

Telling the Story that Makes Sense of All Other Stories - Part 2

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Date: 25 February 2016

Preacher: Darrell Johnson

[0 : 00] Okay, we'll get started again. That was great dessert. And you get to eat it in the sanctuary. This is really cool. Remind you what we're doing. We're looking at Genesis 2 and 3 because I argued that these are critical chapters for understanding the rest of Genesis 1 to 11, which is the first half of the Bible, but then for understanding what the rest of the Bible is about. The other authors of the Bible are assuming we know this stuff. And what I'm doing is walking it through just to make sure that we get the story straight so that when we tell it to our children and grandchildren, we tell it straight. Now, I'm not suggesting that it be told with all these nuances. It depends on the age of the child, after all. But I have been able to draw for our kids over the years this picture at different opportunities. I just wait for the moment to come and just draw the tree and draw the people and say, this is what we were created for, these four relationships. And then, cool, Dad, and they went off to do something else. But it was there so that they have that seed planted in them and they have that perspective as they then, in other contexts, in Sunday school, in youth group, in other places, then as they studied the Bible, they have a frame of reference. Okay. We ended with saying that there was only one command in the Garden of Eden. And I mentioned that if we had maybe in the question and answer time, I can show you how that one command is at the root of all the other commands.

The one command is, I'll now paraphrase it, you be human, I'll be God. You try to be God and it'll all come apart because you can't. And you'll become less human than I made you. That's the one command. Or to put it positively then, trust me. You trust me. Let me be creator, you be the creature, and everything will work out. Enter the snake. Oh, I forgot to draw the snake.

So, we got to draw this little snakey guy comes in here. And the snake is, on the cartoon, is saying, did God say?

And you've heard that question raised many times. Did God say? So, let's read again, chapter 3, verses 1 through 5.

You have it in front of you. Genesis 3, 1 to 5. Now, the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. Notice the author doesn't bother giving us a history of evil.

[2 : 48] Just assumes it. You have to find that in other parts of the Bible. Just assumes that this beast comes in. He says to the woman, indeed, has God said, you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?

By the way, did he quote God's word correctly? No. That's the nature of evil.

Never really quite quotes God's word accurately. God did not say, you shall not eat from any tree of the garden, did he? In fact, he said the opposite.

You may eat from any tree of the garden, except the one. And the woman said to the serpent, from the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, you shall not eat from it or touch it lest you die.

The serpent said to the woman, you surely shall not die, for God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

[3 : 53] Now, the serpent comes in and twists God's word in a particular direction. He twists God's word to sow suspicion.

Did God say? The implication being, Eve, God is not really for you.

God is holding something back that you need because he does not really want you to live a full human life.

That's the goal of the evil one with all of us, to get us suspicious that God is not for us, to help us think that if God makes a command not to do something, he's withholding something from us.

Or if God gives a command to do something, he's doing it because he doesn't like us and he wants us to have a miserable life. That's his great strategy.

[4 : 56] If you study then, later on, how this serpent then interacts with Jesus of Nazareth, creator in the flesh, that's exactly the same tact. Get Jesus to doubt that the Father is good.

And all of us have experienced this. Eve starts to buy into this. And we notice these notes of suspicion.

For instance, she leaves out freely. When she quotes back in verse 2, from the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, God said, you may eat freely.

So she's left that out, which means she's getting a little suspicious. She adds that this tree, the knowledge of good and evil, is in the middle. It's not in the middle.

The tree of life is in the middle. So now she's becoming suspicious that she really needs this, that this is as central as life itself. She adds that God said you can't touch it.

[5 : 57] God didn't say that. So she's now really getting suspicious. And she drops, you will die. The evil one's agenda was to get her to raise the question in her own mind, can I trust this God?

Would a good God tell me not to do something? You've heard that. The suspicion that this God is not for her and Adam, and therefore that she does need to take matters into her own hand and carve out her own life.

So in chapter 3, verse 6 then, Moses tells us, There's this avalanche of sin.

This beautiful garden now turns into a cemetery. And all four of these relationships then began to break. The relationship with God is broken.

And I'm going to put these green lines in here as a way to say that. In chapter 3, verse 8, the text says that they hid themselves from the Lord God.

[7 : 29] Up to that point, whenever God would walk in the garden, they welcomed his presence. Yay, God's here. Now that they've declared this independence, now God's presence is a threat to their independence, and so they hide.

Someone has said that the characteristic human posture is that of hiding from God. And we do it in a lot of different ways.

Noise. I think the noisiness of our culture is partly that. We don't have to deal with God. Just keep the volume going all the time. We hide with busyness.

Because if you finally stop and are silent, you can hear his voice. And that's too threatening. We hide through chemicals, alcohol, cannabis, other kinds of things.

And interestingly, we hide in religion. Religion, what I mean by religion now, is this effort on our own to put our life together and to please God, we hide in that religious ethos.

[8 : 37] Someone has said that most churches pay their pastors to protect them from God. Just keep all the religious machinery going. Keep all of the nice routines going.

Help people feel good about themselves. That they kind of have this God consciousness, but don't really get serious. So we've moved from this intimacy where God has kissed the humanoid into being into now hiding.

That relationship breaks. The relationship with the self now breaks. Chapter 3, verse 10. They are naked and they're ashamed.

The point being that this separation now from God is now experienced as a separation in the self. Because we're cut off from God and the knowledge of God, we no longer know ourselves.

We can only know who we are in relationship to the Creator. And once that decision has been made, then we lose our sense of identity. We cannot put ourselves together again.

[9 : 43] The relationship with others, the third relationship, is also broken between the man and the woman. chapter 3, verse 16. Adam blames Eve for this fall.

God says to Adam, did you eat of the tree I told you not to eat? The woman you gave me, she did it. So already beginning to move the blame on there. By the way, notice that he's also blaming God.

You gave me the woman. But in chapter 3, verse 16, that statement of the last part of it, your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.

It's important here to point out to kids, to each of us right here in this room, that this is descriptive, not proscriptive. In Genesis 3, you have the description of the fall.

In Genesis 2, you have the proscription of what God wants for humanity. You don't build your ethics on chapter 3, you build your ethics on chapter 2, on the original intent that God had for men and women.

[10 : 55] In chapter 3 then, you've got what he's describing, the effect of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam will rule over Eve.

Eve, that's not a statement that men are to rule over women. That's a statement of the fall. That's sin, that men rule over women.

And then it says, and your desire shall be for him, that Eve will desire her husband. I used to think, well, that's a really good thing, that even as the man tries to rule over her, she's going to desire him.

No, the word desire then comes later in chapter 4, where Cain is facing temptation and God says, sin has desire for you and you must master it.

This word desire is that the woman, as the man tries to rule it over her, she's going to try to desire to dominate over him. And so you've got this, instead of this mutual cooperation, this egalitarian mutuality that we were created for, you've got the man trying to lord it over the woman and the woman trying to lord it over the man.

[12 : 05] Partnership has now moved to the attempt to dominate. And then the relationship with the earth is affected. It too is broken.

Chapter 3, verses 16 and 17. The ground is cursed. There's pain in childbirth. See, in Genesis 1, God has said, be fruitful and multiply.

And the consequence of declaring independence from God means that there's now pain in fruitfulness and there's pain, there's pain in being fruitful and there's pain in multiplying.

It's just not working anymore. Now, that's not where the story ends, though. And I like the way Sally Jones, Lloyd Jones says it in the Jesus Storybook Bible.

I think many of you have that. Right there in the middle of Genesis 3. Well, in another story, it would be all over and that would have been the end.

[13 : 08] And the next page, but not in this story. So what we see, even though there's this breakdown in all four of those relationships, in each of the relationships, there is grace.

And I want to show you that. Genesis 3 is full of grace. As sin is ruining this world and breaking all four of those relationships, and we know what that's like.

We experience all four of those breaks. Nevertheless, there's grace. For instance, and I'm going to use a red pen now, to suggest that even as they're broken, there's a bridge that's being built in each of these relationships.

The ground still produces food. In the garden that has become a cemetery, gardens still grow. That's grace.

You see, when we live from this story, you look out at the vegetation of the world and you see grace. That's, by the way, where the tradition came for saying grace when you eat.

[14 : 15] It shouldn't have been that way. Sin destroyed this relationship. Yet God, in His grace, still enables the earth to bear fruit. In the relationship with the others, men and women still want each other.

They still have the capacity to care for each other. That's grace. Adam calls Eve, Eve means, Adam calls Eve, Eve, and it means living.

That even under this reign of death, we still are alive, and we still have something of God's life in us. That's grace. And then the relationship with the self.

God does something wonderful there, too. It's chapter 3, verse 21. God covers the nakedness of Adam and Eve. Earlier on in chapter 3, verse 7, they try to hide under the fig leaves.

I thought, as a kid, that always intrigued me how they did that. They try to hide under the fig leaves. God knows this isn't working, and so God then covers them.

[15 : 25] It's a beautiful picture of grace. And then, this relationship with God that has been broken... Oops, wrong color. I want the red.

You're going to see why I have the red in a moment. There's all kinds of grace that go on in this chapter in the relationship with God. For instance, in chapter 3, verse 9, God asks, Where are you?

Where are you? The implication being, God still wants a relationship with this rebel. Where are you? God is always calling us out of our hiding.

God is always calling everybody out of their hiding. That's something you can know, by the way, in any situation where you live or work. That God, in a mysterious way, is calling all these people out of hiding in one way or another.

God is going to have a relationship. He's not going to be frustrated by this. As I already mentioned, He covers the shame of Adam and Eve. And it's interesting, it's animal skins that He puts on them, which means what?

[16 : 30] And some animal died. And it's a picture then that's through some kind of death, this shame is going to be taken away. Isaiah 61, verse 10, He clothes me with garments of salvation.

Psalms 32 and Romans 4, blessed are those whose sin is covered. God covers the shame.

And then, the other way that is full of grace is that God protects the way to the tree of life. Maybe that's bothered you in chapter 3, verse 24, where He drives the man out and then sets at the gates this sword to guard the way to the tree of life so that Adam and Eve don't reach out and grab this tree in their independence.

That's grace. It's grace. Because God does not want a creature who is now seeking to live independent of Him grab hold of this life and then live eternally in independence.

That would be horrifying. So, God in His grace protects the way. And then, the great note of grace is in chapter 3, verse 15.

[17 : 50] Read that with me. Look at that very carefully. It's called the proto-gospel. 3, 15.

God is speaking to the serpent. I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you on the head.

That is, the seed of the serpent will bruise you on the head. You, the seed of the woman, will bruise him on the heel. In that text, God is promising that one day a woman is going to have a seed slash child.

slash son. And that child is going to crush the serpent and as a result of that, be able to then put these things back together again. A seed is to come, which will help you understand at Genesis 12 when God calls Abraham and Sarah, God makes a promise to Abraham that in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

He then makes it clear that Abraham is going to have a son and the Hebrew text is seed and in this seed all the families of the earth are going to be blessed. You keep reading this word seed through the rest of the story and you get to David and David is promised a seed that will one day come and rule over a kingdom of peace that has no end.

[19 : 23] You have a text like Isaiah 9, a child will be given to us, a son will be given and in him light will come into the darkness, etc. All building up to a great text, Galatians 4, 4.

In the fullness of time, God sent forth his son born of a woman and anyone who had been steeped in these chapters would have understood what Paul is saying. After all these centuries, here finally now is this seed of the woman who has come into the world to crush the evil one and because of that crushing of the evil one, then there can now be the reversal and starting to put all those four relationships back together again.

So, why do we need a savior? We need a savior because all four of these relationships are broken and you know it and I know it, right?

We can all give testimony to some dimension of brokenness in all four of these relationships. That's why we need a savior. And what does the savior come to do? To put all these relationships back together again.

Earlier on, I said before we saw the brokenness that Genesis 2 is describing what righteousness is all about. Righteousness is right relationship. And there's some interesting texts.

[20 : 49] Romans 1, verse 16 and 17. The apostle Paul is saying, I'm eager to preach the gospel in Rome. Why are you eager to preach the gospel in Rome?

He says, because I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Why are you not ashamed of the gospel? Because it's the power of God unto salvation. Why is the gospel the power of God unto salvation? And here's the line.

Because in it, the righteousness of God is revealed. And Paul, I think, has these chapters in mind. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, God's way of putting all these relationships back together is revealed.

Great text in Romans is Romans 5, verse 20. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

tell me a story, Grandpa. Okay. I'll tell you a story. You were made for four relationships.

[21 : 52] A relationship with the earth, a relationship with other people, a relationship with yourself, and a relationship with God. And God told us, you only have one command to make this work.

Trust me. Let me be God. We didn't do it. But God did not give up. God has come all the way down in the person of Jesus Christ to put this relationship with the earth back together, put the relationship with other people back together, to put the relationship with the self back together because he's putting the relationship with God back together.

Tell me a story, Grandpa. Okay, I'll tell you my favorite story when I was a little boy. Humpty Dumpty. Humpty Dumpty. I think I identified with Humpty Dumpty. Humpty Dumpty is this little egg, you know, that sits on a wall.

I identified with him as a fat egg because I was a little chubby boy. Too many chocolate chip cookies. Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall and all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again.

Why used to feel so bad for Humpty Dumpty? Smashed egg on the ground. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again until my dad told me about a king who can put Humpty Dumpty together again.

[23 : 21] In fact, he can put the whole human race back together again. He can put the whole cosmos together again. And that makes sense because we have these two chapters. Okay, I think we have some time.

A good amount of time for some interaction. I was able to move maybe too quickly through that after our break. Would you like to make some other observations and raise some questions from these two chapters?

Any questions? Okay. Yes. Yes. I am not an expert at working with children.

My wife is and now my daughter is. So I have to have them answer that. I just know that I have wanted this is so much in me that I've looked for ways even as the little one when they start to make sense find a way to say this.

You were made for relationships. This is how you go together. And I'd even use this. God, earth, each other, inside. I don't know.

[24 : 33] When can kids start to get that? Probably at the preschool for a nanosecond. Four? Carter, four o'clock. Four years old is asking those?

Well, Carter's a really sharp kid. He would ask those questions. Yeah. I think kids are asking all these questions implicitly.

They're trying to put their world together. And every story we tell them is another way of doing that. We've got to be careful with those stories. Yeah.

So, I live with the posture I'm just praying for the moments to just make this clear. and then that's why Jesus comes.

Yes. Can you talk a little bit more about the knowledge of good people? Yeah. Yeah.

[25 : 39] Most of the commentaries I've read haven't gotten it yet. He says humbly.

It was my professor when I was in seminary Daniel Fuller at Fuller Seminary in California who helped me see it.

And I'm going to repeat now. He says people haven't bothered to follow that idiom through the rest of the Bible. The knowledge of good and evil. So, he lists all the places where it is.

And children don't have it because knowledge of good and evil is the maturity to function on your own. The capacity to be able to live the human life on your own.

The capacity to shape your own future your own identity. And children don't have it. The elderly lose it. And we think we have it.

[26 : 43] So, it's the knowledge of good and evil is the knowledge that makes you think you do not need anyone outside yourself to live.

And that's death is what the text is saying. does that make better sense? You're still wrestling.

You're still... Oh, okay.

Okay. You shall have no other gods before me. So, literally, you shall have no other god in my presence.

so, more literally, you shall have nothing between you and me. Because I'm the only one who can finally fulfill you.

[27 : 46] I'm the only one who can finally make this work. When we break that first commandment, we end up breaking the tenth. You shall not covet.

because when God is no longer the compelling object of my attention and no longer the one in whom my hope for the future lies, I'm going to start craving in all kinds of ways.

I'm going to start seeking all kinds of other ways to make my life work. And I have to break those, the first and tenth commandment, I'm going to break everyone in between in one way or another. Abide in me and I in you.

For apart from me you can do nothing. Jesus is saying the same thing there. Go to the hard commands. Lose your life to find it.

Unless a man lays down his life, he cannot have life. I think what Jesus is saying there is the life that you now have made and the life you now want to live, you're living dependent on yourself.

[28 : 55] lay it down. You're not going to make it. You've got to lay it down to live. So, I think every command has that somewhere behind it.

And then, now you, the evil one is always going after that. you can't trust this God. Why would a good God command anything?

God wants your freedom, right? He wants you to be able to do what you want to do. It's a lie. That help a little more? That help a little more? I know, I noticed we're done.

It was a... Oh, your daughter's very smart. How old is she?

Four? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's, that's a good, that's about the age, I think. Four, right? Three and a half to four, when they start, they become little philosophers and want to know.

[30 : 21] And I've heard that question many, many times that's too, and I don't have a really good answer. Except, God does not want a robot. God wants us to be in a relationship where there's really a authentic relationship where I am freely choosing to enter into this relationship.

For that to really be free, God has to run the risk of me disobeying. So, that's part of it.

Also, part of it is more of the mystery, and this is where it's hard to get in with kids, is, is, Satan was a great angel at one time.

Created for greatness, splendor, brightness. But, he wanted more. he wanted to be like God.

He wasn't satisfied being the creature that he was made to be. So, he rebels. He does not like God at all.

[31 : 34] That's a, that's putting it mildly. Someone has said that the evil one hates God and everything God makes and remakes. I don't know why, fully.

Because, he hates God and everything God makes, then he goes after us because he wants us to do the very same thing he did and rebel and try to be our own God and take us down with him.

All of that's necessary for me to truly enter into a free relationship with God. God risks the possibility that I'm not going to love him because he wants me to love him as a free choice.

Now, I don't know if a four-year-old is going to understand that. I don't know if a four-year-old is going to understand that. she said that because the evil one fell out of heaven there's a possible she would fall?

Wow. Let me get this clear. She's wondering now then could she fall out of heaven? Oh, bless her.

[33 : 18] Boy, she's a deep thinker. Okay. Okay. Try this. Try this. Is that right?

Oh, downstairs. Yeah. Oh, I'd have to back up a whole lot and forgive me because I have to do this short. I can't put all the steps together.

Here's where I'd come out. No one, the only reason a human being, given this picture of Genesis 3, we've all fallen.

we've all been cut off from, we're all hiding, we've all rebelled, we've all rejected, right? Right? To some, right?

To some degree. Okay. Given that reality, the fact that any human being makes any incremental move towards the living God is a sign of grace.

[34 : 25] people who struggle with God, ask those kinds of questions, do so because God has already moved in their heart. They wouldn't, otherwise they wouldn't ask.

Why bother? Big deal. That's off the radar screen. So, your daughter asking these profound questions, that's a sign of grace in her.

Are you following me? So, I would, I don't know how I'd say it to a four-year-old, but I'll say it to your parents. That, to me, is a sign that Jesus Christ has already gotten a hold of her.

And when Jesus Christ reaches out and puts his hand on somebody, he never takes it off. No one will snatch you out of my hands or out of my father's hands.

So, just the fact she's asking the question, says she's experiencing grace, Christ has got a hold of her, she's not going to fall out of heaven. Did you follow that sequence?

[35 : 31] Yeah? Yeah. The fact she's troubled means she's so close, otherwise she wouldn't be troubled. I think it's the same thing with when people are angry at God and even walk off in a huff and don't want anything more to do with God, they're only angry because God's got a hold of them.

Otherwise, they wouldn't care. This wouldn't be oriented. So, that's how I try to work with people in those states and give that kind of comfort. Okay?

Okay? this man-woman relationship, human-human relationship, is fraught with this desire to dominate.

So, I think somewhere along the line, our kids will wrestle with relationships, especially when they're hurt or especially when someone tried to dominate them, and then I think our answer is, yeah, that's where we are.

This is the kind of world we are in. and because of this, because we don't want to be in submission to God, we are rebels, and we will just exercise that rebellion in all kinds of ways and try to hurt other people.

[37 : 16] So, it's a confirmation of the story. Now, then, we go to, now, what is Jesus doing about this? Jesus is healing my heart from needing to dominate other people.

He's freeing me, and he's going to free your friends. That's what he's about, and he's now going to want you to respond in this relationship differently. That's what I've tried to work with our kids.

We're not going to retaliate. We're not going to behave the way the other kids behave as much as you want to. That behavior is the fallenness.

Christ comes to do a different thing with us. So, I mean, this is a reality check for kids. Kids need to know, human relationships are going to be problematic.

So, how are we going to deal with these? One of our grandsons has been bullied a bit. and I try to say to him, he would talk about how he wants to smack him back, you know, all that kind of stuff, and say, no, that's not going to go anywhere.

[38 : 38] You just need to know, that kid's very unhappy. That kid's probably being mistreated by somebody in his home, and he's taking it out on you, and you need to learn to relate to him differently.

Then, I think, then kids need to learn, need to see a model of different human relationships, and that's part of our job as husband and wife, is to model to them what redeemed human relationships look like.

Back to Genesis 2, where there's this equality where we're both in this to serve one another, and to point each other to God. Those kinds of things?

And as you know, that doesn't happen in one moment. That happens in many, many, many, many, many, many, many conversations. In the back? One more minute.

And what did you say? Yeah. And was that helpful?

[40 : 04] Yeah. Okay. Okay. It depends upon how much they know, what they know of the scripture, where they're coming from, all of that. I think we just have an honest conversation and talk about that.

So, why do you think there is no God? What's making you think there's no God? It could be fear, it could be disappointment.

Many children have prayed when they're small for some fantastic thing and it didn't come. so we have an opportunity to talk about how the real God works with those kinds of longings.

So, I wanted to ask her, why are you not believing that there's a God? Then, can I tell you why I do? Sure. So, you give your response.

That may be satisfactory or not. But finally, it is, where I've lived is, okay, here's what you do. You willing to pray? I don't know if there is a God.

[41 : 15] Will you willing to try something? Sure. Pray this, if you are alive, will you make that real to me?

That's about as far as we can go. And, he will. Okay, I think we've come, we literally have come to the hour.

Should I pray? Or, do you want to pray, Melissa? Dear God, thank you that you didn't leave us alone to write our own stories and to try to figure out what it means to be a human being.

Thank you for giving us your book and especially these chapters. thank you for telling us that you've made us relational creatures, that we do belong to the earth.

It's good, it's good to have a body and to be an embodied creature. You did make us a relationship for other people. This is good, a relationship with ourself and a relationship with you and thank you, thank you that when we've messed it up, you have come to us in Jesus Christ and you're putting it all back together again.

[42 : 41] And please Lord, will you help us help our kids know this good news. In Jesus name, amen.