a note of the phrase "*it is written.*" Jesus answers each temptation with truths found in Scripture. What Scriptures do you meditate on when facing temptation?

Week 7: Genesis 3:1-7

Day 3: Oh, for Grace to Trust Him More

READ: Genesis 3:1-7

EXPLORE:

The final line in the hymn entitled *'Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus*¹⁴ reads, "Oh, for grace to trust Him more." This powerful lyric doesn't merely close out the song and mark its chorus, it ought to reverberate within the hearts of all humanity. We need grace to trust God more.

You do not have to look very far to see examples of distrusting God. Sin is fundamentally born from and developed by a rebellion against God's good design. I (Stephen) have known this to be true and I'm sure you have also. Rejection of generosity gives way to greed, rebellion against selfless love gives way to lust, and a distrust of God's authority gives way to pride. Although sin may take slightly new forms with the passing of time, there is nothing new about our desperate need for grace to trust God more. It is as old as Genesis 3:1-7.

After encountering the serpent and listening to his sinister line of questioning, Genesis 3:6 records, "*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*" In a moment, both Adam and Eve demonstrated the core of distrust against God which has marred humanity and all of creation since.

¹⁴ Listening to *Tis So Sweet To Trust In Jesus* would be an excellent way to conclude this reading.

It is important to note that Adam and Eve were not just seeking to something new. Some forms of unbiblical scholarship have falsely suggested that God was restricting them from their full humanity. Much like the ploy of the serpent, according to this false view, God is presented as one who desires to hold humanity back from what they could truly achieve apart from Him. This does not represent the truth of the Garden or any period in human history. God was not trying to merely hold Adam and Eve back. They were not, in the fateful act of rebellion against God, attempting to escape a tyrannical bully. They were running from the love, protection, and good design of the One who made them.

The disobedience of Adam and Eve was a pragmatic reach for fulfillment apart from God's design. They attempted to detach God's declaration of what was good from reality, and it led to separation, pain, curse, and ultimately death. They desired the blessing while simultaneously rejecting the one who blesses. This, friends, is the heart of humanity's condition apart from God's intervening grace made available through Jesus. It is a grace and kindness which makes dead souls live and wayward hearts trust for the first time. We would do well to remember this moment and its profound truth as we daily learn to ask the Lord to give us *grace to trust Him more*.

BIG IDEA: In sin, we rebel against a good God and His design. By His grace, we can learn to trust Him more.

APPLY:

- **Question and Activity:** In what areas of your life are you tempted to distrust God? Spend time actively praying and writing down the ways in which you need grace to trust God more.
- **Question:** In what specific ways would your life look different if you actively trusted God?

Week 7: Genesis 3:1-7

Day 4: The Role of Consequences

READ: Genesis 3:1-7

EXPLORE:

In a recent conversation with a friend who has played professional baseball for several years, I (Stephen) asked him about his experience handling injuries. Specifically, my question was about whether it has become easier or more challenging to handle injuries well throughout his time in professional athletics. His answer was profound as it was memorable. In only a few words, he told me it has become much easier to deal with injuries over the years because each injury provides space for reflection, improvement, and renewed focus. As an elite and high-achieving individual, he then told me how injuries provide space for self-assessment just as moral consequences provide space for repentant reflection on sin.

Certainly, an athlete can experience an injury because of a traumatic unforeseen collision or accident. In the world of injuries, however, often the damage incurred can be often connected to a previous warning sign in a person's body. In similar fashion, we do not merely experience the spiritual consequences for bad choices, we also receive prior warnings from God. They serve as reminders that all is not right in our souls and that we need to recover and pursue God's design daily.

Adam and Eve should have recognized how the serpent was twisting the protective guidelines of God. Instead, they yielded to half-truths said by the serpent and suffered the consequences. Immediately after giving into the temptation, Adam and Eve experienced the first cycle of shame, hiding, and the shifting of blame. The harmony of their relationship with God and one another was broken and the consequences came quickly. We can learn from their tragic example.

When we encounter warning signs and experience repercussions, we should acknowledge that they are both means of God's grace toward us in a world that is beset with chaos and sin. For my athlete friend and for

us today, it is a fundamentally good thing when we come to grips with the emptiness of sin. When we realize the weight of our own dysfunction and pain, it is an act of God's grace calling us back to Himself. It's an act for which we ought to be thankful.

For the moments in which we have comprised, we need to fight the urge to spin the story or make excuses. Whether we have trouble directly because of what we have done or because of others, consequences are God-given reminders that can shatter spiritual apathy and deepen a holy trust in God. The good news which bursts from the page in Genesis 3:15 is that God has not left us to ourselves. It was for a people who had rejected His warnings and experienced severe consequences that Jesus came to redeem a rebellious humanity and heal a fractured world.

BIG IDEA: The consequences we experience for bad choices are a means of God's grace which can shatter spiritual apathy and awaken reliance upon Him.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Is it hard for you to think of consequences you experience in your life as one of God's gracious methods of growing you spiritually? Why or why not?
- **Question:** A study of Genesis 3 would not be complete without an encouragement to stop flirting with temptation rich environments that yield little spiritual fruit. Spend some time in prayer and confession after completing this study.

Week 7: Genesis 3:1-7

Day 5: For Better or for Worse

READ TOGETHER: Genesis 3:1-7, Revelation 12:9

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EXPLORE TOGETHER:

Genesis 2 ends and you may think to yourself, could things get any better? Genesis 3 begins and you may think to yourself, could things get any worse? The answer is yes to both questions!

We could have read about Adam and Eve having children before the fall, being fruitful and multiplying just as God commanded them to. Sinless adults and sinless children would have been cool to read about. We also know that after chapter 3 things continue to get worse to the point that God must bring a flood to start over again. The contrast between Genesis 2 and Genesis 3 shows us that this marriage union would indeed be for better or worse.

Adam and Eve were on cloud nine, but Satan was on the prowl. We are told that the serpent was more crafty or shrewd than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. No doubt Eve was used to the serpents being shrewd, but this one could even talk, which surely grabbed her attention. He came to her when she was alone and he did not come with a statement, but with a question. A question is more disarming than an outright statement of contradiction. His question was also deceptive in that he asked if God had forbid them to eat of every tree in the garden. The serpent is immediately seeking to cause Eve to doubt and question God's goodness. His question is basically, isn't God

restrictive? God has clearly been super abundant and giving consistently but if Satan can cause any doubt he will seize on the opportunity.

Eve answers the serpent correctly, however she should have not continued in the conversation with the serpent at this point. The serpent has already shown his true colors by misrepresenting God thus proving himself an enemy of God. With Eve on her heels, the serpent comes right out and contradicts God's word by saying "you shall not surely die." In fact, it will not end poorly but well. Your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Satan is saying, God is really just envious of you and doesn't want you to be as smart as Him.

Eve took the bait. She believed the lie when she saw that the tree was good for food. She realized this fruit can be eaten and enjoyed just like any other fruit. If this is so God must be holding something back from me and I want what it has to offer. I want to be a god. This tragic fall only gets worse when we see that she gives some to Adam and he also eats. Their eyes were indeed opened, but only to grief and shame. Now they would have to live in this marriage union truly for better or worse.

BIG IDEA: Things were so good for the first human couple and then they turned bad so quickly.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** Eve focused her attention on what she couldn't have rather than on the many blessings and gifts that she did have. Why is it important for us to focus on the things we do have rather than on what we lack?

- **Activity:** After a week of discovery and study, describe again the process that the serpent took in his temptation of Eve. This will help prepare you when you are being tempted.

Week 8: Genesis 3:8-24

Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text

READ: Genesis 3:8-24

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time reading Genesis and complete the activities below.

- **Activity**: Take notes on Genesis 3:8-24 and write down what you observe your first time reading it through.

- **Question**: What did Adam and Eve do after they sinned? What did God do immediately after Adam and Eve sinned?

- **Question**: What are the specific curses given to the serpent, to the woman and to Adam in vv. 14-19?

- **Question:** Genesis 3:22-24 will be studied this week and in the weekend's sermon, but what are your initial impressions of these verses and their significance?

- **Optional Activity:** Search your Bible for other occurrences of Cherubim. What do you notice in the biblical references you find?

Week 8: Genesis 3:8-24

Day 2: God's Judgment & Sacrifice

READ: Genesis 3:8-24

EXPLORE:

Previously in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve fell from innocence by disobeying God. Now they face judgment: pain, sweat, thorns, and death. In their fallen state, humans could not participate in immortality. The aspects of God's good design¹⁵, though not eliminated, are now blemished. Instead of reaching up and plucking fruit while tending the garden, man would eat bread through difficult labor. Work and family life are both frustrating because of the fall. Although frustrating, work and family life are still partially fulfilling: Sometimes you have a sense of achievement after a hard day's work, and families provide traces of the intimacy and companionship for which God made us. These remind us of our innocent past and our glorious future with Christ in Heaven. In view of these things, we need to see how God's judgments on man and woman correspond to their origins, names, and roles:

The First Man	The First Woman
Made from the ground (2:7)	Made from the man (2:22)
Named "Adam" after the ground (<i>adamah</i>) (2:7)	Named "Woman" (<i>'Ishshah</i>) after man (<i>'iysh</i>) (2:23)
Made to work the ground (2:5)	Made to help the man (2:18-20)
Judgment: Painful labor working the ground; Return to the ground in death (3:17-19)	Judgment: Painful labor in childbearing; Conflict with the man (3:16)

¹⁵ See Genesis 1-2 for reference.

God's judgment also contained promises: that the woman would bring forth children and that the seed of a woman would bruise the serpent's head.¹⁶ In faithful response to God's promises, Adam renamed his wife Eve,¹⁷ confident that his descendants would continue living long after he died. He had previously named her "Woman" (*Ishshah*) after himself.¹⁸

God's promises encompass not only the continuation of human life, but redemption. Adam and Eve were unable to cover their own guilt and shame by sewing fig-leaves together.¹⁹ Only God could atone for their sin. The first death occurred when God offered a sacrifice for Adam and Eve, clothing them in animal skin. This points forward to the atoning death of Jesus, the true seed of a woman who was the virgin Mary. On his brow, Christ wore those thorns which are part of the curse. Rather than hiding behind our own pitiful attempts at religion or good works, we can wear the righteousness of Christ as we trust in his redeeming victory.

BIG IDEA: Adam's disobedience brought frustration and death to all humans, but we can be redeemed by trusting in Christ's atoning sacrifice.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** Considering your job or family situation, list some of its "thorns and thistles." Then list some of its blessings.
- **Questions:** How do you deal with guilt and shame? What "fig leaves" (if any) are you hiding behind?
- **Question:** How are the roles and judgments in the table above similar to or different from what you've experienced?

¹⁶ See Genesis 3:15 for reference.

¹⁷ Meaning mother of all living in Genesis 3:20.

¹⁸ See Genesis 2:23 for reference.

¹⁹ See Genesis 3:7 for reference.

Week 8: Genesis 3:8-24

Day 3: Shame in the System

READ: Genesis 3:8-24

EXPLORE:

In the events which are described after Adam and Eve sinned, the painful effects of sin can be seen. The pristine, undefiled creation held together by the pure love of God was, in a moment, lost because of the introduction of human rebellion. Genesis 3:8-24 affords us another chance to reflect upon the all-too-familiar outcomes associated with a sinful departure from God's design.

After choosing to disobey the one rule which they had been given, Adam and Eve experienced shame. Interestingly, the shame they experienced is instantly and quite literally made visible in their nakedness. Although they were previously unashamed at their nakedness prior to the fall,²⁰ everything changed because of their sin.²¹ It could be because of awkwardness or general confusion, but this uncomfortable aspect of the story is typically left unexplored. A brief word of clarity ought to be helpful.

In the garden, the nakedness of Adam and Eve is a statement or symbol of their purity in relationship with God and one another. As a result of sin, God fashioned garments for Adam and Eve.²² To be clear, God ordained clothing to testify to the relationship lost between Him and man. Shameless nudity cannot be considered a return to innocence, it is a continued rebellion against God's actions after the fall. Likewise, a person who uses clothing as a

²⁰ "The Fall" is an overarching term typically used to describe the moments in which Adam and Eve first sinned and violated God's instruction, resulting in curse, pain, and separation from God.

²¹ Compare Genesis 2:24-25 with 3:7-13 for reference.

²² See Genesis 3:21 for reference.

means of authority and prestige has also missed the fundamental function of clothing from God.

In their shame, Adam and Eve attempted to cover themselves and hide. In a later conversation between Adam and God, it becomes clear that fear was the motivation for their attempts to hide after sin. Moreover, when Adam and Eve were confronted by God, they simultaneously neglected personal responsibility and shifted the blame. In the progression through distrust, disobedience, shame, fear, hiding, blame, and ultimately the curse which we have already studied this week, we are able to see similar patterns in our own lives when we sin.

All is not as it should be. Shame is in the system, and we are helpless on our own. By God's grace, it did not stay that way. The full weight of sin's curse was willingly taken by Christ in such a way that the separation between God and humanity might be bridged for those who have placed their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

BIG IDEA: The progression through distrust, disobedience, shame, fear, hiding, and blame-shifting reminds us of our sinfulness and the sufficiency of our Savior to redeem what was broken.

APPLY:

- **Question:** When you look at the response of Adam and Eve, what similarities do you see in your own reaction to sin?
- **Activity:** Genesis 3:15 is often referred to as the *protoevangelium* or "first gospel." It is seen as a prophecy which Jesus will later fulfill. Read and reflect on this passage in a time of prayer.

Week 8: Genesis 3:8-24

Day 4: Getting to the Root of the Problem: The Tree of Knowledge

READ: Genesis 3:8-24, Exodus 26:31-35, and Luke 23:44-49

EXPLORE:

This week's study brings us face-to-face with some of the most heartbreaking verses in all of Scripture. Genesis 3:22-24 reads, *"Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever—" therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."*

In the aftermath of Adam and Eve's disobedience, their conversation with God, and the pain which followed, the couple was banished from the Garden of Eden. They were expelled from God's direct presence, and they were kept from the tree of life. In only a few verses, there is pain and there are questions. Although the ripple effects of these verses are sent throughout Scripture, we will attempt to answer some of the important questions briefly below.

Question: What did God mean when he said, *"man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil?"*

When Adam and Eve chose to eat from the forbidden tree, they longed for and acted upon what seemed good to them but was in opposition to God's decree. In the serpent's previously stated half-truth, man and woman were given knowledge. They had knowledge of evil like God, but worse. They had an experiential

knowledge of evil because they defied God. They gained a type of knowledge which fails to satisfy desire and only awakens more despair. They sought fulfillment in created things, knowledge apart from God, and they were separated from His presence. Scripture consistently speaks about trying to obtain a type of wisdom apart from God which does not yield fruit.²³

Question: Why did God have to expel them and why was it guarded by a Cherubim on the East?

Instead of having Adam and Eve chase human desires in a lost paradise, God justifiably separated them from the Garden and from the tree of life. This is a tragic moment not just for Adam and Eve, but for us as well. Like them, when we seek to satisfy our longings apart from God we receive a diminished existence, not a satisfying life. Cherubim, which are an angelic being consistently associated with the presence of God,²⁴ were placed to guard. The imagery of the Cherubim is consistently seen in Scripture. Notably, Cherubim imagery was placed on the sacred ark and within the tabernacle which, like the Garden, had its entrance to the East. A thick, tall curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place within the tabernacle depicted none other than mighty, protective Cherubim. It was a vivid reminder of the space that existed between God and humanity because of sin.

The Scriptures are filled with allusions to Genesis 3 and the painful separation therein. Although we can't cover them all now, our study today would not be complete without reminding ourselves once again of what Christ accomplished in His sacrificial death. On the cross, Jesus bridged the gap between God and humanity, securing full fellowship and eternal life with God! For as Christ was breathing some of His last, the curtain which was

²³ See Job 15:7-9 and Proverbs 30:1-4 for reference.

²⁴ See Psalm 18:10 and Ezekiel 10 for reference.

interwoven with Cherubim and symbolized the separation between God and humanity was torn in two. The pain and penalty of sin are severe, but God's grace, made available through Christ, is greater still.

BIG IDEA: Separation from the Garden was necessary and it was justified. By God's grace, a way has been made for humanity to live in relationship with Him once more.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How would you explain the events of vv. 22-24 simply and in your own words?

- **Optional Activity:** Read James 3:13-18 and I Corinthians 3:18-23 and reflect on them below.

Week 8: Genesis 3:8-24

Day 5: Judgment and Gospel

READ TOGETHER: Genesis 3:8-24, Revelation 22:1-5

Instructions: *We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.*

EXPLORE TOGETHER:

After their sin and after their feeble attempt to cover their shame, they heard the Lord coming in the cool of the day. He did not come on a fiery chariot to strike down his enemies. He came as a self-controlled father when his children are in trouble. But Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. Here is one of the more tragic verses in all of the Bible. Previously before the fall, they would have gladly greeted and headed for the Lord when they heard Him coming. Now they cannot bear the sight of Him. But God in His goodness calls to them. Adam eventually confesses that he has eaten of the forbidden fruit and so does Eve.

God begins his judgment where the sin began and that is with the serpent. The serpent is cursed and now must go on its belly and eat dust. Since the serpent must go on its belly, any time it attacks for a meal, dust will inevitably be eaten. Moreover there will be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Serpent and man will be at war with each other. Serpents normally are able to only bite the heel of man since they are so low to the ground and man is able to crush the head of the serpent with his heel. But this physical truth also is a spiritual truth. One seed of the woman will crush the rule, power, and kingdom of the devil, and that is Jesus. So even as God is meting out judgment over the serpent, the woman, and man, He is also giving a gospel promise.

The woman is not cursed as the serpent, but she is disciplined. Her pain in childbearing will be multiplied. This is a judgment of sorrow. We know that since the fall, mankind has lived with many sorrows. We have pains, trials, and tribulations of all sorts. Her desire shall also be contrary to her husband, but he shall rule over her. Before the fall, there would have been peaceful headship and submission. Now due to sin, the husband does not also rule in wisdom and love. Now because of sin, the wife does not always submit in meekness and humility. Sin has caused this friction, this difficulty in submission, but nonetheless, the husband will still rule in the home. Once again, the husband is not cursed, but the ground that he works is. The garden of Eden was easy labor compared to the pain and sweat that the ground will now cause him. Every time we think of the difficulty of marriage, childbirth, work, and all our sorrows, we are to remember the fall. Sin has caused this, and more, sin will only cause it to be worse. But every time we think of the fall, we can also think of our Lord who sweated great drops of blood for us, who went into the dust (death) for us and who opened the way for us back to the tree of life.

BIG IDEA: Judgement does not leave us hopeless, for God has promised us redemption through his Son Jesus Christ.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** What do you think of the significance of God clothing Adam and Eve with garments that he had made rather than letting them keep the fig leaves that they had made? (*Hint:* the gospel)
- **Activity:** Make a list of ten things that are a result of sin. Then, make a list of ten things that are a result of the gospel.

- **Question:** Sin is described as “*crouching at the door*” with a “*desire to rule over*” a person. In what ways have you personally known this experience with sin to be true?

- **Activity:** Read Hosea 6:6, Psalm 40:6-8, Jeremiah 7:21-23 and Hebrews 10:4-10. What do you notice about these biblical texts?

Week 9: Genesis 4:1-8

Day 2: The Sin of Minimal Effort

READ: Genesis 4:1-8

EXPLORE:

The sin of minimal effort is a dangerous, yet often overlooked temptation in the life of every individual. From a failure in self-control to an exaggerated projection of diligence, the allure of inactivity often keeps us ineffective. Since brokenness entered the world through disobedience, the sin of minimal effort has been plaguing humanity. The story of Cain and Abel is no different.

After being separated from the Garden, Adam and Eve were enabled by God to conceive and were given two sons.²⁵ Cain worked in the fields and Abel was a shepherd. As the story is told, both Cain and Abel brought an offering to the Lord from their respective areas of labor. We are told that Cain brought *fruit of the ground*, but Abel specifically brought *the firstborn of the flock and the fat portions*. It may seem vague to us as modern readers, but this text would have been abundantly clear to the ancient audience. Cain's offering was inadequate. It was incomplete. Abel did his best and Cain did not.

In Cain's anger and God's reaction, we can see that the *fruit of the ground* was not a gift from a grateful heart, but compulsory action of minimal effort. What began from a heart of indifferent obligation quickly morphed into violence against his own brother. This well-known story ought to remind us to not look lightly upon minimal effort and where it can lead.

I (Stephen) have found that the struggle to work and worship diligently can come to the surface in different ways. Like Cain, I can be guilty of not giving my first and best unto the Lord as an act of worship. Too often, the most important things in life receive a relatively small amount

²⁵ Adam and Eve had more children, but the two primary characters of vv. 1-8 are Cain and Abel.

of attention. It's possible that you are diligent and disciplined and the struggle takes a different shape for you. It could be that you actively project a busier and more productive version of yourself than that which matches reality. Moreover, it could be that you find your worth and value in what you do rather than who God has created you to be.

In repenting of our own minimal effort, we need to be careful not to embrace another sinful extreme of frantic busyness. In Hebrews, the faith of Abel is praised as one who worshipped God and gave sacrifices to Him as a representation of deep gratitude and thanksgiving. He is not honorable because he was a high achiever. He is a man of faith because he was worshipful. Because he gave his offering from a deep place of satisfaction in the Lord, his gift was abundant, and it was full.²⁶ When God looks upon our lives, may He see cheerful gifts rooted in diligence rather than minimal effort, which is grounded in compulsion.

BIG IDEA: Gospel-centered diligence is the right response to the sin of minimal effort.

APPLY:

- **Question:** In what areas of life are you tempted to give minimal effort? How would your behavior change if you were to embrace diligence as a Christian virtue in all aspects of life, work, and relationships?

- **Question:** Have you ever been tempted to project an inauthentic depiction of yourself, your busyness, and/or your importance?

²⁶ See Hebrews 11:1-4 for context and reference.

Week 9: Genesis 4:1-8

Day 3: Why Are You Angry?

READ: Genesis 4:1-16 (*Notice the significance of anger and sin which result in death and separation*)

EXPLORE:

Oh! Happy day! when the first woman, Eve, conceived her first child and gave birth to a son named Cain. What joy to also give birth to his brother Abel! We don't learn much about their early years except that Cain was a farmer, a tiller of the ground, bringing forth fruit of the ground. Abel, on the other hand was a keeper of flocks. As God would have us to know, we learn that there came a day, in the course of time, that these men would bring forth offerings and present them to the LORD. As we learned on Week 5-Day 2 of our WTL study, the LORD Yahweh is God's personal name and reveals the desire of God to have a close relationship with His children, in this case, Cain and Abel.

We soon see that these two brothers presented their offerings to the LORD. Abel's gift was the first of his flock with its fat portion and the LORD was pleased. But as for Cain's offering, the first fruit of the ground, the LORD did not approve. In this exchange, the LORD observed that Cain was very angry over His disregard of the fruit offering.

I (Leeanna) love the ministry of Breakthrough Prayer and often use this biblical example of how the LORD asked Cain a self-discovery question to help him see the danger ahead of him. Unconfessed sin will often lead to terrible consequences. Knowing this, the LORD graciously asked Cain, *"Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."* What is the principle here? That if we do not discover the root of why we are angry and master it, we will cultivate it to the point of our anger becoming sin. The result of Cain's unresolved anger and intense jealousy, was murderous rage, resulting in death and separation not only from the one he despised most, but also from the ones he loved the most.

The LORD, being a personal God, wanted to have a conversation with Cain about his anger. He wanted to talk with him about it and help him see the error of his ways. When the LORD didn't regard Cain's offering, He had a very good reason. In fact, the LORD is always just and right in His decisions, no matter how we might feel about it. It would have been beneficial for Cain to inquire of the LORD, repent and make his offering acceptable, as Abel did. But Cain's intense anger and refusal to come to the LORD with his pain, blinded him to doing the right and honorable thing toward God and his brother. If you need help letting go of your hurts, reach out to Breakthrough Prayer Ministry. We (Leeanna Porter and the Breakthrough Team) truly do want to go on this journey of freedom, with you.

BIG IDEA: Sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Cain's story is a reminder to bring our hurt and brokenness before God.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Sometimes, hurts are valid; the only cure for truth-based pain is to allow the LORD to carry it. However, unresolved anger is never the way to a cure. Do you have any unresolved unforgiveness, jealousy, or anger towards another person? How long has this festered and how much longer will you allow it to continue?

- **Question:** Do you sense any hesitancy or resistance to having a conversation with the LORD about what hurt or brokenness you have experienced? What do you believe would happen if you talked this over with God in prayer?

- **Optional Activity:** As necessary, reach out to Breakthrough Prayer using the information included here.
 - a. Visit: www.golpc.org/breakthrough-prayer
 - b. Call: 832-978-6381
 - c. Email: breakthrough@golpc.org

Week 9: Genesis 4:1-8

Day 4: Suffering and the Scriptural Response

READ: Genesis 4:1-8 and Romans 7:17-25

EXPLORE:

What do you do when injustice occurs to the vulnerable? What do you do when evil seems to go unpunished? What do you do when the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous die early?

Scripturally speaking, the story of Cain and Abel provides us with the first chance to look upon and grieve the injustice and violence which occurs in a world which has been broken by sin. Generally, good decisions receive good consequences, but the story of Adam and Eve's children will force us to ask, "What do you do when righteous action is met with a violent response?"

In the example of Abel, we are reminded that sometimes the virtuous die and the wicked seem to thrive. Certainly, if we were left only with an earthly perspective of pain and suffering, this question would be incredibly difficult. According to the Scriptures, however, we are powerfully reminded of God's ultimate, eternal, and victorious justice against evil. God will be triumphant and evil will be eradicated. However, Genesis 4 gives us the chance to ponder the nature of Christian hope amidst suffering here and now.

First, we need to be reminded that Scripture gives constant voice to the very types of questions that we have introduced in today's study. Questions about God's goodness, his plan, his nearness, and his justice fill not only the Psalms, but nearly every book in the Bible. A person who reads Scripture cannot be left with the impression that God does not want to hear us call out to Him in our pain.

Second, Scripture does not merely ask tough questions, it also provides wonderful answers. From reminders about God's eternal nature and His holiness to the assurance that He will act in time, we are constantly reminded that God is near the brokenhearted. God is not a distant, passive observer. His love is bent toward the sufferer. His ear is inclined toward their struggle and prayer.

Third, Scripture asserts that the pain we experience is not just the result of evil around us, but of evil which exists within us. We are utterly incapable on our own of living sinlessly before a God of perfection and goodness. The result of rebelling against a life-giving God is death. However, because of His great love and tender mercy, God made a way by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit to grow hope and holiness in the souls of those who trust in him. I John 5:19-20 summarizes it well, stating, *"We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."*

BIG IDEA: Christian hope acknowledges the legitimacy of pain here and now with the deep assurance that God holds ultimate victory.

APPLY:

- **Question and Activity:** When have you experienced the hope of God which was bigger than the difficulty you were facing? Write down your responses and share with your LifeGroup when possible.

Week 9: Genesis 4:1-8

Day 5: The First Family

READ TOGETHER: Genesis 4:1-8, Hebrews 11:4, 1 John 3:12

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EXPLORE TOGETHER:

The first family is representative of all human families. Due to the fall, sin and death are experienced by every human family. In this first family we see both the wicked and the righteous. The enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is clearly put on display for us. The fall was not without hope, but we know that it results in a world filled with sorrow. The consequences of Adam and Eve's sin may not have ever reached a higher fever pitch than in this instance when their eldest son kills his younger brother. Long gone are the peaceful days in the garden of Eden.

Eve bore a son and she and Adam called him Cain, which means "possession." God gave them a gift, as all children are, and it seems they may have thought that this seed would be the one to crush the head of the serpent and end their sorrow. They quickly found out this is not the case. Another son was born, and they named him Abel, which means "vanity." With the promised seed having already been born (or so they supposed) in Cain, Abel was given the name vanity. Unfortunately, his brief life would live up to this name.

The brothers each had a calling or vocation. Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain was a worker of the ground. It was out of these callings that they brought an offering to the Lord. Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground and Abel brought an offering of the firstborn of his

flock and of their fat portions. It seems that Abel gave his best of what God required, from a pure heart, while Cain gave something other than what God required, withholding his best from an impure heart... Abel's offering was given in faith and Cain's was not.

Since God did not accept Cain's offering, he became angry. As is the case with all anger borne out of jealousy and rebellion against God's authority, his anger was irrational. God graciously gave Cain the chance to recognize and release that anger; He gave him the chance to right his wrong (*If you do well, would you not be accepted?* vs. 7), but he was having none of it. Cain wrongly believed that his problem was his brother and not his own sin. He thought, "If I get rid of my brother, then I will get rid of my problem". So, he deceived Abel into accompanying him into the field and killed him. The righteous Abel was killed simply because he was righteous, and his brother evil.

BIG IDEA: Sin in the world brings about murder.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** Why do you think God did not accept Cain's offering?

- **Question:** How do you react when God convicts you that something you've done is wrong? Do you repent and correct your mistake, or do you deny that you've done something wrong?

- **Activity:** List other family conflicts and sin that you can think of in the Scriptures.

Week 10: Genesis 4:9-26

Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text

READ: Genesis 4:9-26

EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time reading Genesis and complete the activities below.

- **Activity:** After reading the verses, write down some of your thoughts, comments, questions, and ideas.

- **Question:** In the first few chapters of Genesis, we have seen God ask many questions. We have witnessed this once again in vv. 9-10. Why do you think God asks so many questions?

- **Question:** Genesis 4:11-16 describe some of the repercussions for Cain's actions against Abel. What do you notice about what occurs and how God responds to him?

Week 10: Genesis 4:9-26

Day 2: Sibling Rivalry and Recovery

READ: Genesis 4:9-26

EXPLORE:

Following the fall in Genesis 3, we begin to see the devastating reality of sin. We can see its destructiveness on human relationships.

We see the first glimpse of this with Adam and Eve, who once walked naked in the garden with one another and with God. After the fall, they were ashamed of their nakedness, showing an emotional and intimate separation. They covered themselves with leaves that functioned as a literal barrier between the two. Adam and Eve hid from God but when He confronts them with his disobedience, Adam was quick to place blame on “the woman” that God gave to him, while Eve places blame on the serpent. They were then cast out from the garden. I’m (Josh) sure that was a long awkward walk to nowhere.

Now we see Cain and Abel arrive on the scene as the first sibling relationship. It should bring us some comfort to see that rivalry between siblings is not unique to our own homes. Literally, as I write this, I am hearing the delightful sound of a daughter screaming because her brother has just destroyed her building blocks, while simultaneously another daughter yanking her baby sister down with an overly affectionate hug. Siblings are filled with pride and competition towards one another because of the sin in their hearts. It should come as no surprise that this leads to ongoing tension in their relationships.

Eventually Cain’s jealousy and rage led him to murder his brother and it sets off a pattern of sibling rivalry that we see throughout Genesis. Later, Abraham will have Isaac and Ishmael, whose tension echo through two nations this very day. Not to mention Jacob and Esau, Rebecca and Leah, and Joseph and his brothers. For thousands of years since the fall, sin has worked to destroy families.

In Jesus, however, we see a great work of redemption for the family. Not only do we see restoration of families in Christ, we also see those who follow Jesus become a new family, siblings even, each as children of God. When someone comes to Jesus to tell Him that His mother and brothers were looking for Him, Jesus responds, *“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*²⁷ Jesus is doing a new thing.

In Christ we have hope in sibling relationships. First, by grace we have received Holy Spirit. The power of God’s spirit can bring healing to broken relationships through repentance. As we submit ourselves to Christ and, unlike Cain, repent of our sin and pride, we can see the relationships with our brothers and sisters restored. Second, if one has no siblings or their relationship is irreconcilable, we find that in Christ we are given a new spiritual family. Colossians 3:26 says, “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.” As children of God, the church becomes a community of brothers and sisters as we share the same loving heavenly father.

BIG IDEA: In the redemption of Jesus, we receive freedom from rivalries into renewed relationship through repentance.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** If you have siblings, think through your experience of sibling rivalry growing up. Consider how your hearts were like that of Cain. Are there relationships that need to be restored?
- **Question:** How would our church look different if everyone embraced the reality of spiritual family? How well do you do in this area?

²⁷ See Matthew 12:46-50 for reference.

Week 10: Genesis 4:9-26

Day 3: Tough Questions to Consider²⁸

READ: Genesis 4:9-26

EXPLORE:

Family conflict, polygamy, and genealogies are not on most lists of what people enjoy studying in Scripture. And yet, Genesis 4:9-26 introduces us to the aforementioned trifecta. In today's study, I (Stephen) am going to quickly introduce and briefly discuss two complicated questions that come to the surface in the aftermath of Cain and Abel's notorious story.

Question: Who was Cain's wife and was their relationship incestuous? In answering this question, we need to remember that we are not told in the story when exactly Cain killed Abel. From the framing of the story in the larger context of Genesis 5, it does not appear as though the murder took place in their early years. As such, Adam and Eve would have been able to have many children by the time Cain married his wife.²⁹ Jewish tradition believed that Adam and Eve had more than 50 children. The Scriptures consistently affirm that Adam and Eve were the first created beings from whom all humanity was later produced. As such, we are left to assume that Cain's wife was one of Adam's other daughters.

The question remains, however, was it wrong for Cain to marry his relative? First, because Adam and Eve were created without genetic defect or flaw, there would not have been degenerative effects in their offspring and their respective relationships. Second, the reproductive relationship between the first family of creation would have been a necessary dynamic to populate the earth. Third, a law against incest was not passed until Leviticus, but it was upheld in the New Testament.³⁰ God's prohibition of incest protects the health of the individual, their

²⁸ **Caution:** If you are reading this study with children, the content may be too mature for a given audience.

²⁹ See Genesis 5:4 for reference.

³⁰ See Leviticus 18; 20, Mark 6:17-18, and I Corinthians 5:1-12 for reference.

offspring, and the sanctity of the family unit. Finally, even before sin entered in the world, we read about a husband and wife who will be called to leave their family of origin to cleave to their spouse.³¹ In summary, we do not see incest promoted, considered as ideal, or labeled as permissible in Scripture outside of when it was necessary for the human population of the earth.

Question: Why are genealogies listed and given at such length in the Scriptures?

At their core, genealogies were foundational in the biblical contexts. They are central in many cultures still today. Genealogies serve to ground relationships in a sense of continuity over time. They remind individuals of their legacy without having to detail each individual's story. When a dispute arose concerning honor or position, an individual's genealogy would have often been considered in the ancient world. When we consider Genesis 4, there are at least two primary connotations which are clear. First, in His grace, God enabled not only the just, but the unjust to conceive and reproduce. Second, we are meant to see the continued dysfunction of Cain in his descendant, Lamech, who took multiple wives and continued a legacy of violence. If we are willing to diligently spend time in the genealogies, we will be reminded anew how all Scripture is truly God-breathed and valuable for us today.³²

BIG IDEA: Genesis introduces us to complicated questions with compelling answers which ought to ground biblical confidence once again.

APPLY:

- **Activity:** Compare the genealogy of Lamech (Genesis 4:17-24) with the line of Seth (Genesis 5:3-32). What do you notice and why might it be significant?

³¹ See Genesis 2:24 for reference.

³² See II Timothy 3:16-17 for reference.

Week 10: Genesis 4:9-26

Day 4: There is Still Hope

READ: Genesis 4:9-26

EXPLORE:

Movies and books are often marked by a similar flow and structure. The initial introduction and setting are followed by conflict and quickly elevated action. At some point in the plotline, the rising tension gives way to the climax which is followed by falling action and an eventual resolution. If you are a fan of Hallmark Movies, you know this progression like clockwork... literally.

I (Stephen) don't know about you, but the tension of a gripping movie or riveting book often makes me squirm in my seat, anxiously awaiting the resolution that I know is around the corner. Sometimes, I find the deepest moments of a story's tension in hard to endure. In those instants, I actively fight the urge to close the book, stop the movie, and delete the conflict altogether.

This all-too-familiar plotline and tension in movies and books speaks to a deeper spiritual reality within all of us. It is a God-given desire for tension to be resolved, for things to be set right, and for hope on the other side of conflict. It is a storyline that takes shape in Genesis as well.

In our study of Genesis 3-4 I have been struck by the same sort of tensions for Adam and Eve. What must it have been like to stand outside the garden and experience blessing turn to curse before your eyes? What was it like to have the murderer of your son be his own brother? What was it like to experience pain emotionally, physically, and relationally for the very first time? I have wondered, "How often did they battle for hope in a life now broken by sin?"

Abel was dead and Cain had been disqualified, but the gracious God of creation still made a way for hope once more. Adam and Eve were enabled to conceive, and they had another son. His name was Seth which means *granted, to set, or to place*.³³ His birth and the connotation of his name is an intentional reminder that even though sin had fractured all of creation, God was not done with humanity. The graciousness of God which is ultimately exemplified in the life and love of Jesus, was visible in the descendants of Adam and Eve as well.

In the throes of tension and pain, Adam and Eve may have been tempted like us to doubt the God of hope. They may have been tempted to close the metaphorical book or to stop the proverbial movie. Yet, it was in some of the most painful moments of uncertainty that the hope of God broke through once more! We would do well to learn from this scriptural example by refusing to doubt the God of the story amidst the complexity of its plot.

BIG IDEA: The birth of Seth is a hope-filled reminder that God is gracious and kind amidst the dysfunction and sin of humanity.

APPLY:

- **Question:** In what situations of your life is it most challenging to believe in God-given hope? Spend time not only listing these, but also praying about them with others. *This may be a good activity to discuss with your LifeGroup this week.*

³³ See Genesis 4:25-26 for reference.

Week 10: Genesis 4:9-26

Day 5: Cain's Seed and Adam's Seed

READ TOGETHER: Genesis 4:9-26

Instructions: We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.

EXPLORE TOGETHER:

Due to Cain's heinous murder, he was cursed from the ground. The ground was cursed due to Adam's sin, but Cain was cursed due to his sin. The ground would no longer yield its strength to Cain and we remember that he was a worker of the ground. He was also to be cut off from his family. As Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, Cain was expelled from the family of faith. Cain's response was that his punishment was greater than he could bear. In other words, Cain was still responding selfishly. He did not ask for the pardon of God or seek His mercy. He simply thought only about how God was making life harder on him. He was not remorseful of his brother's death. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord. Once again, this is one of the more tragic verses in all the Bible.

Cain was now a heathen and would give birth to more heathens or seeds of the serpent. We are told of a few of Cain's descendants, but we are given additional commentary on one in particular named Lamech. We are told that first Lamech takes for himself two wives. The seed of Cain is the first to introduce polygamy in the world. We are also told that Lamech was a murderer like his father Cain before him. Lamech was also not

remorseful for his killing of a younger man (like Abel), but rather he was boastful. If Cain is to be avenged sevenfold then I shall be avenged seventy-sevenfold. Now this is not what God had pronounced to Lamech. This was a self-proclamation which really had no meaning other than a presumptuous boast. The frightening aspect in Cain's line is that God is not present or active.

However, God did not depart from Adam and Eve. Eve bore another son and called him Seth which means settled. In his seed mankind would continue to the end of time and from his seed the Messiah would come. For it was at this time that man began to call on the name of the Lord. This means that man was prayerful or seeking God. This was the righteous seed or God's covenant seed. We see from Cain and Seth that you have a wicked seed and a righteous seed just as God had said that there would be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

BIG IDEA: We can clearly see the wickedness of Cain's seed and the righteousness of Seth's seed.

APPLY TOGETHER:

- **Question:** Why do you think God longer wanted Cain around the rest of his family?

- **Activity:** Name some great men that come from the line of Seth. (*Hint:* Genesis 6)



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