

Creation and the Fall

Six Bible studies on a perfect creation and man's sin

By Rev. Mark R. Etter

Other sermons and Bible studies at

www.32daysdevotions.com

Contact me at 32daysdevotions@gmail.com

Bible Studies in this series

<p>Creation and Fall – 6 studies to look at the creation and fall of mankind. We will look at the perfection and plan of God’s creation and how man tarnished the creation with sin.</p>	<p>Jesus’ Miracles in John’s Gospel – 7 studies on the miracles of Jesus in the gospel of John. Each miracle has a meaning that tells us something important about Jesus’ person and ministry.</p>
<p>Noah: Man and Mission – 6 studies on the Flood. We will see the grace of God and the obedience and trust of Noah. God makes a new beginning in a fallen world.</p>	<p>Jesus’ parables in Luke – 6 studies on the parables of Jesus in Luke. We will look at the meaning behind some of these familiar parables and see patterns for our lives.</p>
<p>Storm Shelter Psalms – 6 studies on some of the psalms to turn to when life hits you hard. Wrestle with the psalmist as he learns to trust the Lord in difficult times.</p>	<p>Upper Room Conversations – 6 studies on the conversation that Jesus had with the disciples around the last supper table. Learn what was so important to Jesus that He just had to share it with the disciples.</p>
<p>Revival in Nehemiah – 6 studies on the second half of Nehemiah. The walls were rebuilt. Now it was time to rebuild a people who was down and distant from the Lord.</p>	<p>Galatians: Rules versus Grace – 6 studies with Paul in the heart of the gospel. In an age when people want to force us to follow their rules, Paul wants us to see the power of grace.</p>
<p>Daniel: Godly Living in a Pagan World – 6 studies to encourage us as we live in a world that has become harsh to God. It will make all the difference to keep our faith in tough times.</p>	<p>Paul’s first missionary journey – 6 studies on the conversion and first journey of Paul. See Paul as he grows and learn what the life of the Christian was meant to be.</p>
<p>Power of Prayer – 6 studies on the power and help that we receive in prayer. Follow the saints in their prayers and learn from them how valuable prayer can be for you.</p>	

Introduction

How did I get here, and what went wrong? These are the fundamental questions of life answered at the beginning of the book of Genesis. Science may say that we are accidents of nature. The Bible tells a different story. We are the perfect creation of an Almighty God who loves us. Genesis first gives a cosmic view of our beginnings as God makes an ideal place for us to live. It continues with a personal view of man and woman's origin and God's vision for their future. Sadly, perfection didn't last long. The serpent came in disguise, bringing down Eve's defenses and tempting her to disobey the loving God. In one moment, men and women were alienated from God, each other, and their world. Sin had consequences that would affect Adam and Eve and all of their descendants. The enormous corruption of sin is demonstrated in the account of Cain killing his brother in anger. God created a perfect couple who tainted their world with sin. Humanity unleashed evil in the world, bringing only pain and trouble to our lives.

Genesis begins with why God made us and explains the tragedy of our rebellion against the God who made us with such love. Humanity has searched for other worlds like Earth but has never found one with just the right amount of water, sunshine, and gravity God created for us on Earth. You can feel the love of God in the pages of the first chapters of Genesis. It is a love that He had for our first parents and still has for us. Here is a loving God who provides everything you need in life and wants to have a close relationship with you. The world is evil because the couple wasn't satisfied but wanted to become just like God. We still want to control our world and often resent that God doesn't give us what we want. Sin is the story of humankind taking the future into their own hands and losing the paradise God had created for them. Sadly, sin is one thing that we all do well. Wickedness has spread like weeds from that first sin. It blossoms into anger, selfishness, and even murder. The sin of Adam and Eve has become a destructive torrent in the life of humankind.

Creation shows us an act of love by a caring God. We experience God's love as we look at a beautiful sunrise or hold our children. The origin of man should remind us that God still loves each of us. He has given us complex bodies and a wonderful world in which to live. He has planned each of us with our own unique set of gifts and abilities so that we can thrive in this challenging world. Our goal in life should be to draw close to the Lord as Adam and Eve could do so before the fall. God wants us to know Him intimately and reveals Himself to us as we spend time with Him in Bible study and prayer. We need a deep relationship with God because the fall has put hazards into our days. Beware of modern "serpents" that call evil good and good evil. They seek to separate us from our loving God and to cause destruction in our lives. The wise will run toward God and not from Him. Only God can teach us right from wrong and help us in our time of need. There is no reason to let sin take hold of us and destroy our future. Listen to God and nip sin in the bud. He is our only defense in this fallen world.

Table of Contents

The chapter title, text, and theme

1. Why did God make the world? (Genesis 1) - God made the world specifically for the man.
- 2 How did we get here, and why? (Gen. 1:26-2:3) - I am not an accident but am wonderfully made.
3. The perfect man. (Genesis 2) - Creation gets personal.
- 4 The Technique of Temptation (Gen. 3:1-13) - Man is to blame for sin, and God is the cure for it.
- 5 Consequences of the fall (Genesis 3:14-24) - Mankind has paid a hefty price for their sin.
6. Murder. (Genesis 4:1-16) - Sin spreads like weeds without forgiveness

How to use this Bible study

Each of the six chapters contains an introduction to help you get the big picture and is followed by thirteen questions to help you dig into the truth. The questions will help you understand what is going on and apply it to your own lives. The leader's guide provides answers for the questions that can be used in a Sunday Bible class or a small group. In a small group setting, you may find it helpful to copy the four-page leader's guide for each person. There are also student guides provided in the back of the book. In a large setting, it may be easier to copy those guides so that each of the members of the class has a student guide for personal use. Notice that there are also three questions at the end of each lesson that can either be discussed as you meet together or assigned for people to think about in the coming week.

My prayer is that you and the members of your group or class can grow through these studies. The answers in the leader's guide may challenge you to find deeper meaning and application for your lives. Life as a Christian can be difficult. It becomes even more difficult as we try to actively serve our Lord in ministry. The lessons that Jesus gave to help His disciples as they began the ministry of the new church are still important for us today. They can provide strength and help with our fears. As you study, realize that many of the questions have no single answer but are meant to help people find God's help in your trials. If you need to take more than one week per lesson, do so and enjoy the discussion and the learning.

Bibliography

Beacon Bible Commentary
Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old and New Testament
Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament
Layman's Bible Commentary
Life Application Study Bible.
New American Commentary
The Enduring Word Bible Commentary
The Expositor's Bible

Copywrite 2020

This book may be copied for church or small group use. The materials may not be sold in any other publication or distributed in print or electronically beyond the local ministry.

May the Lord bless you as you learn and grow in His grace.

1. Why did God make the world?

Genesis 1

Big idea: God made the world specifically for the man

Evolution describes man as the greatest ape. It is cold and expects you to believe that we are the product of a cold, heartless chance. The Bible presents the creation as the act of a loving God. It shows God's perfect plan in which He created the ideal place for Adam and Eve to live. The first three days are days of creation in which God creates a perfect place for humanity to live. We have light, air to breathe, and land to stand on. No other place in the universe has this precise combination where a man can live. God furnished his creation during the fourth to sixth days with stars in the heavens to tell time and creatures on earth for companions. Every action is a gift of love as God creates a beautiful place for the humans who will dwell on this planet. Nothing was left to chance. It was all made for us.

Scientists want you to think that this world was made by chance. They spend billions of dollars to find another world where life can exist. To date, they have not found a place where even the simplest microbes can live. Our ventures to the moon and into space have required expensive equipment that brings the food, water, and air of earth into space so man can survive. There is no other place like this because God made it uniquely for man. Look at the order and care that God used to create this world. God creates water and air first since they are the basics of survival. Land and plants give us a home and something to eat. Time is formed by the sun while the stars and animals fill the earth to have companions and later food. Our God is a God of abundance with everything around us complex and wonderfully made. The whole world speaks of God's love as he created a paradise unlike anything else in the universe for us to live.

Only when everything was ready did God create man. He made a man out of the earth's dust and gave the new couple the keys to their new home. God called them to fill the world and to make it their own. He gave them abundant food so that they would never worry about running out of food and starving. Creation was an act of love by a caring God for us. We feel that love when we look at a beautiful sunrise or smell a flower garden. Evolution seeks to take God out of the picture. Creation puts God front and center so that we can feel the love that He has for us when we stroll in the forest or walk on the beach. We look at our hands or hear a waterfall and are amazed at how complex our bodies are and how wonderfully made. You and I are not an accident of nature. We are children of God and have received a home where God provides for us every day. Earth is a home where we can love God and be adored by Him throughout our lives.

1. Where do you go when you want to see the beauty of God's creation? Why is this place or this kind of place attractive to you?

If I want to commune with nature, I go to one of America's National Parks. There is nothing like standing at the Grand Canyon's rim or at the base of the Rocky Mountains to let you feel the power and beauty of nature. My wife and I will go camping for a week to one of the parks to get onto the trails and attend the ranger shows to learn about the National Parks, their animals, and the landscape's geology. My favorites are the forests and the mountains. I especially like Rocky Mountain Park in Colorado and the Great Smoky Park in Tennessee and North Carolina. Let the group share their favorites and why those places let them commune with the Lord.

Read Genesis 1

2. Verse 2 How is the earth described at the beginning of creation? Would this have been a pleasant place for humanity to live?

The universe is empty without any form or substance. Darkness hovers over everything out into the deep of space. It reminds us of a journey out into the emptiness of space in a fantasy program like Star Trek.

Outside the ship's confines is a dark vacuum barely lit by stars far off in the distance. We know what would happen to an astronaut that somehow becomes untethered to their ship and drifts off into space. Certain death would occur as oxygen begins to run out. Such was the emptiness of space before creation. It was a rough inhospitable place where a man could not survive. Genesis 1 is the story of God creating a home where mankind can dwell and thrive.

3. Verse 3 How does God create on each of the three days? How does God's act of creation show the tremendous power that the Lord has?

Each day is a miracle of creation that is not done by the sweat of God's brow or flex of His muscles. It was a simple word that God spoke, and the world came into being. Light, land, and animals came instantly as the power of God overcomes the emptiness of the universe. It was a demonstration of the almighty power of the Lord. He spoke, and it happened. It reminds us of the power of Jesus in the gospels. He cast out demons, healed the sick, and even raised the dead just by a word from His mouth. The power of our God is boundless and seemingly effortless. In six short days, God created a home for man and woman where nothing had existed before.

4. What does the Lord's power to create with just a word say about His ability to help us in our lives? How is that encouraging for us?

The power of God in creation should encourage us to speak to our Lord in prayer when our world seems to have fallen apart. The one who creates the land we stand on with a single word can control the tornado and the earthquakes of a fallen world. The Lord, who intricately designed our bodies, knows how to heal what He has made when doctors struggle to understand. The plan that God had for the earth demonstrates His wisdom. He shows His power as He fashions a world that we still are unable to fix or repair. Creation gives us confidence in our God. We ask for His help and know that whatever He decides will be the best plan and bring the greatest blessings for us all.

5. Verse 5 How long does it take God to create each part of His plan for the world? Why doesn't God need more time?

While many try to say that creation took millions of years and that each day was an era, the Bible says it differently and plainly. "There was evening and there was morning, the first day." Twenty four hours was all that God needed to create each segment of His plan. The nations that surrounded Israel had traditions of monsters battling in the oceans or gods up above fighting to bring the universe into being. The simple account in Genesis presents us with an almighty God who has a plan and works that plan to create a perfect world. The Lord, who the Bible shows us, is so powerful that He doesn't need millions of years to create. Jesus was able to raise the dead or cast out the demon with a simple word. He didn't need days to work out miracles. We need to take the Bible at its word and accept that the Almighty God had no trouble creating everything in just six days.

6. Verse 5 How does this section refute the idea that the universe randomly came into being after a big bang or some other kind of event?

The Bible refutes the theories of evolution if we listen to what the text says. The big bang theory states that the universe was created by the explosion of a dense star in its middle. It never explains the origin of the dense star. The Bible says that God created everything out of nothing, which is not an unreasonable thing for God to do. The big bang theory and other evolutionary theories say that random improvements made the world evolve and become better and better. It never explains how the order and complexity of the world came to be by such accidental connections. The Bible shows an all-wise God who had an organized plan and made the world step by step. The words of the Bible are far more believable than the random happenings of evolution.

7. Verse 6 What does God create on days 1-3? How are they foundational to the needs of man?

In the first three days, we see God build the foundations of the world. Life could not exist without light, water, and land. These are the basics that we take when we travel out into space. We need light to see and have a fear of the darkness. We need water and food to eat if we are to survive and not die of starvation. We need a place for our feet to stand rather than drifting out in space. God had a plan for the design of man and woman. Here we see our Lord creating the foundational things that every human needs to sustain life. The first three days produce items that are found nowhere else in the universe but are essential for a man to live and prosper.

8. Verse 6 How often do you thank the Lord for light, air, water, and the land under your feet? Why is it so easy to take these gifts for granted?

The gifts of the first three days are easy to take for granted. It is only after weeks of rain that we ask for a sunny day. Only when we are sinking in the ocean or caught in a smoky building, do we wish for a breath of fresh air. Light, air, and water are in such an abundant supply that we easily take them for granted. Only the most radical scientist talks about the day the sun will stop shining, or the air will be too foul to breathe. God has supplied these gifts every day of the earth's existence so that we have to have them taken away before we thank the Lord at their return. Take time to thank the Lord for the gifts that you have their been given. God is blessing you every day.

9. Verse 24 What does God create on days 4-6? How do they complete the work of the first three days?

Having created the three spaces of land, sea, and skies, God now begins to fill them so that man does not have a Spartan existence on Earth. Sun, stars and the moon fill the skies giving humankind the concept of time. The Jews would use these stellar objects to tell the time they needed to plant and harvest and the religious holidays. We still count our days by the sun, our months by the moon, and our years by the stars. Animals are added to our world, adding beauty and giving companions to Adam and Eve in the garden. The diversity of animals reminds us of God's wisdom and power and the thought that God put in to make this an excellent place for humanity to live.

10. Verse 24 How does God add beauty and quality in days 4-6 to the world that He made in the first three days? How does this show the depth of God's love for us?

Most of us would not want to live in space with air and food but no animals or earthly beauty. You could exist, but life would soon be boring in our little pod in space. It is in the fourth to the sixth day that the Lord brought beauty to the world. Stroll through any zoo and see the diversity of animals that the Lord made. Each of them is uniquely suited to the terrain where they live. Each is a work of art with a cheetah's speed or the soaring of birds in the air. Stare up at the sky and enjoy a full moon or the stars across the sky. God's love for us was so great that He created a world teeming with life and beauty. God didn't just give us what we needed. He filled the world, making it a wonderful place for us to live.

11. Verse 31 What is God's pronouncement on His creation? In what ways is Earth the perfect place for mankind?

God looked over the earth, and it was perfect. It had just the right amount of sun, food, and air. It was not something where the man had to make do but was the perfect place for a man to live and to prosper. There was a beauty in what He had created for man. It was a home and not just a place to live. It had a stunning harmony in that all the parts of the world worked together in ways we still don't understand. It was a place of great complexity as we look at how the human body works or how the sun and moon move in our sky to create time. While we still look for another place where mankind can survive, there is no other place in the universe like Earth. No other planet has the air or water we need or the beauty of the Earth that we so

easily take for granted. God finished on the sixth day, and it was just the way that He wanted for the man He created.

12. How does the complexity of our world disprove the idea of evolution?

Have you ever thrown a load of laundry in the air and had it come down in perfect piles of folded clothes? Evolution expects us to believe that a great sun exploded, and the debris formed perfect constellations with suns surrounded by planets and moons in perfect orbits. The Bible presents an orderly plan carried out by an Almighty God. Nothing is created by chance, and God doesn't make junk. If we want proof of that, all we need to do is to look at how complicated our planet is. Plants grow with sunshine and rain and produce cells with fantastic intricacy. Ecosystems in forests or deserts are not random and depend on a complex network of moving parts to keep their plants and animals alive. An accidental joining of compounds could not create the life we see or the environments that are part of our world.

13. How does creation show the love of God for His people?

Sometimes it is easy to doubt God's love when things are not the way that we want in life. We face crisis and wonder who cares and who will help. We need to look back at how things were before man fell into sin. The world was perfect, and it was all created in love for you and me. God explicitly made this world for man's needs and desires, showing the great love of God. We revel in a beautiful sunrise and the smell of flowers. We enjoy the variety of fruits and vegetables created for no reason except to give us pleasure. The diversity and complexity of nature show that it is no accident. It is the product of a God who loves us enough to create a special place for us. Let the scientists keep looking for another accident of nature fit for humanity out in the cosmos. I will enjoy the Earth and its beauty made by a loving God just for us.

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What part of creation do you most enjoy and would thank God for today?

Deep 2 What have you learned from the study of creation that shows your worth to God?

Deep 3 Why does it matter that God created the world instead of having it evolve haphazardly?

2 How did we get here, and why?

Gen. 1:26-2:3

Big idea: I am not an accident but am wonderfully made by God.

According to science, you and I are accidents of nature. We are just the products of a big bang that threw out random particles. The Bible starts with a different scenario as it unfolds the story of creation. It begins with an almighty and all-wise God having a plan. God planned our world and man to the minutest detail. The world has been made in all its beauty and is perfect for habitation. God then turns to the creation of man. The Bible says that we were made in God's image, so we have a conscience and have a relationship with God that the animals do not have. We also have complex bodies with hands that can swing a hammer or throw a baseball with remarkable accuracy. God then gives man his purpose. He is to be a caretaker for the world that God made for man and to have children so God has more people to love. Humankind and their world are all made according to God's plan.

The creation story is the story of why God made us. The Bible calls us to appreciate the uniqueness of our world and our bodies so that we can see the love that the Lord has for us. Nowhere else in the universe is a place so well suited for human habitation. We have materials to build houses, food to eat in abundance, and incredible places to explore. God made it especially for us with the perfect amount of oxygen, water, and gravity. Then he gave this world to man and woman to rule and to care for it. He also made us according to a unique plan. Animals live just to survive. God had something greater planned for man. We can think rather than solely rely on instinct, knowing our past and hopes for the future. Our bodies and minds can create tools and manipulate objects in a way no animal can. We are too complex to be an accident. We are a product of God's love.

Only a fool would believe in evolution. Admittedly some don't want to accept God because they don't want to obey Him. Yet, think of how haphazard evolution is. It means that you and I were thrown together by an explosion and everything in the universe somehow came together in this fantastic and complex order. Who wants to be a mistake of fate? Isn't it more comforting to think that God planned you and your world with love? The complexity of our bodies shows the wisdom and power of God as He made us the best that we could be. Instead of questioning God or arrogantly thinking that we don't need God, the wise will praise God for the world with its beauty and the bodies our Lord has given us. We are not accidents thrown together. Our loving God wonderfully makes us according to His plan. Let us thank the Lord every day for what He has done for us.

1. What is the result of planning for a task instead of just throwing things together?

Throwing things together never seems to work for me. I need to plan so I have the materials I need and know what I want the outcome to be. There are times that you have a spontaneous gathering. You meet some friends and invite them over for pizza. That is fine, but the more complex the function, the better you need to plan. For example, a wedding reception needs planning since you have to have a place, food, music, and an order of how the events will unfold. Let the group talk about a well-planned event and how planning impacted the event. Let them also talk about when something just didn't go well because the hosts threw something together at the last minute.

Read Gen. 1:26-2:3

2. Overview. How does Genesis 1 describe the creation of the world? How does that differ from what you know about the evolution theory?

According to science, a big bang of matter exploded and threw out particles that magically gathered neatly into suns, planets, and moons. The order came out of the chaos, and life began out of random

chemicals that just happened to interact. The Bible starts with a different scenario. It opens with God having a plan and creating a world with just the right amount of light, soil, and water needed for the man and woman He was about to create. Once everything is correct, God creates man and places him in the world God created for him. Man is given a complex body in the image of God that can reason and rule the world. The Bible shows the story of God making a perfect place according to an ordered plan. Creation was not an accident. It was a loving parent preparing a nursery for someone they love so that the first man and woman had an ideal place to live.

3. Verse 26 How does verse 26 show that God planned the creation of man and his world? What consequences come from God planning this world?

It began with a conference and a plan. The Trinity of God had a "consultation" before the creation of man. The creation of the world in the first five and a half days was orderly and complete. God did not create animals until there were oceans and land to live in and food to eat. Likewise, man is not haphazardly made but is made in the image of God according to God's plan so that man will be the pinnacle of God's creation, not just another animal on the planet. The fact that God had a design means that the world is perfect for humanity. As we have explored the universe, we have never found a place like Earth with the right amount of sunshine, water, or oxygen. God had a plan for man's world and for the man that made us and the world what it is today.

4. Verse 26. What does it mean for you that you were planned and not an accident?

It means that we have all that we need. We have material to build houses, food to eat, and wonderful earth to explore. Imagine if the first man had tried to develop on the moon. He would have been dead before he had been there an hour. Instead, we have bodies that still confound medical science. Our attempts at robotically creating hands or legs have significant limitations and can't heal themselves. God not only made the world but gave it the ability to heal itself as forests do after a fire or a body does when it has been cut or burned. Only God could create the complexity of our world and keep it running. The fact that you and I were planned means that God cares about us and that He will continue to heal the world when damaged and keep things working right for ages to come.

5. Verse 27. What does it mean that you were created in the image of God? How is man made in a different way than the animals?

God's image does not speak to how we look but our attitudes and abilities. Man alone has a conscience. Animals think nothing of killing and have no sense of right or wrong unless man trains a domestic animal. They just live to survive. Man and woman are different. They can think before they act rather than relying on instinct as they have a sense of their past and hope for the future. They have purpose and dreams where animals just live in the moment. Most of all, man and woman alone can have a relationship with the Lord. We can communicate with God in prayer and have a deep connection with God in our worship. Man is not the greatest of the animals. He may have flesh and blood like many of the mammals, but he has a spirit and character that none of the animals possess. Humanity is unique and made separately on the sixth day, not just called into being like the animals were on days five and six.

6. Verse 27. How does your creation in the image of God affect how you see yourself?

We are distinct in all creation. Science wants to say that the monkey is my father and other mammals are my cousins. That demeans us and means that we were just lucky to evolve more than they did. The Bible indicates that I am unique, and I am wanted. God created me with His image to think, and am free to create and have emotions and rational thought like none of the animals. Mankind alone was designed to have a special relationship with God. We alone can pray or study God's word so that we have God's direction and comfort. Because we were created and not evolved, we can see ourselves as loved by the

Almighty God and equipped for the tasks that He wants to give us in life. We can have confidence as we look to the days ahead, knowing that God wants to be near us and that God made us in love.

7. Verse 28. What two commands did God give to man? How do these commands give man purpose in this new world?

God told man to fill the earth and subdue it. Humankind is to fill the globe by having children who will know and worship the Lord. Even before sin and death came into the world mandating that we replace ourselves, God called us to fill the Earth with others that He could love. To subdue the world means to make it yours. God created this world and its resources to make life comfortable and enjoyable for a man. In one sense, God was telling humanity to make this world your home. He was also telling us to manage the world. We are to care for the animals and plants on this Earth so that they prosper and continue to make our world a good place to live. In these commands, God left no doubt that this world belonged to man and would belong to man for a long time.

8. Verse 28. What does it mean for a man to rule the earth?

God had just given man a new home. Now the man was to care for it or manage it. Like a parent passing on the family farm to their son, God wants us to manage and pass on the earth to future generations. God tells the man that they need to care for their world so that generations to come will have a place to live. It doesn't mean we are to abuse or exploit their world since that destroys the earth for future generations. God charges man with the stewardship of the Earth. He is to care for it in a way that the animals are unable to do. It is to be a home for all people and animals. As God has made man preeminent in the world, they will have a specific ability to affect the future of God's creation.

9. Verse 31. What is God's assessment of the world and of the man He created?

God saw that the world was perfect. God even said it was very good, showing that nothing could be better than what God had made according to His plan. All that God created from the first day to the sixth was good and worthy of praise. God did nothing by accident but made everything in harmony with each other. Water came up from the deep to water the plants. Man and animal lived together with no fear or anger. Illness did not exist, and man and animal lived forever (remember that man could not eat animals at this time). In every way, God created a perfect world for the man and woman He had created. It was only sin that would later taint the world that God had made.

10. Verse 2:2 What did God do on the seventh day? What does that say about the work that He had done?

God didn't need to rest because He was tired. He rested because everything was done so well that there was nothing else to do. The world was perfect, and everything was complete, so that man and woman had a home, a future, and a relationship with God. God also sets the Sabbath tone as a gift for humankind so that they could have a time of rest and replenishment. While God didn't need to rest, man does. We need to honor the Sabbath because God did not build our bodies to work twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. The Sabbath is a special day that the Jews spent with God refreshing their souls in God's word and spending time in community with others. Having created a perfect world, God was now giving man a way to commune with God and find peace.

11. Man often doubts God's creation and questions His love. Instead of questioning God, what should this passage lead you to do before the Lord?

Instead of questioning God or arrogantly thinking that we don't need God, we should praise Him for all that he has made for us. We have hands that can swing a hammer or play the piano. We have hearts and lungs working together to keep us alive without us having to spend a moment thinking about these critical functions. Psalm 8:3-4 says, "*When I consider Your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon, and the*

stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" Like the psalmist, we should marvel at what God created just for us. Who are we that God would care for us or give us such astonishing bodies to enjoy? The only answer is that we are people loved by an Almighty God who created all of this for us. We are blessed and should give God praise each day.

12. What have you learned from this passage about your worth to God?

When I travel, I am amazed at the mountains in Colorado or cornfields in Illinois. Nowhere in our universe is a place like the Earth. As humans, we search and never find another planet like this. We travel to the moon and hope to go to Mars, but neither will sustain life easily. God made a world that is perfect for the humans that He created. We also can look at our bodies and see the intricacy of our flesh and blood. We are uniquely made with a complexity that man can still not duplicate with robots or computers. All of the world's things and our frames show us that we are essential to the Lord. He made it all perfect for us, and we should never doubt our value before God.

13. Why should you care if you were haphazardly evolved or wonderfully made by our creator?

It is hard to understand why people want to believe in evolution. The mathematical odds of particles evolving into complex beings like mankind are astronomical. It is also cold and means that something better could come along at any moment and displace mankind from the premiere spot on Earth. I don't want to be an accident. I am glad that God planned this world to be a perfect fit for all of us. The water and air are just right. Food comes out of the ground and rain down from above. He then made man and woman so that they have extraordinary abilities and did so because He loved them from the beginning. The man didn't have to earn God's love. It was freely given as He made everything to be wonderfully suited for people. Evolution is an accident embraced by those who don't want to believe in God or have His love. Creation says God loves me and created the world for me and will keep it running for many generations.

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What does this passage tell you about God's character and His intention for man?

Deep 2 How does your view on creation affect how you see humanity and see yourself before God?

Deep 3 How will you praise the Lord for the gifts that He has given you in creation? Why is praise important?

3. The perfect man. Genesis 2 Big idea: Creation gets personal.

In chapter two, the focus goes from the cosmic view of creation to an intimate look at how man came into being. Creation gets personal. The Bible describes the home that God has created for man as if you are walking in the garden. Man and woman are made individually, and the command to obey and not eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is given. In chapter one, we see the power of an almighty God who creates the world in six days. In chapter two, we see a loving and gentle God who is thinking of man and speaks directly to the man about his future and needs. Chapter two answers the personal questions of how I was created and what I should do with my life. It shows God as loving and caring. We are important to Him and are not just another part of creation. The focus is on man and the love that God shows to the man in creation.

Chapter two gets personal. While many think of an almighty God who lives in the heavens and has little connection with us, here we see a God who gets intimate as He breathes into the man to give him life. Here is the foundation of our relationship with God. We are not just higher beings who are part of an incredible creation. God personally crafted men and women with care. If anyone doubts the love that God has for the men and women that He has made, they need to look here and see how God is concerned with creating a perfect place for man and the creation of a woman so that man and woman can live fulfilled lives. God's power was on display in chapter one. Here we are shown the love of God so that we can live in it all our lives and enjoy His friendship and His care.

Even with sin, God's desire for us has not changed. He wants us to live in a deep relationship of love with Him. He has provided for us, His children so that we can have a life full of blessings. The account in Genesis 2 should encourage us to draw close to the Lord. In this text, we see how He made the world ideal for us and how he gave us reasoning, skills, and intuition that animals do not have. We see how God wanted man to choose to love Him without being forced. We have a Heavenly Father who cares about us and is just longing for us to get close to Him every day of our lives. God wanted to have someone to love forever, and that is still true today. When humanity fell into sin, God sent Jesus to save us so we could be close to Him again. He is a personal God who we can love forever as He loves us.

1. What place in nature takes your breath away? What does that place have that makes it so unique to you?

Each person may have their answer to this question. It could be the Rocky Mountains with the majestic peaks and bubbling streams. Others might enjoy the Arches of Utah or Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. God has given us several amazing places that we can visit in this country. Our nation has also done a great job of protecting many of those places in the National Parks. My favorite is the mountains. I love the peaks of both the Rockies and the Appalachians and the beautiful streams and trees.

Read Genesis 2

2. Verse 7. What does it mean that God breathed into a man when He created man?

While many beings are created and called living beings or creatures (1:20, 21, 24, etc.) Only man has the breath of God. In one sense, man is like the animals with a similar structure to the mammals, but the breath of God points to man's uniqueness. Breathing into man recalls Ezekiel's vision of dry bones in Ezekiel 37:9-10. In both cases, the bodies came to life as God brought life-sustaining breath into his body. It shows the difference between man and animals. God put something of himself into us so that we have

reasoning and an ability to create. No animal can think or design as humankind can. No other animal worships God or can have a relationship with Him as we call God Father and friend.

3. Verse 7. What does the manner of man's creation show about his relationship with God?

Breathing into someone or touching their lips is a very personal and intimate act. It shows the closeness that God has for man. God didn't just call us into being like he did the animals. He touched us and gave us life directly. Man alone has a soul that is given to him by God. We have a sense of ourselves and God that the animals do not have. We can know God and to see the world from His viewpoint in the scripture, while animals only see the environment where they live. Here we see that the Lord wanted man to be greater than the animals. He made them personally and individually as He breathed in man and later would craft woman out of the man's bone. God gave man's birth a personal touch, and we need to realize how special we are in Him.

4. Verse 15. What is the first task that God gives man? Why do you think it was important for the man to have this task?

God gave Adam the task of working and caring for the garden that the Lord had given him. He is to be a caretaker of the world that God has made. This role shows that the Garden of Eden is his and is his responsibility. Like a child given a bedroom, who must keep it clean and undamaged, Adam was given the world as his "room" where he would live and later have children. The task gave his life purpose. He was the steward with the entire world under his control. He could use his abilities and have the satisfaction of seeing everything prosper that the Lord had given him. Work was a joy and not the toil that it would become after sin (Gen. 3:17-19). Know that this was a blessing for the new man as he lived in the Lord.

5. Verse 15. Why is work a good thing for mankind? How does work bring meaning to life?

Without work, man has no purpose. Work is how we often identify ourselves. We are a plumber, a doctor, or a teacher. Our occupation gives us meaning so that we feel like we are accomplishing something as we do something that will make life better for others. Think of the builder who can take pride in the skyscraper or the farmer who looks over a field of ripening corn. Both have satisfaction in what they were part of and what they did with their hands. How miserable it would be to sit back and feel like you were not accomplishing anything each day. God gives us dignity through our work and a sense that we have been part of making the world a better place for our family and others.

6. Verse 17. Which plant does God forbid the man to eat? What is the penalty if he eats the plant?

While the man is free to eat of the trees of the garden (v.16), God commands man not to eat of the "Tree of the knowledge of good and evil." It is one of the two trees specifically mentioned (v.9) in the text. The other is the tree of life. While eating from the tree of life would give immortality (Gen. 3:22), eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would bring an experience of sin that would bring death. God specifically tells them that eating the tree of good and evil will bring death. Up till the time they ate the tree of good and evil, they had no concept of evil. Life was just good with perfect bodies and an ideal world where they could live. Eating the tree would be disobeying God and unleash evil into the world.

7. Verse 17. Why do you think God created a forbidden plant and place it near man?

The tree was in the garden so that man could make his own decisions about good and evil and his relationship with the Lord. The boundary line was that they had the choice to cross and disobey God or stay away from and remain sinless. Adam and Eve could not break most of the Ten Commandments. For example, they could not steal since God had given them the garden or commit adultery since there were no other people. God put the tree there because He wanted them to love him freely, and without the tree, they had no freedom to choose to love. God still wants His children to love him by their own choice. He

doesn't strike people with lightning bolts to force them to go to church. He gives people the freedom to choose whether they will have faith in Him and obey His word.

8. Verse 18. What was one thing that was not good about creation on the sixth day? How does God fix the situation?

Over the first five days, God had pronounced everything to be good. Having created man, God knew that it would not be desirable for Adam to live alone. God knew that people need people and that Adam needed a partner in life. While Adam could enjoy the relationship he had with God, he needed someone to share his life with and enjoy the home God had created for him in the garden. There was no such person among all the animals that God had made. They had partners, but Adam was alone. For creation to be complete and for humanity to increase in number and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28), God needed to create a woman to complement the man. Man and woman could now give themselves entirely to another, sharing life, dreams, and a future.

9. How are man and wife helpers for each other? What would life be missing if there were not two sexes?

Men and women are helpers to each other. They are the first line of aid and support that adults have. We may have friends, but we usually turn to our spouse first when we need help in times of crisis. Together, we use our shared resources and time to build a life for ourselves and our children. In marriage, husband and wife often have different skills and gifts. One may be good at finances while another is better at planning or keeping the couple on track for the future. The Bible does not teach that the woman is the lesser person in this arrangement. It merely states that Adam can't do what God wants for him alone. He needs someone else. He needs a wife who will help him just as he will help her. Two sexes also allow men and women to have children as God commanded. They will also provide various gifts that are often more common in men or women than in the opposite sex. God was giving man and woman what they needed if their future was to be full and prosperous. The two could accomplish more and have greater joy than one could by himself.

10. Verse 22 How is the woman formed in a way that is different from the man? Why not make her from the dust like Adam was?

God formed the man out of the dust of the ground. God formed the woman out of the rib of the man. To create a woman out of the earth could make her a different species than man. By fashioning her from Adam's rib, they had a bond that made them truly one. She was of the same substance as the man and the same species. They would be united in marriage when God brought the woman to the man and joined in the flesh since God used a part of man to create his wife. While many animals gather to have offspring, man and woman would make a bond for life. Adam's words in verse 23 show that Adam considered Eve a part of him and a gift from God that would make him complete. The woman is a unique creation in the eyes of God, and men would do well to see their wives as someone God created so that they, too, could be complete.

11. Verse 24 What is God's desire for man and woman in marriage?

Verse 24 was quoted by Jesus and by St. Paul in the New Testament. It shows three things about what God planned for the marriage of a husband and wife. First, God wanted a companion for the man who would be his equal and who would understand him in a way that no animal ever could. Second, God wanted man to be fruitful and multiply, which includes having children and having lives of importance after their childbearing years. Third, marriage is a union that takes precedence over other relationships, even the family relationships of our youth. Man and woman become one in a way that they never do with parents or siblings. The relationship between a man and his wife is so strong that God will use it in

scripture as an analogy of what He wants between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33). Man and woman are united until death parts them. God wants us to make an eternal commitment to Him as well.

12. What does it mean that husband and wife are one flesh? How does that express itself in marriage?

One flesh may mean a lifetime sexual union of a man and woman, but it means more than that. In our society, we rightly think of a man and woman as one legal entity who own property and who can be held liable for each other's actions in that lawsuits will take the property of both. The text goes further in that it says that your lives and futures are intertwined. In marriage, we ask the couple to pledge to be together through "sickness and in health." A couple can't think only of themselves when they make big decisions. They have to consider each other and their children. They have become one, and what happens to one will happen to the other.

13. As you read chapter 2, what do you think God's expectations were for man and woman?

God created man so that He might have a loving and caring relationship with him. He gave the man a home where he could live and flourish with a mate who would complete him for all his life. He made man special by breathing into the man, so he had reasoning and a sense of himself that the animals do not have. The man was given the ability to choose to love the Lord and not be forced into worship or friendship with God. As I look at this passage, I see the care that God had in creating man. God made a people that He could love and care for as a parent cares for his children. God gave man the best of everything in the way that a parent would want the best for his children. He expected to have someone to love and who would love Him. While man has fallen into sin, I still think that God is looking for such a relationship with Christians today.

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What do you think it would be like to have lived in the garden as Adam and Eve did? What is one thing that you would like to have now?

Deep 2 If you are married, how does your spouse complete you and bring you the fulfillment you would not have if you were alone?

Deep 3 How has God shown personal attention and love to you in your life? What would you gain by having a deeper and more intimate relationship with God?

4 The Technique of Temptation

Gen. 3:1-13

Big idea: Man is to blame for sin, and God is the cure for it.

He came in disguise and caught Eve unaware. With three short sentences, Satan brings down her defenses and leads her to do the very thing that God had commanded them not to do. He begins by questioning God's motives and leading her to doubt God. The Devil continues with a blatant lie so that she doubts what God has said. Finally, he promises that she will be like God. The temptation is too much, and she eats the forbidden fruit. Death has now entered the world and will be the fate of all the world. When we yield to temptation, it often causes us to have a realization that we have sinned. Sin opened their eyes, and they desire to run from God, yet God is the only one who can save them. They try to cover their sin with fig leaves, but only God can cover the evil that they have committed. God is the solution and not the problem with sin.

Death is all around us, and many blame God. We grieve when a loved one dies and fear the grave as we are getting old. We are bothered by the evil in the world that we see around us. If God is perfect and made an ideal world, why is there so much sin and death? We struggle with the answer and often conclude that God must not be so perfect or not exist at all. Our temptation is to abandon God and run and hide from the evil around us and the death that stalks us till the end of life. Genesis 3 provides the answer to our questions of how sin and death came into the world. The fault is not God's but is the fault of man. We accepted Satan's lies about God and our future as equals to God. We doubted the love and wisdom of God and thought that we could be just like God. In the end, disobedience has a high cost. Sin alienates us from God and each other. We try to blame others for our faults and hide from God. Mankind still causes a great deal of his and her pain. God comes to us and offers to help. God has the solution to the sin that we commit every day as fallen people.

The wise will run to God and not from Him. Some look for new technologies that will freeze them until there is a cure or create a pill that will prolong life. Trustworthy solutions begin with an admission that we have sinned. We have abandoned God and destroyed the paradise that He created for us. Our faults and the problems of an imperfect world are painful reminders of the fall of Adam and Eve. We could wonder what life would have been like if they had never sinned, but that doesn't help us. Fortunately, God comes to us because we can never go to Him. He comes with love and answers to the problem of sin in our lives. Instead of blaming others, we need to confess our sin to our loving God so that He can take away the transgression with the cross of Jesus. Man is the cause of pain in the world. God is the answer to our suffering and our sin. We destroyed His perfect world, yet He is still here helping us and bringing us forgiveness.

1. What is one food that always tempts you?

Most of us have one food that we just can't resist. It might be a snack food like popcorn or cookies. It might be a main dish like lasagna or a juicy steak. Just the smell of the food is enough to make us stop what we are doing and seek out the source of the odor. Let the group talk about their favorite foods. What would it take for them to give up that food completely? What makes that food so extraordinary to them? Is it just the taste of the food, or is there some memory attached to the food?

Read Gen. 3:1-13

2. Verse 1. What is the question that Satan raises about God? How does the question attack God's character?

He came in disguise and caught Eve unaware. The serpent pretends to ask a question but frames it as an accusation against God. The wording leads you to believe that Satan finds it hard to believe that God could deny anything to the first couple. His target was Eve's mind as he wanted to plant the seeds of doubt concerning God's generosity and love. He might have just as well said, "God's holding out on you and keeping something from you!" Suddenly, the focus is not on all the incredible plants God gave Adam and Eve as food but on the one plant they were not to eat. Our God, who made a beautiful garden just for humankind, is portrayed as selfish. According to Satan, God is not as loving as we first thought.

3. Verse 1. What doubts do people have about God today? How do their doubts destroy their relationship with God?

Satan still attacks God's character. Just as it was in the garden, Satan focuses on the things that we can't have or that are wrong in our world rather than on the beautiful creation and abundance surrounding us in the world. God is cruel because he allows war or because a starving child doesn't have enough food. It is a smear campaign against God so that people don't trust or honor God. Satan wants to knock God off His throne in our mind, so we start doubting God and following Satan and his evil ways. Satan began the first temptation and continues today by casting doubt on God so that we distance ourselves from Him and his protection. When the Devil destroys our relationship with God, we are an easier target for Satan.

4. Verse 4. What blatant lie does Satan tell Eve? What is he trying to convince her is true?

Eve's answer in verses 2-3 shows that Satan has started to get to her. If you compare her words here to God's command in 2:16-17, you will find that she forgets that they can freely eat any of the other trees and added the rule not to touch the tree. She has changed God's command. Now Satan will continue with a direct contradiction of God's word. He lies when he tells them that eating the tree will not cause death. Satan is trying to convince her that there are no consequences to sin. He casts God as mistaken at best and offers to tell her the real truth. Eve should have left the serpent and went to find the truth from her husband, but she instead listens to the snake and accepts his word as truth.

5. Verse 4 What lies does Satan tell people to convince them that bad is good? How do you protect yourself from such lies?

Most of the lies that Satan tells boil down to the simple belief that you can do something that God tells you is evil and have no consequences for your actions. It is alright to do drugs, to give in to lust, or to seek revenge. People start seeing advantages to doing evil without thinking about destroying their lives and others' lives. Sadly, like Eve, many Christians know just enough about God's word to become confused. They know the broad outlines of good and evil but don't understand why some things will benefit them and other actions will harm them. They listen to Satan's lies or bending of the truth and accept it as beneficial for us. We forget or don't know God's clear word, and so we react by what will be enjoyable in the moment rather than advantageous for us. The best defense against Satan is to study God's word so that Satan's lies will be readily apparent.

6. Verse 5. What promise does Satan give to lure Eve into disobeying God? What kernel of truth is in the false promise?

Now comes "the closer." Eat of the fruit and become like God. The tempter says that life is not found in obeying God but in becoming like God. Wrapped up in this one temptation seemed to be the opportunity for power, pride, and prestige. Satan didn't promise anything good. He never promised that they would have God's power or that they would be equal to God. He just promised that they would know the difference between good and evil. Sadly, there is a bit of truth in that. Up till now, humanity didn't know what evil was. Everything in the garden was good and perfect. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they would know the good they lost and the evil they had become. The horror of becoming evil like Satan and

experiencing pain and suffering had been wrapped up in an appealing wrapper so that it seemed so normal. The tree gave them the promised knowledge, but it has not been good for humankind ever since.

7. Verse 5. What promises does Satan make to get people to do evil things today? How is half a truth just as bad as a total lie?

The world around us substitutes truth for a lie and lures people in. It promises that drugs and alcohol are solutions to our problems. It makes greed, pride, or lust something so appealing that people sell their soul for it. Satan has bound some of our culture's smartest people into thinking that they are as smart as God and that they know good and evil better than God does. We even take polls to find out what truth is rather than look to the scripture or even look at the lessons history has taught us. Half-truths abound in our culture and are amazingly deceptive because there is just enough truth to it that we believe the falsity as well as the kernel of truth. The only way that we will see through Satan is to be a student of scripture and history. Learn from God's word what is right and what is wrong. Look at people's lives in the Bible and throughout history to see where they avoided Satan's lies and where they fell for them. God has given us the wisdom to evade Satan and his ways.

8. Verse 7. What is the result of mankind's sin? What is man's solution to immorality?

Once they ate the fruit, man and woman lost their innocence. They understood what it was like to sin and saw themselves apart from their spouse and the rest of creation. They had the knowledge that Satan had promised them, and it caused them pain. Their nakedness also showed their shame. Sin makes us ashamed of ourselves. As a result, they made coverings of leaves for their bodies. They covered themselves so that their spouse could not see their body and the innocence that they lost. What had been "pleasing to the eye" was something that brought them shame. Finally, they felt fear. They no longer felt comfortable with God and hid as the Lord visited them in the garden. They knew that they had disobeyed him and feared the God who they had walked and talked within the Garden of Eden. The shame, fear, and guilt must have transformed the couple so that it was hard to enjoy the perfect garden that the Lord had made. Where each day had been paradise, now it was a place where they wanted to be left alone and not encounter God or others.

9. Verse 9. Why does God have to come to man to bring healing? What did man fear, and what did God bring?

Sin had broken the relationship between God and man. Like a child caught with his hand in the cookie jar, the first couple was afraid because they had done wrong. The loving God became someone who they feared would punish them. While we know that Adam and Eve should have gone to the Lord to confess what they had done, sin was a new experience, and they had no idea what to do. They hide in fear because they know nothing of forgiveness or mercy. God has to go and find them because guilt and shame would not allow them to come to God. As the story plays out, God comes to man to help man see the truth and restore the relationship. Even the question that God gives in verse 9 is meant to help Adam know that he is no longer in the same place that he had been hours before. God wants them to see Satan's deception so that they understand why God must save them.

10. Why is it wise to seek God when we feel guilty instead of running from Him?

Unlike Adam and Eve, we have had experience with sin. We know its destructiveness and realize that we can't wipe wickedness away by ourselves. While the tendency is to hide from God when we have done something wrong, we are wise to come to the Lord when we are guilty. As Christians, we have learned about God's forgiveness and mercy and have come to depend on it. We know that our only hope for restoration is to confess our sins and throw ourselves on God's mercy and grace. We know that God will always forgive the penitent sinner and help us rebuild our lives, overcoming the damage that sin has caused. As we come to the Lord, He will teach us the truth so that Satan deceives us no longer. He will

help us repair the damaged relationships and give us the strength to overcome the sins in our lives. Unlike Adam, we understand the power of sin and that we need God's help to overcome it.

11. Verse 12-13. What do Adam and Eve say when God asks them about their sin? Does this take away sin from humankind?

God asks Adam two more questions to help Adam confess what he had done. God's visit to the couple was an act of grace because God could have just destroyed them for their sin. In asking the questions, God knew the answers but wanted to allow Adam and Eve to own the evil they had just committed. Instead of confessing, Adam blamed the woman and blamed his God, who had created her. She gave him the fruit of the tree and should be responsible. God gave Adam the woman instead of just leaving him with the animals. Eve was no better, for she blamed the serpent for the transgression as if she had done nothing wrong. Sadly, both show how we try to excuse our sins by blaming someone else. Such a "blame game" ultimately destroys relationships. Adam and Eve damaged their relationship with God as they avoided the questions of God. They also destroyed their relationship with each other and the world around them as they tried to blame others instead of admitting what they had done. The blame added to their sins by hurting each other instead of taking any of the sins away.

12. How does sin affect the relationships that we have in marriage, family, and friendships? What options do we have that Adam and Eve didn't know of in the garden?

Sin destroys our relationships as we are often selfish, filled with pride, and become angry. We want what is right for us, even if it will be harmful to others. We want to think that others should value us even if we do not treat them as if they have value. We even lash out in anger or jealousy when we feel we have been poorly treated by others or by life. Humanity causes most of the damage and pain that we experience in life. If we want to lessen the hurt, we need to come to the Lord. He will teach us to be kind and caring about the significant people around us. He will teach us how to approach them when we have wronged them and ask for their forgiveness. The Lord will also help us forgive ourselves and rebuild our lives to have a character that attracts and benefits others rather than being a person that others do not want to be around.

13. Who is to blame for sin? How is God the only one who can help?

"The devil made me do it!" That was the line of a comic years ago, and it is still the sentiment today. We want to blame the Devil for temptation, God for making something wrong, or others around us who lead us into sin. God comes to us to bring the truth. We are to blame. Like Adam and Eve, we need God to appear and gently show us our error and help us overcome the sin that plagues us every day. Without God's word, we would think that many of the actions that the world encourages us to do are perfectly fine. It would only be when life is shattered that we wonder why things didn't work out so well. God knows what is good and what is evil. We are on a constant learning curve as we experience new situations. Only God can teach, and only God can forgive. We are the source of our problems, and God alone is the answer.

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What is the problem with knowing good and evil? What do you think it was like to know only good?

Deep 2 Why are we so attracted to all the things that God or others have forbidden?

Deep 3 What is the worst thing about disobeying God for you? Is it guilt, shame, broken relationships, or something else?

5 Consequences of the fall.

Genesis 3:14-24

Big idea: Mankind has paid a hefty price for their sin.

Some things belong to the Lord alone. Such was the tree in the midst of the garden. Man and woman ate its fruit in disobedience to the direct command of the Lord. In doing so, they lost their purpose for existing. They wanted to become like God, and it cost them the plan that the Lord had in mind for them in the garden. There were also consequences to such rebellion. Adam and Eve strained the relationship between man and God and the relationships between man and woman and man and God's creation. The very essence of man and woman was twisted and made painful. The joy that women would have in having children would now be a painful event. The work that God had given humanity would be cursed and no longer be a joy as well. Finally, death would be their end. God had made them lovingly out of the dust, and they would become nothing more than dirt when life ended. It would only be in God's promise that they would find hope in the tragedy of their sin.

People still want to be the gods of their world and control what only God commands. They take life and their future into their own hands and lose the paradise that God had planned for them. Ambition and aspirations go wrong. We desire not to be the best person we can be as we lean on the Lord for His help and wisdom but conceive of being in charge of our world. We ignore God's Word and seek to advance our life at the cost of others. The consequences of greed, anger, and lust are often swift and brutal. Businesses are lost, and marriages go up in flames. We hurt ourselves and the people around us. We push forward with our plan instead of living according to the purpose of the Lord for our lives. We stumble through life instead of trusting Him to bring us a life of joy and peace. We seek what we will never find and blaze a path of pain and suffering for ourselves and others until we ultimately die with nothing to show for our struggles but a trail of destruction.

Beware of those who will call evil good and good evil. Like the serpent in the garden, the world will try to convince us that the only thing that matters is what is good for us. In truth, there are moral standards laid out in the scripture that are true for all people. What feels right may not be best. What is right is what is in God's word, and those who don't follow the Lord's ways will face the consequences of abandoning God's plan. Yet, there is hope for those who have drifted from God's ways if they will return to the Lord and seek His mercy. God promised a messiah here to Adam and Eve. He is Jesus, our savior who will crush the head of Satan through the cross. Life will not be easy as we struggle with Satan and his wily ways, but God gives victory to those who seek Him and follow His ways. The consequences of sin do not have to be deadly.

1. What is one thing that Adam and Eve had in paradise that you wished humanity still had?

While I'm not too fond of the days when work is not easy and wish that I had the beauty of nature that they were surrounded by, I miss how Adam and Eve never fought and were always kind. Mankind's inhumanity to man is our constant companion. We see how epidemic crime is with the rampant greed and murder in our streets. We see it in our families and marriages as people don't speak to each other and let petty things divide them. It would have been so lovely to be in a world where everyone got together. Let the group discuss what they miss most about the perfect world God created.

Read Genesis 3:14-24

2. Verse 14-5. What is the punishment for the serpent? How is this punishment fitting for one who the text describes as crafty (Gen. 3:1)

"Because you have done this" shows that the curse is directly connected to the serpent's temptation of the woman. God curses the serpent above all the livestock and wild animals. God gives him a threefold punishment of crawling on his belly, eating dust all his life, and being destroyed by the woman's seed. These speak to humiliation in the animal world and are spoken against Satan as much as the snake. The one who thought he was crafty and was able to approach the woman and tempt her to evil will be one who is abhorrent to men and has been the symbol of darkness more than any other animal. Since he will be crawling on the ground, the snake must be careful that other animals do not step on him and kill him. Finally, the cunning serpent is relegated to the ground and has less dignity than many other animals. He will tempt man no longer.

3. Verse 15. What comes as good news for humankind? Who are the offspring of Satan that God is talking about in this verse?

Here, we have what many think of as the first promise of a savior. God will put enmity or hostility between the serpent and the woman and give hope in her seed. It is God's declaration of war against Satan and shows God's willingness to save humanity instead of abandoning them. God will send His son, Jesus, to crush the head of Satan even as the serpent strikes our Lord on the cross. Satan's offspring is referred to as wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:13-15) and are all of those who oppose the Lord and his church and try to keep God's people from salvation. Like their master, Satan, they will try to tempt God's people to do wrong, to slander the name of God, and to destroy the good that the Lord has made on earth and among His people.

4. Verse 16 What is the punishment for Eve? How does this punishment hit at her most important relationships?

While the words of God reassure Eve that she will bear children and will not immediately die because of her sin, it spells out how the privilege of having children will now be painful. Her punishment impacts what has traditionally been the primary role of women through the ages as mother and wife. The children that will be a great blessing to her will also cause her great pain during their birth as a reminder that she was the first to bring sin into this world. Her relationship with her husband will also be filled with conflict since she was instrumental in causing her husband to sin. She will have a desire for her husband, but it will not always be a comfortable relationship. There may also be a sense that, until recent times, women were often dependent on their husbands economically and legally and could be taken advantage of by their spouses.

5. Verse 17 What is the punishment for Adam? How does this punishment relate to the task that God gave to man and woman in Genesis 2:15?

Man's punishment came because he followed his wife and not the Lord. It is important to note that man is not cursed here like the serpent. It is the ground that is cursed, making it hard to work. The joy of caring for the garden would be replaced by hard work and sorrow as he produced the food that naturally came to him in Eden. Man would work the fields and deal with thorns and thistles instead of reaching the trees' fruit. God had given man a joyful purpose of caring for the garden that the Lord had made for him. Now, his useful work would become toil so that he would only survive by the sweat of his brow. In our day, women work in outside jobs almost as much as men. In a sense, they take on this punishment. God created work as a time of fulfillment and joy that it sometimes is, but it has also become a time of trials and pain for men and women.

6. Verse 17. How has the world changed because of mankind's sin? Why is this hardship a natural consequence of sin entering the world?

In the garden, "streams came up out of the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground" (Gen. 2:6). The picture given in chapter 2 is truly a paradise where food was abundant, and there was no hard work to

make it come forth. Now, sin has cursed the earth. Thorns and thistles will appear because the planet is broken. The simple caring for a perfect creation will become toil as you wrestle from the ground the food that you need. When man fell into sin, he destroyed the perfection that God had made in the world. He will eat the grains of the earth, just like the oxen eat its grass. He will know abundance and famine as the fields have cycles of plenty and scarcity. Man is not cursed, but man's sin condemns the earth, and man will feel the consequences of moving out of paradise and living on rugged land.

7. Verse 19 What is the final penalty for disobeying God? How far-reaching in the results of man's sin?

Satan's lie of immortality in Genesis 3:4 is shown to be the ultimate fallacy. Before Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, there was no reason to expect that they would face death. God had given them a tree of life (Gen. 3:22), which it would seem would provide eternal life. Now Adam would return to the soil. God had given Adam a warning that death would be the consequence of eating from the tree (Gen. 2:17). Adam had not listened to the Lord. The penalty of death would not be immediate. Adam would live for 930 years (Gen. 5:5) so that he had time to produce many heirs and fill the earth as God had commanded. However, he would die, and his sin brought man's curse on the animals as well. Since humans did not eat animals before the flood (Gen 9:3), there is no reason to believe that animals had to die before sin. Death would now affect both animals and plants, just as it was the fate of the man to whom God gave the perfect earth.

8. Verse 19. How is the world affected by man's sin? Why is the effect so significant?

Death and taxes are the only sure things in life. Everything in the world lost the perfection that the Lord had created. Hurricanes and tornadoes, oppressive heat and forest fires, as well as floods and bitter cold all give testimony to the fact that the world is not the servant of man, as was the garden. Death comes to animals and plants and even to whole ecosystems. Ironically, death is the one thing that points many people back to God. Man fears death and the destruction caused by a broken world and looks to heaven for help and deliverance. Death spares no one this constant reminder that sin has ruined our lives and our world since death comes to people of all economic levels and races. Having become dead in sin spiritually, the man now must deal with the physical death all around him. Only Jesus overcomes death by the gift of the cross and resurrection.

9. Verse 21. What does God provide the couple to cover their nakedness? What is the cost of their sin to others?

They had sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness and shame (Gen. 3:7). In the warm sun, fig leaves would not last, and so God provides them garments of (animal) skin as coverings that will last for more than a few days. Here is God caring for His people and showing that His love for them has not waned just because of their sin. Unfortunately, God sacrificed the life of animals so that they could be covered. Death had come to the world to cover the sins and shame of man. In a small way, it prefigures the death of Jesus, which covers our sin and guilt from the cross. God gave them a new beginning and rebuilt their relationship with Him and with each other. It will not always be tainted with shame, but God will fill life with love.

10. How does man try to cover his sin today? What is the only effective way to cover sin?

Like Adam and Eve, a man tries to cover his sins. We do so by blaming others like Adam and Eve did or by hiding and hoping that no one will notice as our first parents did when they realized their shame. Finally, we come up with excuses, which are just our fig leaf coverings for sin. None of these things worked for Adam and Eve, and none will work for us today. We can't make up for sin based on good works or because of any homemade coverings. Only God can provide a covering that will last. That covering is the blood of Jesus given from the cross, which covers the sin and provides forgiveness for our

sins. God promised the Savior in verse 15 and fulfilled that promise in Jesus Christ. We may think that we can provide relief for our guilt and shame but will soon find that all our ways will just crumble away like fig leaves in the sun. Only God can bring relief and help.

11. Verse 22-23 What is God's concern now that man has become sinful? What is God's solution, and what does it say about the future of humanity?

Now that they know good and evil, God is concerned that they might decide to eat from the tree of life. Eating the fruit of this tree would have doomed them to an eternity of pain and suffering. It would have been hell on earth. God also expelled them because they were no longer perfect and could not be in God's ideal place for them. Sin and paradise were incompatible. Daily life would now become a struggle as man toiled to raise food to eat and deal with a thorny life filled with problems. God had shown that He would not abandon them, and they still could have a relationship with Him, but suffering and pain would fill their lives. Ironically, God bans Adam from the garden that He gave Adam and told him to care for it.

12. Mankind continues to try to live longer and longer. What do you think it would be like if a man or woman were to live forever in his sinful state?

Let the group talk about this scenario to see the wisdom in God protecting man from the tree of life. You might consider what it would look like as our sinful bodies get weaker and weaker, and there is no possibility of death mercifully taking us from a body that no longer can see, hear or walk. Think of people in a local nursing home that continue to get worse and worse and never die. You might also consider how evil and evil men would flourish and grow in their knowledge of evil as they grow older. Humankind is blessed in that evil men in this world will all die at some point. Man has only so much time to learn evil. The pre-flood picture (Gen 4:17-24) shows a man named Lamech, who became very adept at sin, possibly because he had hundreds of years to learn how to be very bad.

13. What does this chapter teach us about the effects unleashed by Adam and Eve's first sin?

Let the group talk about what they have learned. Indeed, we can see the breakup of relationships. Man is no longer close to God, and there is friction between man and woman as they blame each other for sin. There is the guilt and shame that man tries to cover, but only God can take away. The hardships come as the things that were to be blessings in creation have now become filled with pain and trouble. A woman should rejoice in the gift of children and her relationship with her husband. Now childbirth will be painful, and the relationship with her husband will have conflict and fights over control. The man was to care for a perfect garden and have joy in his work. Now it will be hardship and toil. Prickly problems fill our lives. Finally, sin has produced death for man and his world. We discount sin and make excuses for it. Here we see the cost of sin for all people. One sin unleashed what we experience every day. Let the group talk about the greatest cost of sin to them.

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 In verses 14-19, is God punishing us, just listing the consequences that come with sin or doing both? Why must He share these words with them rather than just letting them find out the effects for themselves?

Deep 2 What sins are you most ashamed of in your life? How have you tried to cover them, and what was the effect? Why do you need to seek God's mercy if the shame is ever going to be taken away?

Deep 3 What in this chapter brings you hope? How does God show in this chapter that He still loves man and woman despite their sin?

6. Murder. **Genesis 4:1-16**

Big idea: Sin spreads like weeds without forgiveness

One often wonders how the world became so sinful. When Adam and Eve ate one forbidden fruit, it didn't seem so bad. Sin, however, spread like wildfire over just a few decades since the fall of man. Sadly, we see that sin spreads like weeds. One sin often leads to another, and Satan is always busy teaching humanity how to sin in new and exciting ways. For Cain, it began with an angry thought. His pride was hurt because God accepted Abel's sacrifice rather than his. Temptation didn't have to be spoken by the serpent. This anger welled up from inside Cain, and he was propelled into murder. He had seen animals sacrificed to God. Now, Cain sacrificed his brother on the altar of his pride. God confronts Cain with his sin, but he is more concerned with himself than with what he had done to his brother. God's punishment is swift and just. As God banishes Cain from the family, Adam and Eve lose two children to this horrible sin.

Sin is one thing that man does well. Like a patch of weeds, wickedness has moved through the whole garden of man's existence. No part of this world is free from sin and its effects. Humanity often tries to excuse sin or hide sin as our forefather and mother did in the garden. It doesn't work, and sin soon traps man in sin. Sadly, we have become so sinful that no one has to teach us to sin like the serpent showed Eve. Instead, sin wells up in us with a thought. It might be anger, lust, or a lie. Often it is just our emotions ruling over us instead of common sense. We lash out in a moment, and our sins are released like Abel's blood lying on the ground before our feet. Sadly, we often compound one sin with others to cover up our sins or try to make things better. Our concern is to protect ourselves rather than make amends for what we have done. God's punishment is still swift, and often we face terrible consequences that may haunt us and those we love for the rest of our lives.

If we are not careful, sin will ruin our lives. God tries to warn Cain that his anger may lead to wickedness. It was a teachable moment, but Cain doesn't listen. God reaches out to us in those moments of anger or temptation to heal our wayward heart. If we listen to God, we nip sin in the bud, and we avoid the pain and consequences. Listening to the word of God in scripture can guard our hearts and stop the spread of sin in our lives. It may extinguish the emotions that lead us into sin and help us to find satisfaction in life. Often we purposely don't listen to God. We might appeal to God after the sin to help us with the consequences that have destroyed us. Sadly, that appeal is still more about our pain and sin's effects than about the lives that we have ruined. True repentance opens the way for a renewal of life. One wonders what would have happened if Cain had repented instead of just complaining about God's justice. Ours is a God of forgiveness who gives second chances. True repentance when we do sin opens the future and lets God rebuild a broken life.

1. How well did you get along with your brothers and sisters? Was there ever a time that they made you upset?

My family has gotten along very well over the years. We still get together twice a year, even though we are spread across the country. I have known many families that do not get along. There are fights over money and bad choices and bad spouses. Children move away because they want to have "space," and parents decide to leave the family and go to Florida or Arizona with no thought to the distance that they have from their children and grandchildren. Let the group talk about how their families function. Let them share times now or when they were younger that siblings made them upset.

Read Genesis 4:1-16

2. Verse 2. What was the calling of each of the two sons? Why is it necessary for every person to have a calling?

Abel was a keeper of sheep while Cain worked in the fields. Each of the brothers had a calling as they served the family and provided for the daily needs. It is evident that as they grew up, Adam put them to work, paying attention to their interests and skills. In this work, they fulfilled God's command to care for the world that the Lord had made (Gen. 1:26-31). Work was never meant to be a curse but was a blessing given to God before man fell into sin. Christians don't work only to pay the bills or take care of our needs. We work as a way to serve God and others. We use the abilities that God has given us, and we honor God with the fruit of our labors, as Cain and Abel did (v.3).

3. Verse 5. Where does sin begin for Cain? What do his thoughts show about his relationship with God and his self-worth?

Sin began with sinful thoughts for Cain. God was not pleased with his offering so that his heart was downcast because of his pride. He became angry that God should think more of Abel's sacrifice than his own. He was so furious that his countenance or face fell and showed how he felt inside. His anger shows us a lot about his attitude. He longed for approval, but his relationship with God was not right. There was nothing wrong with the sacrifice of the "fruit of the soil." It was what he produced with his labor and was in no way inferior to Abel's sacrifice. What was wrong was the heart. Temptations didn't have to be spoken by a serpent; sin welled up in his heart, gushing in anger, jealousy, and pride without Satan having to lend a hand. 1 John 3:11-12 describes Cain as "belonging to the evil one." Sin has grown so that it now comes from within the heart.

4. Verse 5. How does Cain's story show us the wisdom of guarding our thoughts and emotions?

Since evil often starts with a thought, it would be wise to manage our thoughts and actions. It could be anger like Cain's or lust like David will have as he looks at Bathsheba. Emotions can lead us to sin because sin is now part of our heart, mind, and nature. The temptation to anger is not a sin, but when anger, lust, or jealousy takes hold of us, they become sins. Curb your emotions, or they will take us over and lead to sin and sometimes to other sins to cover up our sins. Our feelings lead us astray even when our mind knows what we should be doing in a given situation.

5. Verse 7. How does God intervene with Cain to help him at this time of temptation? What is the substance of the warning that God gives?

God knows what is coming and steps in to try and show Cain the danger. It was a teachable moment, but Cain didn't listen. God asked questions and gave advice to one he loves. God was warning Cain that Satan wanted to use his feelings to destroy him. Feelings alone were not sin. He still had the option to follow the Lord and master the sin before it mastered him. God was reaching out to Cain and trying to heal Cain's wayward heart. If Cain had listened and understood why his sacrifice was unacceptable, he would have never killed his brother. God was giving Cain a second chance. Godly actions are rewarded, but following his emotions would lead to destruction. Murder may be a new sin, but Cain will not be able to claim ignorance since God has given him a warning.

6. Verse 7. How does God speak to us to help us in temptation? What advantages do we gain by listening to the Lord in those times?

The Christian needs to be in the word if God will have an easy time speaking to us and warning us of the dangers we face each day. God indeed warned some people like St. Paul (Acts 9) with a vision from heaven. Listening to the Lord is like poison for the weeds of our lives. God exposes what is happening to us and gives us the power in the Bible to extinguish emotions like anger and jealousy that will lead us into sin. It also gives us better alternatives. Killing Abel didn't give Cain the acceptance that he sought. If he had a heart that worshiped God as Abel did, he would have overcome the sin and been closer to the Lord.

Sprinkle the word generously in your daily life, and it will chase Satan away, curb your emotions, and provide answers for the problems and troubles that you face each day. The scripture grows the fruits of faith and chases the weeds of sin away.

7. Verse 8. What do the thoughts lead Cain to do? Is this deliberate or just a fit of passion?

The emotions bloom into action and sin. While the text does not say that Cain specifically took Able into the fields with the intent of murdering his brother, it seems that this was premeditated murder. It would be natural to lure his brother away from the rest of the family so he could use the opportunity to kill Abel on the spot. What had just been emotions and thought now became the actions of his hands. He had seen animals sacrificed to God. Now Abel was sacrificed on the altar of Cain's pride. Thoughts had bloomed into sinful actions, and the violence common in our world is set into motion. Cain killed his brother without thinking of the consequences. Cain never considered how his parents would feel losing a son. He never considered the punishment for what he was doing. The emotions led him to act blindly and do what people would think was impossible. He killed his brother.

8. Verse 8. How do sinful thoughts lead to wicked actions? What makes us so vulnerable to our emotions?

We never think of the danger of our sinful thoughts. They are inside our heads, and no one needs to be the wiser to what we think or believe. Yet, when we don't curb our minds, it seems right to lash out at our neighbor, break up our marriage, or trample on a coworker to get ahead. Satan and our emotions convince us that it is our right to react, defend ourselves, or stand up for our version of the truth. Our desires and feelings are more important than the needs and freedoms of others. Just as Abel lies on the ground in a pool of blood, we trample others to the ground with our words and actions. Like Adam and Eve in the text, others who are not part of the fight often get caught up in the crossfire and pay a terrible price. Soon, sin has multiplied, and others reply to our sin with sinful words or actions of their own. One emotion has multiplied into a host of emotions and immoral acts that destroy relationships between friends, family, and our relationship to the Lord.

9. Verse 9. When questioned by God, how does Cain respond? What opportunity does Cain miss, and what does it show about his feelings?

God questioned Cain to give him a chance to repent as God did for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:11). Instead of repenting, Cain lied. He compounded his lie with an accusation denying that he had any responsibility or relationship with His brother. God's question and Cain's answer showed the family's intimate relationship that Cain and Abel had. Did Cain think that God was a fool and that he could get away with what he had done by merely denying that it had ever happened? He had been angry with God for not accepting his sacrifice. Now Cain acts like God does not deserve any respect. What a fool Cain is for thinking that God would not know. God's questions were not to get information but to give Cain the chance to tell the truth and show remorse. Like his parents in chapter 3, Cain is evasive and seeks to cover up what he had done.

10. What is the right thing to do when we sin? Why is that often so difficult for us to do?

The fool still thinks that he is smarter than God. Instead of listening to the Lord or answering the questions that God brings to mind in scripture, we believe we can ignore His words or hide from them. Cain should have admitted what he had done. He should have shown some sorrow for killing his brother, who he saw every day. Instead, he denies knowing where his brother is or having any responsibility for his brother. Sin grows when people don't want to face it and receive God's forgiveness. It is hard to admit that we have done wrong. We expect that denials and trickery can fix the problems that we face. Christians fail to seek forgiveness, which can help stop sin in its tracks. We allow it to spread across our culture and nation. If we deny and dishonor God, we empower sin to continue to grow.

11. Verse 13. What is Cain's response to God's punishment? What is missing from the reaction?

God punishes Cain by making the ground, which has absorbed Abel's blood unfruitful for Cain. He would now be a wanderer across the earth. Cain's response never thinks of the brother whose life he took. He simply complains that God is too harsh. Cain never asks for forgiveness but paints God as cruel and unfair. Perhaps he expected a simple reprimand for killing his brother and never really considered that there would be consequences for what he had done. He complains that the consequences of his sin would be harsh. He would lose his occupation and never farm the land again. He would lose his relationship with the Lord. He would wander the earth aimlessly with no purpose. Finally, he feared that someone would kill him in revenge for his murder of Abel. The price he would pay for this sin would be great. By refusing to repent, he created a difficult life for himself as he closed the doors to God, family, and his future.

12. What can we learn from Cain's reaction? How does Cain make matters worse?

When we sin, we add to the harm of sin by refusing to repent. It is common in our day to blame others when we sin like Adam and Eve did or to excuse our sin as if it is nothing like Cain did. In the mind of many, sin should have no consequences, and God should ignore it. Cain shut himself away from God's mercy by blaming God for the effects instead of taking responsibility. He lost his future because he expected God and his family to not care about Abel's loss. Ultimately, he feared for his life when he didn't consider Abel's life to have any value. Consequences do come from our sin. We must admit our sin, take the results that come from it, and seek the Lord's mercy by asking for His forgiveness and help to rebuild our life. If we try to ignore God or blame God, we must face the consequences alone.

13. How can sin destroy the rest of life if we continue in anger and do not repent?

Angry at God for not ignoring his sin, Cain leaves God's presence. Adam and Eve will lose not one son but two. Confident in his self-righteousness, Cain will have no place in the family or the history of God's people. Since he is not able to farm the land, he will build a city without God. His family will continue to degenerate. One of his descendants, Lamech, will boast about killing another and dare God to judge him as God judged Cain. (4:23-24) If Cain had confessed his sin, life might have been challenging, but God would have helped him rebuild his life. Because he was unrepentant, he changed the fate of his children and children's children. Ultimately, his sin would overwhelm the other children of Adam and Eve until only Noah and his family were left righteous (Gen. 6:9). The solution for our world and the rampant sin that plagues us is to be in God's presence and bring others we know and love to seek the forgiveness and mercy that only God can give. Sin spreads like weeds, and only God can help us guard against sin's growth in our lives and the world.

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 From Cain's reaction in this story, why do you think God did not accept Cain's sacrifice?

Deep 2 What emotion do you have trouble controlling? How have your feelings gotten you into trouble in your life?

Deep 3 How do you react when others accuse you of doing something wrong? What is a better solution?

1. Why did God make the world?

Genesis 1

Big idea: God made the world specifically for the man

Evolution describes man as the greatest ape. It is cold and expects you to believe that we are the product of a cold, heartless chance. The Bible presents the creation as the act of a loving God. It shows God's perfect plan in which He created the ideal place for Adam and Eve to live. The first three days are days of creation in which God creates a perfect place for humanity to live. We have light, air to breathe, and land to stand on. No other place in the universe has this precise combination where a man can live. God furnished his creation during the fourth to sixth days with stars in the heavens to tell time and creatures on earth for companions. Every action is a gift of love as God creates a beautiful place for the humans who will dwell on this planet. Nothing was left to chance. It was all made for us.

Scientists want you to think that this world was made by chance. They spend billions of dollars to find another world where life can exist. To date, they have not found a place where even the simplest microbes can live. Our ventures to the moon and into space have required expensive equipment that brings the food, water, and air of earth into space so man can survive. There is no other place like this because God made it uniquely for man. Look at the order and care that God used to create this world. God creates water and air first since they are the basics of survival. Land and plants give us a home and something to eat. Time is formed by the sun while the stars and animals fill the earth to have companions and later food. Our God is a God of abundance with everything around us complex and wonderfully made. The whole world speaks of God's love as he created a paradise unlike anything else in the universe for us to live.

Only when everything was ready did God create man. He made a man out of the earth's dust and gave the new couple the keys to their new home. God called them to fill the world and to make it their own. He gave them abundant food so that they would never worry about running out of food and starving. Creation was an act of love by a caring God for us. We feel that love when we look at a beautiful sunrise or smell a flower garden. Evolution seeks to take God out of the picture. Creation puts God front and center so that we can feel the love that He has for us when we stroll in the forest or walk on the beach. We look at our hands or hear a waterfall and are amazed at how complex our bodies are and how wonderfully made. You and I are not an accident of nature. We are children of God and have received a home where God provides for us every day. Earth is a home where we can love God and be adored by Him throughout our lives.

1. Where do you go when you want to see the beauty of God's creation? Why is this place or this kind of place attractive to you?

Read Genesis 1

2. Verse 2 How is the earth described at the beginning of creation? Would this have been a pleasant place for humanity to live?

3. Verse 3 How does God create on each of the three days? How does God's act of creation show the tremendous power that the Lord has?

4. What does the Lord's power to create with just a word say about His ability to help us in our lives? How is that encouraging for us?

- 5. Verse 5 How long does it take God to create each part of His plan for the world? Why doesn't God need more time?**

- 6. Verse 5 How does this section refute the idea that the universe randomly came into being after a big bang or some other kind of event?**

- 7. Verse 6 What does God create on days 1-3? How are they foundational to the needs of man?**

- 8. Verse 6 How often do you thank the Lord for light, air, water, and the land under your feet? Why is it so easy to take these gifts for granted?**

- 9. Verse 24 What does God create on days 4-6? How do they complete the work of the first three days?**

- 10. Verse 24 How does God add beauty and quality in days 4-6 to the world that He made in the first three days? How does this show the depth of God's love for us?**

- 11. Verse 31 What is God's pronouncement on His creation? In what ways is Earth the perfect place for mankind?**

- 12. How does the complexity of our world disprove the idea of evolution?**

- 13. How does creation show the love of God for His people?**

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What part of creation do you most enjoy and would thank God for today?

Deep 2 What have you learned from the study of creation that shows your worth to God?

Deep 3 Why does it matter that God created the world instead of having it evolve haphazardly?

2 How did we get here, and why?

Gen. 1:26-2:3

Big idea: I am not an accident but am wonderfully made by God.

According to science, you and I are accidents of nature. We are just the products of a big bang that threw out random particles. The Bible starts with a different scenario as it unfolds the story of creation. It begins with an almighty and all-wise God having a plan. God planned our world and man to the minutest detail. The world has been made in all its beauty and is perfect for habitation. God then turns to the creation of man. The Bible says that we were made in God's image, so we have a conscience and have a relationship with God that the animals do not have. We also have complex bodies with hands that can swing a hammer or throw a baseball with remarkable accuracy. God then gives man his purpose. He is to be a caretaker for the world that God made for man and to have children so God has more people to love. Humankind and their world are all made according to God's plan.

The creation story is the story of why God made us. The Bible calls us to appreciate the uniqueness of our world and our bodies so that we can see the love that the Lord has for us. Nowhere else in the universe is a place so well suited for human habitation. We have materials to build houses, food to eat in abundance, and incredible places to explore. God made it especially for us with the perfect amount of oxygen, water, and gravity. Then he gave this world to man and woman to rule and to care for it. He also made us according to a unique plan. Animals live just to survive. God had something greater planned for man. We can think rather than solely rely on instinct, knowing our past and hopes for the future. Our bodies and minds can create tools and manipulate objects in a way no animal can. We are too complex to be an accident. We are a product of God's love.

Only a fool would believe in evolution. Admittedly some don't want to accept God because they don't want to obey Him. Yet, think of how haphazard evolution is. It means that you and I were thrown together by an explosion and everything in the universe somehow came together in this fantastic and complex order. Who wants to be a mistake of fate? Isn't it more comforting to think that God planned you and your world with love? The complexity of our bodies shows the wisdom and power of God as He made us the best that we could be. Instead of questioning God or arrogantly thinking that we don't need God, the wise will praise God for the world with its beauty and the bodies our Lord has given us. We are not accidents thrown together. Our loving God wonderfully makes us according to His plan. Let us thank the Lord every day for what He has done for us.

1. What is the result of planning for a task instead of just throwing things together?

Read Gen. 1:26-2:3

2. Overview. How does Genesis 1 describe the creation of the world? How does that differ from what you know about the evolution theory?

3. Verse 26 How does verse 26 show that God planned the creation of man and his world? What consequences come from God planning this world?

4. Verse 26. What does it mean for you that you were planned and not an accident?

- 5. Verse 27. What does it mean that you were created in the image of God? How is man-made in a different way than the animals?**

- 6. Verse 27. How does your creation in the image of God affect how you see yourself?**

- 7. Verse 28. What two commands did God give to man? How do these commands give man purpose in this new world?**

- 8. Verse 28. What does it mean for a man to rule the earth?**

- 9. Verse 31. What is God's assessment of the world and of the man He created?**

- 10. Verse 2:2 What did God do on the seventh day? What does that say about the work that He had done?**

- 11. Man often doubts God's creation and questions His love. Instead of questioning God, what should this passage lead you to do before the Lord?**

- 12. What have you learned from this passage about your worth to God?**

- 13. Why should you care if you were haphazardly evolved or wonderfully made by our creator?**

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What does this passage tell you about God's character and His intention for man?

Deep 2 How does your view on creation affect how you see humanity and see yourself before God?

Deep 3 How will you praise the Lord for the gifts that He has given you in creation? Why is praise important?

3. The perfect man.
Genesis 2
Big idea: Creation gets personal.

In chapter two, the focus goes from the cosmic view of creation to an intimate look at how man came into being. Creation gets personal. The Bible describes the home that God has created for man as if you are walking in the garden. Man and woman are made individually, and the command to obey and not eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is given. In chapter one, we see the power of an almighty God who creates the world in six days. In chapter two, we see a loving and gentle God who is thinking of man and speaks directly to the man about his future and needs. Chapter two answers the personal questions of how I was created and what I should do with my life. It shows God as loving and caring. We are important to Him and are not just another part of creation. The focus is on man and the love that God shows to the man in creation.

Chapter two gets personal. While many think of an almighty God who lives in the heavens and has little connection with us, here we see a God who gets intimate as He breathes into the man to give him life. Here is the foundation of our relationship with God. We are not just higher beings who are part of an incredible creation. God personally crafted men and women with care. If anyone doubts the love that God has for the men and women that He has made, they need to look here and see how God is concerned with creating a perfect place for man and the creation of a woman so that man and woman can live fulfilled lives. God's power was on display in chapter one. Here we are shown the love of God so that we can live in it all our lives and enjoy His friendship and His care.

Even with sin, God's desire for us has not changed. He wants us to live in a deep relationship of love with Him. He has provided for us, His children so that we can have a life full of blessings. The account in Genesis 2 should encourage us to draw close to the Lord. In this text, we see how He made the world ideal for us and how he gave us reasoning, skills, and intuition that animals do not have. We see how God wanted man to choose to love Him without being forced. We have a Heavenly Father who cares about us and is just longing for us to get close to Him every day of our lives. God wanted to have someone to love forever, and that is still true today. When humanity fell into sin, God sent Jesus to save us so we could be close to Him again. He is a personal God who we can love forever as He loves us.

1. What place in nature takes your breath away? What does that place have that makes it so unique to you?

Read Genesis 2

2. Verse 7. What does it mean that God breathed into a man when He created man?

3. Verse 7. What does the manner of man's creation show about his relationship with God?

4. Verse 15. What is the first task that God gives man? Why do you think it was important for the man to have this task?

5. Verse 15. Why is work a good thing for mankind? How does work bring meaning to life?

6. Verse 17. Which plant does God forbid the man to eat? What is the penalty if he eats the plant?

7. Verse 17. Why do you think God created a forbidden plant and place it near man?

8. Verse 18. What was one thing that was not good about creation on the sixth day? How does God fix the situation?

9. How are man and wife helpers for each other? What would life be missing if there were not two sexes?

10. Verse 22 How is the woman formed in a way that is different from the man? Why not make her from the dust like Adam was?

11. Verse 24 What is God's desire for man and woman in marriage?

12. What does it mean that husband and wife are one flesh? How does that express itself in marriage?

13. As you read chapter 2, what do you think God's expectations were for man and woman?

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What do you think it would be like to have lived in the garden as Adam and Eve did? What is one thing that you would like to have now?

Deep 2 If you are married, how does your spouse complete you and bring you the fulfillment you would not have if you were alone?

Deep 3 How has God shown personal attention and love to you in your life? What would you gain by having a deeper and more intimate relationship with God?

4 The Technique of Temptation

Gen. 3:1-13

Big idea: Man is to blame for sin, and God is the cure for it.

He came in disguise and caught Eve unaware. With three short sentences, Satan brings down her defenses and leads her to do the very thing that God had commanded them not to do. He begins by questioning God's motives and leading her to doubt God. The Devil continues with a blatant lie so that she doubts what God has said. Finally, he promises that she will be like God. The temptation is too much, and she eats the forbidden fruit. Death has now entered the world and will be the fate of all the world. When we yield to temptation, it often causes us to have a realization that we have sinned. Sin opened their eyes, and they desire to run from God, yet God is the only one who can save them. They try to cover their sin with fig leaves, but only God can cover the evil that they have committed. God is the solution and not the problem with sin.

Death is all around us, and many blame God. We grieve when a loved one dies and fear the grave as we are getting old. We are bothered by the evil in the world that we see around us. If God is perfect and made an ideal world, why is there so much sin and death? We struggle with the answer and often conclude that God must not be so perfect or not exist at all. Our temptation is to abandon God and run and hide from the evil around us and the death that stalks us till the end of life. Genesis 3 provides the answer to our questions of how sin and death came into the world. The fault is not God's but is the fault of man. We accepted Satan's lies about God and our future as equals to God. We doubted the love and wisdom of God and thought that we could be just like God. In the end, disobedience has a high cost. Sin alienates us from God and each other. We try to blame others for our faults and hide from God. Mankind still causes a great deal of his and her pain. God comes to us and offers to help. God has the solution to the sin that we commit every day as fallen people.

The wise will run to God and not from Him. Some look for new technologies that will freeze them until there is a cure or create a pill that will prolong life. Trustworthy solutions begin with an admission that we have sinned. We have abandoned God and destroyed the paradise that He created for us. Our faults and the problems of an imperfect world are painful reminders of the fall of Adam and Eve. We could wonder what life would have been like if they had never sinned, but that doesn't help us. Fortunately, God comes to us because we can never go to Him. He comes with love and answers to the problem of sin in our lives. Instead of blaming others, we need to confess our sin to our loving God so that He can take away the transgression with the cross of Jesus. Man is the cause of pain in the world. God is the answer to our suffering and our sin. We destroyed His perfect world, yet He is still here helping us and bringing us forgiveness.

1. What is one food that always tempts you?

Read Gen. 3:1-13

2. Verse 1. What is the question that Satan raises about God? How does the question attack God's character?

3. Verse 1. What doubts do people have about God today? How do their doubts destroy their relationship with God?

- 4. Verse 4. What blatant lie does Satan tell Eve? What is he trying to convince her is true?**

- 5. Verse 4 What lies does Satan tell people to convince them that bad is good? How do you protect yourself from such lies?**

- 6. Verse 5. What promise does Satan give to lure Eve into disobeying God? What kernel of truth is in the false promise?**

- 7. Verse 5. What promises does Satan make to get people to do evil things today? How is half a truth just as bad as a total lie?**

- 8. Verse 7. What is the result of mankind's sin? What is man's solution to immorality?**

- 9. Verse 9. Why does God have to come to man to bring healing? What did man fear, and what did God bring?**

- 10. Why is it wise to seek God when we feel guilty instead of running from Him?**

- 11. Verse 12-13. What do Adam and Eve say when God asks them about their sin? Does this take away sin from humankind?**

- 12. How does sin affect the relationships that we have in marriage, family, and friendships? What options do we have that Adam and Eve didn't know of in the garden?**

- 13. Who is to blame for sin? How is God the only one who can help?**

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 What is the problem with knowing good and evil? What do you think it was like to know only good?

Deep 2 Why are we so attracted to all the things that God or others have forbidden?

Deep 3 What is the worst thing about disobeying God for you? Is it guilt, shame, broken relationships, or something else?

5 Consequences of the fall.

Genesis 3:14-24

Big idea: Mankind has paid a hefty price for their sin.

Some things belong to the Lord alone. Such was the tree in the midst of the garden. Man and woman ate its fruit in disobedience to the direct command of the Lord. In doing so, they lost their purpose for existing. They wanted to become like God, and it cost them the plan that the Lord had in mind for them in the garden. There were also consequences to such rebellion. Adam and Eve strained the relationship between man and God and the relationships between man and woman and man and God's creation. The very essence of man and woman was twisted and made painful. The joy that women would have in having children would now be a painful event. The work that God had given humanity would be cursed and no longer be a joy as well. Finally, death would be their end. God had made them lovingly out of the dust, and they would become nothing more than dirt when life ended. It would only be in God's promise that they would find hope in the tragedy of their sin.

People still want to be the gods of their world and control what only God commands. They take life and their future into their own hands and lose the paradise that God had planned for them. Ambition and aspirations go wrong. We desire not to be the best person we can be as we lean on the Lord for His help and wisdom but conceive of being in charge of our world. We ignore God's Word and seek to advance our life at the cost of others. The consequences of greed, anger, and lust are often swift and brutal. Businesses are lost, and marriages go up in flames. We hurt ourselves and the people around us. We push forward with our plan instead of living according to the purpose of the Lord for our lives. We stumble through life instead of trusting Him to bring us a life of joy and peace. We seek what we will never find and blaze a path of pain and suffering for ourselves and others until we ultimately die with nothing to show for our struggles but a trail of destruction.

Beware of those who will call evil good and good evil. Like the serpent in the garden, the world will try to convince us that the only thing that matters is what is good for us. In truth, there are moral standards laid out in the scripture that are true for all people. What feels right may not be best. What is right is what is in God's word, and those who don't follow the Lord's ways will face the consequences of abandoning God's plan. Yet, there is hope for those who have drifted from God's ways if they will return to the Lord and seek His mercy. God promised a messiah here to Adam and Eve. He is Jesus, our savior who will crush the head of Satan through the cross. Life will not be easy as we struggle with Satan and his wily ways, but God gives victory to those who seek Him and follow His ways. The consequences of sin do not have to be deadly.

1. What is one thing that Adam and Eve had in paradise that you wished humanity still had?

Read Genesis 3:14-24

2. Verse 14-5. What is the punishment for the serpent? How is this punishment fitting for one who the text describes as crafty (Gen. 3:1)

3. Verse 15. What comes as good news for humankind? Who are the offspring of Satan that God is talking about in this verse?

4. Verse 16 What is the punishment for Eve? How does this punishment hit at her most important relationships?

5. Verse 17 What is the punishment for Adam? How does this punishment relate to the task that God gave to man and woman in Genesis 2:15?

6. Verse 17. How has the world changed because of mankind's sin? Why is this hardship a natural consequence of sin entering the world?

7. Verse 19 What is the final penalty for disobeying God? How far-reaching in the results of man's sin?

8. Verse 19. How is the world affected by man's sin? Why is the effect so significant?

9. Verse 21. What does God provide the couple to cover their nakedness? What is the cost of their sin to others?

10. How does man try to cover his sin today? What is the only effective way to cover sin?

11. Verse 22-23 What is God's concern now that man has become sinful? What is God's solution, and what does it say about the future of humanity?

12. Mankind continues to try to live longer and longer. What do you think it would be like if a man or woman were to live forever in his sinful state?

13. What does this chapter teach us about the effects unleashed by Adam and Eve's first sin?

For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 In verses 14-19, is God punishing us, just listing the consequences that come with sin or doing both? Why must He share these words with them rather than just letting them find out the effects for themselves?

Deep 2 What sins are you most ashamed of in your life? How have you tried to cover them, and what was the effect? Why do you need to seek God's mercy if the shame is ever going to be taken away?

Deep 3 What in this chapter brings you hope? How does God show in this chapter that He still loves man and woman despite their sin?

6. Murder. **Genesis 4:1-16**

Big idea: Sin spreads like weeds without forgiveness

One often wonders how the world became so sinful. When Adam and Eve ate one forbidden fruit, it didn't seem so bad. Sin, however, spread like wildfire over just a few decades since the fall of man. Sadly, we see that sin spreads like weeds. One sin often leads to another, and Satan is always busy teaching humanity how to sin in new and exciting ways. For Cain, it began with an angry thought. His pride was hurt because God accepted Abel's sacrifice rather than his. Temptation didn't have to be spoken by the serpent. This anger welled up from inside Cain, and he was propelled into murder. He had seen animals sacrificed to God. Now, Cain sacrificed his brother on the altar of his pride. God confronts Cain with his sin, but he is more concerned with himself than with what he had done to his brother. God's punishment is swift and just. As God banishes Cain from the family, Adam and Eve lose two children to this horrible sin.

Sin is one thing that man does well. Like a patch of weeds, wickedness has moved through the whole garden of man's existence. No part of this world is free from sin and its effects. Humanity often tries to excuse sin or hide sin as our forefather and mother did in the garden. It doesn't work, and sin soon traps man in sin. Sadly, we have become so sinful that no one has to teach us to sin like the serpent showed Eve. Instead, sin wells up in us with a thought. It might be anger, lust, or a lie. Often it is just our emotions ruling over us instead of common sense. We lash out in a moment, and our sins are released like Abel's blood lying on the ground before our feet. Sadly, we often compound one sin with others to cover up our sins or try to make things better. Our concern is to protect ourselves rather than make amends for what we have done. God's punishment is still swift, and often we face terrible consequences that may haunt us and those we love for the rest of our lives.

If we are not careful, sin will ruin our lives. God tries to warn Cain that his anger may lead to wickedness. It was a teachable moment, but Cain doesn't listen. God reaches out to us in those moments of anger or temptation to heal our wayward heart. If we listen to God, we nip sin in the bud, and we avoid the pain and consequences. Listening to the word of God in scripture can guard our hearts and stop the spread of sin in our lives. It may extinguish the emotions that lead us into sin and help us to find satisfaction in life. Often we purposely don't listen to God. We might appeal to God after the sin to help us with the consequences that have destroyed us. Sadly, that appeal is still more about our pain and sin's effects than about the lives that we have ruined. True repentance opens the way for a renewal of life. One wonders what would have happened if Cain had repented instead of just complaining about God's justice. Ours is a God of forgiveness who gives second chances. True repentance when we do sin opens the future and lets God rebuild a broken life.

1. How well did you get along with your brothers and sisters? Was there ever a time that they made you upset?

Read Genesis 4:1-16

2. Verse 2. What was the calling of each of the two sons? Why is it necessary for every person to have a calling?

3. Verse 5. Where does sin begin for Cain? What do his thoughts show about his relationship with God and his self-worth?

4. Verse 5. How does Cain's story show us the wisdom of guarding our thoughts and emotions?

5. Verse 7. How does God intervene with Cain to help him at this time of temptation? What is the substance of the warning that God gives?

6. Verse 7. How does God speak to us to help us in temptation? What advantages do we gain by listening to the Lord in those times?

7. Verse 8. What do the thoughts lead Cain to do? Is this deliberate or just a fit of passion?

8. Verse 8. How do sinful thoughts lead to wicked actions? What makes us so vulnerable to our emotions?

9. Verse 9. When questioned by God, how does Cain respond? What opportunity does Cain miss, and what does it show about his feelings?

10. What is the right thing to do when we sin? Why is that often so difficult for us to do?

11. Verse 13. What is Cain's response to God's punishment? What is missing from the reaction?

12. What can we learn from Cain's reaction? How does Cain make matters worse?

13. How can sin destroy the rest of life if we continue in anger and do not repent?

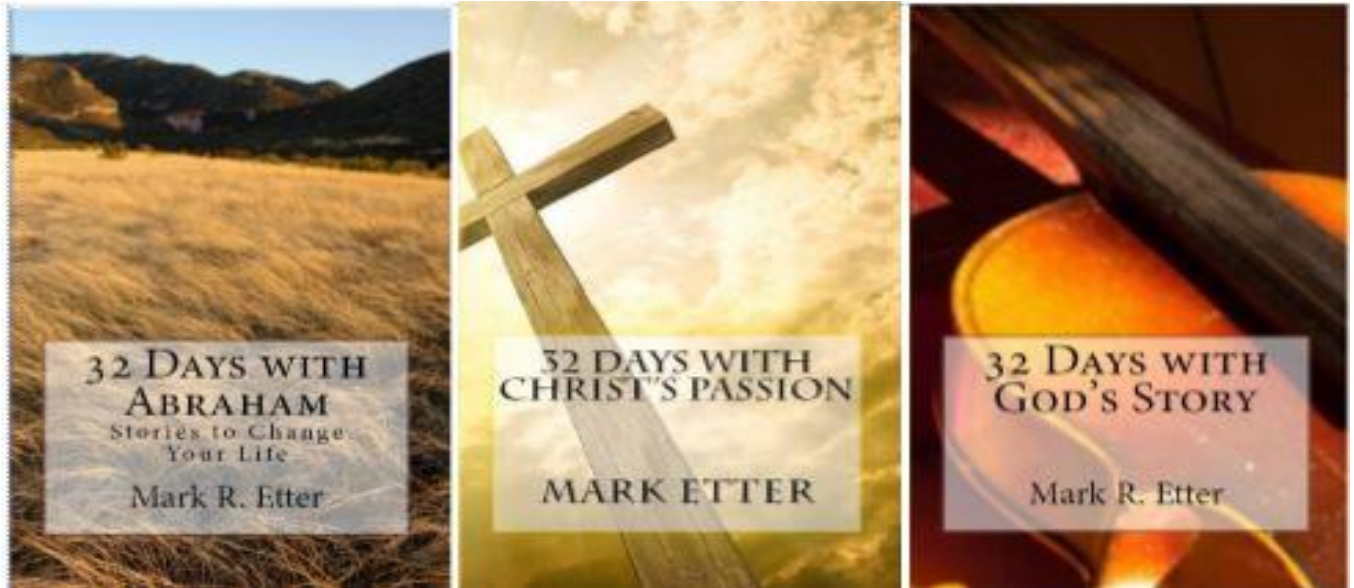
For now or later - taking the next step.

Deep 1 From Cain's reaction in this story, why do you think God did not accept Cain's sacrifice?

Deep 2 What emotion do you have trouble controlling? How have your feelings gotten you into trouble in your life?

Deep 3 How do you react when others accuse you of doing something wrong? What is a better solution?

Also Available from Rev. Mark Etter



32 devotions to grow your faith and 12 reproducible Bible studies to share in your church or small group available from Higher Ground Books and Media at <https://www.highergroundbooksandmedia.com/shop>

These three books are designed to be a tool that brings you closer to Christ. Each book has 32 devotions with depth to help you dig below the surface and understand the context. Each devotion is based on a single story and lays out the events in an organized way to help you comprehend the deeper meanings in the passage and then apply them to your life. Each book also includes twelve bible studies that are meant to be shared. You can copy the student guides for your church or small group bible studies. The student guides are formatted for easy reproduction. Each Bible study is connected to one of the devotions and to a leader's guide so that you can feel confident leading others to understand God's word. The hope is that you enjoy the book with its devotions and studies and let the Holy Spirit change your life through them. God is ready to sit down with you through these studies and change your life.

About the author

Rev. Mark Etter has been a pastor for over thirty-five years and is currently the pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Erlanger, KY. Rev. Etter has published several books of Adult Bible studies and numerous devotions and youth studies with Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. He has been active in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as an LWML counselor, evangelism chairman, coach for pastors, and circuit counselor. He and his wife, Joan, have three grown children and two grandchildren.

Did you know?

Here are seven questions that are answered in this study. The page and question number in this study are given after each question.

1. How long does it take for God to create each part of His plan for the world? Why doesn't God need more time? (Page 6, Question 5)
2. How does creation show the love of God for His people? (Page 8, Question 13)
3. What does it mean that you were created in the image of God? How is man made in a different way than the animals? (Page 10, Question 5)
4. Why do you think that God created a forbidden plan and placed it near man? (Page 14, Question 7)
5. Why is it wise to seek God when we feel guilty instead of running from Him? (Page 19, Question 10)
6. What is God's concern now that man has become sinful? What is God's solution and what does it say about humanity? (Page 24, Question 11)
7. How does God speak to us to help us in times of temptation? What advantages do we gain by listening to the Lord in those times? (Page 26, Question 6)

Studies are reproducible so that only one copy of the study is needed by the class or small group. You have flexibility when the class you thought was going to be 15 suddenly becomes 25. You are free to copy and distribute the two-page student guides for a large formal class or the four-page leader's guide for a small group. The focus is to get deep into the text and apply the lessons to your life. Each of the six chapters contains an introduction to help you get the big picture and is followed by thirteen questions to help you dig into the truth. Look for the other studies in the series and may the Lord bless your time in the word.