

You are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God to reflect His glory. God is calling you to a life of meaning and purpose. Jesus offers you the gift of life, "I have come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly." Abundant life means that your life is so full of the good things of God that you have enough to give away. That's the way it's supposed to be - that we would live a Life Worth Giving.

But if you peek behind the curtains of the average American home, life there could hardly be described as abundant. There is a good chance that you might see what John Ortberg describes as a "*middle-aged man (who) spends his nights sitting in front of a television set watching whatever sport happens to be on cable. He was once all fired up with bright plans for the future and strong yearnings to make his mark on this world. But somewhere along the line all the fire went out, and he settled for comfort. His dreams were sacrificed to a La-Z-Boy and flickering images on a screen. His is a story of unrealized potential...unfilled longings...a sense that I'm not living my life - the one I was supposed to live. (That) leads to boredom, to what Gregg Levoy calls 'the common cold of the soul,' to sinful patterns of behavior that never get confronted and changed, abilities and gifts that never get cultivated and deployed. Weeks become months and months turn into years until one day you're looking back on a life of: Deep intimate gut-wrenchingly honest conversations you never had; great bold prayers you never prayed, exhilarating risks you never took, sacrificial gifts you never offered, lives you never touched. And you're sitting in a recliner with a shriveled soul and forgotten dreams and you realize there is a world of desperate need and a great God calling YOU to be a part of something bigger than yourself. You see the person you could have become but did not. You never followed your calling. You never got out of the boat.*" (Ortberg, *If You Want To Walk On Water...*, pp. 34-35). That's NOT the way it's supposed to be.

People are looking for life but they are having a hard time finding it – even in our churches. One pastor admits, "We say we are following Jesus, but what we actually offer is buildings, programs, music, classes, token work projects and budget appeals. Our calling has become encrusted, buried under layers that lack significant evidence of life. Viral cat videos seem to touch our humanity and longing more than many church services do. I have felt caught in this vortex. The temptation in the church is to bring in more clowns and light the sparklers, but the real solution is what the Bible declares is our calling: to live out genuine love that shows up in the face of real need." Labberton, p. 20

If you feel like there is something more to life but don't know how to find it you're not alone. If you have had a hard time discovering what God wants you to do, join the club. Living a life based on the expectations of other people while God seems silent is not the way it's supposed to be. God may be calling but the call keeps getting dropped. Let's find out why by turning to Genesis 3.

Last week we went back to the beginning to explore what God had in mind at creation. God spoke all things into existence and called them good or "just right." But God's word was not the only word in the Garden... Gen. 3:1.

Before Adam and Eve were created there had been an act of cosmic treason among the angels of God. Satan rebelled and was cast from God's presence. His agenda from then

until now is to oppose God any way he can; to corrupt His creation and distort His design so that things are no longer the way they are supposed to be. He used a serpent to tempt Eve to follow him in his rebellion against God. Notice the tactics of the Tempter:

First, the serpent questioned the word of God. Sometimes just asking a question can plant the seed of doubt that leads to chaos and confusion. We often see this tactic used to undermine the motives of our country. "Is it true that Americans want to adopt children in order to take them back to the U.S. and harvest their organs?"

The serpent then contradicted the word of God...3:4. Having planted the seed of doubt the next step is to deny the truth. In the process Satan impugns the character of God...3:5.

The consequence of this act of cosmic treason is ruined relationships, relationships with self, with God with one another and even with the rest of creation.

First, their relationship with self is affected. Something changed within their own self-awareness. They knew that they were naked...3:7. Suddenly they become self-conscious. They took their eyes off God and began looking in the mirror. We haven't taken our eyes off ourselves since. (Little girl's reflection in window...we see through a glass darkly!)

Sin is selfish. When I am self-centered I consume my giftedness on my own self-interest. "Behind all our sin is the outlook oriented toward the self. Pride is an exalted view of myself. Envy is a resentment of what another has that is not mine. Wrath is the fury born from not getting things my way. Gluttony claims more than it needs for my satisfaction. Lust exploits another for my pleasure. Greed is insatiable desire for more aimed at me. Sloth is the inordinate desire to maintain status quo." Jones, p. 59. Temptation is a little like an "all-you-can-eat" buffet. There are so many choices that you keep going back to the table. As the calories increase the satisfaction decreases.

Secondly, their relationship with God is altered. They hid...3:8. Now, rather than confess their sin, Adam and Eve shift the blame...3:13-14.

The third relationship that is disfigured is their relationship to one another. Men and women become antagonists. This is the first shot fired in the battle of the sexes...3:16

Finally, even the relationship with the rest of creation is vandalized by their decision.

Women will experience pain in childbirth...v. 16

Thorns and thistles will make the land hazardous...v. 18

Work will become burdensome...v. 19

When God created the heavens and the earth and Adam and Eve everything was the way it was supposed to be. The earth experienced the "shalom" of God. Today nothing seems to be the way it's supposed to be. That's because "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Ro. 3:23.

So here it is: You will never have a healthy view of life without a healthy view of sin. If you do not appreciate human depravity then you will go through life constantly surprised and frustrated that your life is not the way it's supposed to be.

Sin is not a popular concept today. The greatest cultural sin you can commit is to suggest someone sinned. But when we properly understand sin it is not the violation of someone's moral code but the vandalism of shalom. The reason God hates sin is not because He is trying desperately to protect His rules or because He is easily offended. God hates sin because it violates His original plan for all of creation.

It seems there are two common human solutions to our sin problem. One is the way of some secular psychologists who do the dance of denial, "Sin? What sin? I'm OK, you're OK. You are only a victim of all these people who talk about things like sin. Accept yourself, love yourself, assert yourself, because you have a right to be happy."

The other common approach is the disciplined approach often employed by religious people. This approach says, "I'm OK, you're not so hot." If you don't want to feel bad about your sin then don't sin! Keep the rules. We will help you. Every time you violate a rule we will make you miserable. We'll even make rules to protect the rules.

Adam and Eve tried to solve the problem their own way...3:7. But there is no human solution to man's biggest problem. The solution to man's problem is the gospel and the essence of the gospel begins to emerge in Gen. 3.

Gen. 3:15 says, And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

Gen. 3:21, "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." Grace is God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

All of us carry within us a vision of the way things are supposed to be. The memory of shalom still resonates within us. That's why we love pictures of restoration throughout the OT. Wolves and lambs lie down together, weapons are transformed into farming implements, justice rolls down like a river. Everything is the way it's supposed to be.

But I can't seem to get there. I can't seem to get it right. For that matter, every church I have attended just doesn't seem to get it right. I know we should love one another but there are some who are harder to love than others. I know the color of my skin is not as important as the content of my character but racism races on. I really want to do what God called me to do but I just can't figure out what that is.

How do we restore the connection with God and regain the ability to glorify Him? How do we get back to the Garden? By dealing with the two questions God asked Adam and Eve.

1. Where are you? 3:9. This is the question of proximity. What do you do with all your chaos? Do you hide from it? Do you run from it? Do you just accept things the way they are or do you suffer from divine discontent? “God wants to be the God of those who are perpetually discontented. We aren’t called to be cynical or negative or distrustful, but God does call us to be discontented. Discontented about what? Discontented that there is still so much brokenness in our lives and in the world. Sacred discontent is that yearning for a better future that comes from being swept up in the dream of God for a world set right that compels us to respond to the vandalism of shalom with indignation and abandon.” Barry Jones, *Dwell*, pp. 64-65. This is not the way it’s supposed to be.

2. Who told you? 3:11. This is the question of authority. Who/What is the authority in your life? Do you believe the Word of God or will you follow another voice?

The promise of God is that if you invite Him to He will give you His Holy Spirit. Your relationship with Him will be restored and you can glorify Him once again. In Gen. 2:7 God breathed life into Adam and called Him to cultivate and care for all that God had created. Everything was the way it was supposed to be. One chapter later Adam and Eve dropped the call and ever since man has been calling out, “Can you hear me now?” We are disconnected from God. But Jesus came to earth to restore the connection. Listen to what He said in John 20:21-22: “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” God breathed life into the first man. 2:7. God must breathe His Holy Spirit into man so that we can glorify Him once again.

Jesus came to reverse the curse, to restore the peace and to offer life to all who believe. And that’s the way it’s supposed to be.