

related to one another. The goal of God's mission for Adam and Eve was to fill the earth with image bears who were imaging God's love to one another as they depended on Him to lead and empower them.

In summary then, the mission of God *proceeds from God* (from his nature and character), *depends on God* (his leading and empowering), and *brings ultimate glory to God* (makes much of Him).

THE MISSION AND THE FALL

Genesis 3

Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve were in deep intimate relationship with God and with each other. They had the *call* and the *capacity* to fulfill God's missional mandate of filling the earth with His image bearers who would reflect Him to one another. They had complete access to Him to be led by Him and to receive what was necessary from Him in order to carry out His mission for Him. And, for a time, they chose to believe God and His design to live in the Larger Story of God and His mission.

Considering that people were designed to experience relational oneness with God in the Trinity and to live with one another out of that relational dynamic in a way that reflected God's relational glory to others, we can now look at what happened at the *Fall* through a relational lens.

Satan's main objective was to bring disorder into Adam and Eve's relationship because their relationship reflected God. Notice that Satan chose to approach Eve over Adam. Since Eve's relational design was to be more open and invitational, this makes perfect sense. By a cunning arrangement of deception through offering a different "Larger Story" to Eve, Satan was able to convince her that

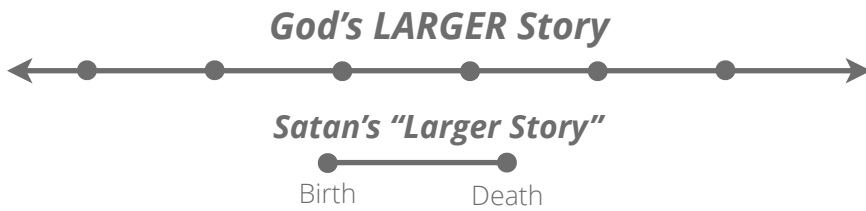
relational independence from God was more personally beneficial than remaining in relationship with God for His provision. In her soul, Eve believed there was something more available outside of God and His will. Satan convinced her that *she* could now define good and evil, life and death according to her own standards. Convinced of these things, Eve chose to operate outside of her design by *moving toward* the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and taking a bite for herself. She chose to align herself with Satan's "Larger Story."

Not only that, but then Eve moved toward her husband and gave some to him and he chose to eat. Notice the switching of the roles. The man was designed to *move towards* and the woman was designed to *accept and receive*. In this case though, Eve, now remembering Satan's Larger Story, moved towards Adam with the forbidden fruit and Adam received and ate, not remembering God's Larger Story.

Upon Adam eating, we observe immediate relational dysfunction between Adam and Eve as result of their relational separation from God. Because of their relational oneness prior to the Fall, being naked was not shameful. After the Fall, because of sin and the relational dysfunction in their souls, they felt extremely exposed and vulnerable in their nakedness. This was so penetrating that they immediately covered themselves with fig leaves.

Their relational dysfunction continued. When God came into the Garden, they hid themselves from His presence because they feared his response to their choice for independence. This was a picture of their relational alienation from God. Then, when God questioned them about their choice, their immediate response was to place blame onto someone else, another picture of relational alienation from God and each other. *They began to define life and death in their own terms, life being the pursuit of things that felt good and death being the avoidance of things that felt bad.* From this

point forward, they no longer pursued God's Larger Story and, instead, began following Satan's alternative "Larger Story."



Because of their disconnection from God, Adam and Eve became corrupt to the core of their being, including their souls and physical flesh. Through procreation, this relational dysfunction and alienation from God has permeated the human race. Sin (our natural inclination for relational independence from God) was passed down from Adam and Eve to their kids and beyond. Although the *goal* of God's mission remained the same (fill the earth with His image bearers who are putting His love on display through a deepening relationship with Him), the *work* of God's mission had now changed!

Since relational alienation from God was the natural state of human beings, by nature people now belonged to Satan, were residents of his kingdom, and lived in his "Larger Story." Before people could participate in the mission of God, they needed to be rescued from Satan's bondage. Once saved, they could begin living in God's Larger Story. They could pursue a deepening relationship with God. This resulted in God working to change the thinking of fallen image bears so that they could live and love more and more like Him. His glory could be put on display through the love expressed between God's people as they pursued Him.

Prior to the Fall, the *work* of God's mission was to be fruitful and multiple through a loving, trusting relationship with God as He directed them into His mission.

After the Fall, the *work* of God's mission now changed to saving alienated, fallen, and broken image bears out of a relationship with Satan and back into a relationship with God³ and then helping them deepen their relationship with God to the point where they more and more reflected the love of God to those around them as they grew in their dependence on God.⁴

Before and after the Fall, the *goal* of God's mission remained the same: To fill earth with image bearers who put His love on display through their growing relational dependence on Him as they chose by faith to live in His Larger Story.

SUMMARY

The intent of this course was to define the Mission of God and to make the connection between the fundamental nature of God and His Mission.

We also saw how the choice of people to rebel against God changed the *work* of the mission. Although the *work* of the mission changed, the *goal* remained the same.

In the next course, we will take a look at how God worked in different ways throughout human history toward the goal of his mission. To keep in sequence, next, study MET 201.

³ The field of study that deals with salvation is called *Soteriology*. See the Institute course SOT 300 for more details.

⁴ The area of study that deals with how a saved person grows is called *Sanctification*. For a more in-depth look at *Sanctification*, please see SAN 301 in the Institute.