

Big Idea: God still loves us... even when we fail.

Primary Scripture: Genesis 2:16-17; Genesis 3:1-21

Supporting Scripture: Romans 5:12-21; Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:9; Hebrews 3:7-8a

CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

- In the year 2000, there was one company that ruled entertainment: **Blockbuster**.
- For decades, renting a movie from Blockbuster was how people watched movies outside of a theater.
- Somewhere around this time, Netflix launched a service where they would mail DVDs directly to your house.
- In 2000, Netflix approached Blockbuster and offered to sell them the company for **50 million dollars**.
- The Blockbuster executives literally laughed at the Netflix team until they just got up and left the room. It was brutal.
- A few years later, Blockbuster realized Netflix might be onto something, so they launched their own DVD-by-mail service, but it was too late.
- Fast forward to today. Blockbuster has vanished and Netflix is worth around **500 BILLION DOLLARS** which is more than the value of Nike and McDonald's *combined!*
- Blockbuster didn't fail overnight. It wasn't just one bad call. It was a slow decline.
- Things were made worse by pride, blame, and refusing to admit they messed up.
- It's easy to shake our heads at Blockbuster. But if we're honest, their story isn't too different from ours.
- Today, we're kicking off a new series called "*Messed Up*."
- This series is all about people in the Bible who made BIG mistakes, people who messed up just like we all do, but God didn't give up on them.

- Each week, we'll look at a different person's story and discover how God's grace, forgiveness, and redemption are always bigger than our failures.
- And that brings us to one of the most well-known and deeply tragic moments in the Bible—the first-time humans failed.

SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)

- Genesis 1 and 2 paint this incredible scene where God created the world with no brokenness, no pain, and no walls between people and God.
- Adam and Eve were having actual face-to-face conversations with the Creator of the universe, walking with God in the garden like He's their closest friend.
- God gives them **almost total freedom**. The entire garden is theirs to explore and enjoy. Every tree, every fruit, every adventure. There's just one boundary:

¹⁶ But the Lord God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— ¹⁷ except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." (Genesis 2:16-17 – NLT)

- One rule. Everything else was fair game.

¹ The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1-2 – NLT)

- Right away, we are introduced to the enemy and his first move is to twist the truth.
- He doesn't come at Eve with something so obviously evil. He starts with doubt.

² "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³ "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'" (Genesis 3:2-3 – NLT)

- Eve starts to drift from the truth, distorting what God actually said.
- It may not sound like a huge deal, but she's forgetting what God actually said, which is definitely opening the door for trouble.

⁴ "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5 – NLT)

- The serpent brings *manipulation* and *temptation* into the picture.
- He's planted an idea: **You can be like God!**

⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. (Genesis 3:6-7 – NLT)

- Shame entered, innocence was shattered, and they felt panic.

⁸ When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:8-9 – NLT)

- It was the first time humanity broke from God.
- Instead of stepping out and taking responsibility, Adam and Eve deflected.
- God didn't strike them down. He didn't explode in anger. He laid out the consequences while His heart was breaking.
- As a result, pain would enter their world, work would become hard, relationships would be complicated, and death would eventually claim them all.

²¹ And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife (Genesis 3:21 – NLT)

- God didn't abandon them or leave them to figure things out alone.

- He met their failure with grace, their shame with love.
- God also realized that if Adam and Eve were to eat from the tree of life in their broken state, they'd live forever without hope of redemption.
- He banished them from the garden and placed angelic guards to protect the tree of life.
- God was preventing them from being trapped forever in their brokenness with no hope of healing.
- Even in their exile, God was merciful, and He was setting the stage for something bigger—a plan of redemption that would bring a Savior to make all things new.
- Because even when we fail, God still loves us.

INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)

1. Sin broke everything... but God didn't give up on us.

- The moment Adam and Eve disobeyed, shame hit like a tidal wave. They panicked and ran, trying to hide from the One who loved them most.
- God went looking for them and walked into their mess asking, "Where are you?"

¹² When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. (Romans 5:12 – NLT)

- That moment in the garden didn't just mess up their story—it messed up everyone's story, yours and mine.
- The fact that God didn't just walk away tells us something profound about His character.

¹⁵ But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:15 – NLT)

- God didn't give up. Instead, He activated a plan of redemption that would ultimately lead to Jesus.
- God doesn't walk away when we fall down or ditch us when we fail. He shows up, again and again, ready to help us get back up.

2. Sin brings consequences, not condemnation.

- Adam and Eve were exiled from paradise. Life became significantly more difficult. Pain entered their world.
- From that point forward, their relationships with God and each other would never be the same.
- Sin has consequences—it breaks things, creates distance, and causes pain. We've all felt that.
- But despite their sin, God didn't condemn them. He clothed them and showed them compassion.

¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. (Romans 5:18 – NLT)

- Because of sin, we've earned condemnation.
- We deserve separation from God. But because of Jesus, we're offered restoration—the opportunity for things to be made right.

¹ So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1 – NLT)

Though sin has a cost, through Jesus, God offers redemption, hope, and the promise that condemnation doesn't have the final word.

3. Healing starts with honesty.

- When God asked what happened, Adam pointed at Eve. Eve pointed at the serpent. Nobody took responsibility.
- Blame is easy, but it doesn't lead to healing. It just keeps us stuck.

¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19 – NLT)

- Adam disobeyed but Jesus stepped in to take responsibility **for our mess**, even though He had nothing to do with it.
- Because of Jesus, we can stop hiding and start healing.

⁹ But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (1 John 1:9 – NLT)

- Confession is where the healing really starts.
- God never expected us to be perfect. He just wants us to be honest.
- He sees us hiding in the bushes and He's ready for us to come out and experience His forgiveness and love.

ACTION (How could we live this out?)

1. Stop hiding and start talking to God.

- When we mess up, we tend to distance ourselves from God.
- The truth is that if you feel distant from God, you can know for certain that God is already looking for you.
- God may be calling out to you right now.
- Start by taking a few minutes to talk to God honestly and tell Him what's really going on.

⁹ But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (1 John 1:9 – NLT)

- God isn't waiting to shame you. He's ready to forgive you.

2. Own your mistakes without passing the blame.

- Real growth starts with three simple words: *"I messed up."*
- This week, think about something you've not taken responsibility for.
- Maybe you've blamed others for it or simply avoided dealing with it altogether.
- Maybe you need to...
 - Apologize to someone you've hurt.
 - Admit a mistake without making an excuse.
 - Be super honest with God about something.

- That is a **big step** toward the freedom God wants for you.

3. Live like you're loved.

- If you believe God still loves you even when you fail, then start living like it.
- That means:
 - **Stop running from God...** and start spending time with Him.
 - **Let go of shame...** because if Jesus doesn't hold your past over you, why should you?
 - **Make new choices...** God's forgiveness doesn't erase consequences, but it does give you a chance to move forward in a new way.
- You're not stuck. You're not too far gone. This isn't the end of your story.
 - You are forgiven and loved by a God who wants to help you get back up.

"Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." (Hebrews 3:7b-8a – NLT)

- If God is calling out to you, asking where you are, He's waiting for you to step out from hiding