

This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).



## Weekly Questions:

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

## From Garden to Garden: Crisis 2

### Genesis 3-4

- **The Fracture of Everything: Distorting Generosity.** In Genesis 3, we encounter the first temptation, which distorts the truth by making God seem restrictive rather than generous. When we reject the healthy boundaries God sets, we move from unhindered communion into fear and hiding. We don't live in a "fallen" world as much as a world that has not yet reached its destiny—a world where our failure moves us away from God's goal of Shalom. In what ways have you viewed God's instructions as "restrictive" rather than "generous provision" lately? How does fear or shame cause you to "hide" from God or others in the cool of the day?
- **Sin as Separation: The Crouching Force** The first mention of "sin" in Scripture appears not with Adam and Eve, but with Cain. It is described as a force "crouching at the door" that desires to have us. Sin is fundamentally separation—it separates us from God and one another. Whether through gossip, isolation, or the refusal to handle disappointment well, sin pulls us away from the collaborative, relational life we were made for. "Am I my brother's keeper?" How does this mindset lead to isolation or harm in your current relationships? Where has a "willful shortcoming" or a failure to handle disappointment created a gap between you and someone else?
- **The Proximity of Grace: Building Bridges.** Despite our mess-making tendencies, God chooses love. God's disappointment in our behavior doesn't cut off relationship but re-situates it amidst the consequences. Just as God marked and protected Cain even after his failure, God's grace builds bridges where sin creates separation. Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, speaking a "better word" than the blood of Abel, carrying our wrongdoing so we can move toward healing. Where in your life have you felt that your mistakes were "irreparable"? How does the image of God "marking" and protecting the wayward change your view of your own mistakes or the mistakes of others?
- **Practice: Living in Grace**  
Sin creates separation, but confession and repair build bridges. This week, practice moving toward proximity through these intentional acts:
  - **The Confession Audit:** Identify a relationship where separation exists due to action or inaction. Practice the "big-hearted love of Jesus" by acknowledging the shortcoming and moving toward repair.
  - **The Keeper Commitment:** Intentionally choose to carry the well-being of someone else this week. Catch a mistake "with a big net," sort it out, and help set things back on a good path, just as God does for us.
  - **The Bridge of Greeting:** Reach out to someone you have been "hiding" from. Instead of withdrawing in shame or fear, invite them into a space of honesty and presence.

- How can you share God's belonging with someone this week, trusting that we are truly made for one another?