



Week of March 13
Paradise Lost¹

Overview:

At some point in our lives, we have to wonder: Why are we here? How did all of this come to be? What are the origins of our universe, our story, and our purpose? In the first eleven chapters of the Genesis, we see a cosmic story unfolding—an epic narrative—of God shaping a good and meaningful world, what went wrong, and how God is redeeming the mess, restoring us to something good. The next several weeks, we will explore new ways to study this narrative and learn how to apply those tools to all of Scripture.

Group Objectives:

- Reflect on this past Sunday’s message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- We live in a broken world since sin entered the Garden of Eden. Consider how we are called as Christ followers to deal with our sin, and the sins of others.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We encounter the Father daily.* God the Father speaks to us through the Bible and we commune with him through prayer.

Conversation Starters:

- What rituals or traditions mark the beginning of spring for you?
- Do you have a favorite season? Why is it your favorite?

Read and Reflect: Bible Study Discussion

Genesis 2 ends with man and woman, as one flesh, each other’s corresponding strength, naked and unashamed. Their relationship with God is perfect, they have work and responsibility, and are unaware of evil. By the end of Genesis 3 what has been established is undone. They are separated from God; their relationship includes conflict and pain; and sin and death have entered the world. The temptation of the woman, her decision to eat the fruit, and the man’s decision to partake set a pattern repeated throughout the history of humanity. Instantly, both realize they are naked and ashamed, and hide from God. In the Ancient Near East narratives, this would mark the end of the story. But God makes a way for Adam and Eve, and all of us, to not be physically separated from God for eternity. Consequences are assigned for the man and woman; the tempter (serpent) and ground are cursed. God “sends” Adam and Eve from the Garden, covers their nakedness, and humanity’s redemption story begins.

¹ This week’s lesson was written by Jackie O’Dell and edited by Dawn Gentry.

- **Read Genesis 3:1-20**
 - *In Gen 3:1, the tempter (serpent) craftily changes what God said. Eve's response (v 2-3) is also inconsistent with what God said.*
 - What were the changes (see Gen 2:16 -17)? Why is this important to the story of sin entering the world?
 - *Review Gen 3:6; 1 John 2:16; Mt 4:1-11.*
 - What patterns do you see the tempter using? How does recognizing this pattern help you to resist? What is your strategy for resisting temptation?
 - *When Adam and the woman realize they are naked, they cover themselves with fig leaves and hide. What are some ways we "cover and hide" our sins today?*
 - *Summarize (v. 14-19) the curse God gave the serpent and the ground. Summarize the consequences God passed on the woman (v. 16) and the man (v. 17-19).*
 - How do you see these consequences evidenced in our world today?
 - Do you believe we are "bound" to these consequences? Or that we can/should live in ways that "overcome" these consequences? Explain your reasoning.²
- **Read Genesis 3: 21 – 24 and Romans 5: 12 – 20**
 - *The last part of Genesis shows God mercifully covering Adam and Eve's nakedness and shame. Why is it significant that an animal skin was used? How does this relate to God's redemption story of all humanity?³*
 - *Read Romans 5:12-20. Contrast the life of Adam with the life of Christ. How does knowing you are forgiven and righteous before God affect your attitudes and actions daily?*

Respond and Pray

- What stood out to you from Genesis 3 that you did not see before?
- JD Greear said, "Cover your sin and God will expose it; expose it, and God will cover it."⁴ How does this encourage or challenge you today?
- Consider breaking into smaller groups for a time of confession.
 - Ask God to privately expose any sin
 - Repent and accept God's forgiveness
 - Ask for strength and help in resisting future temptation
 - Spend time in prayer thanking God for his mercy, grace, and the gift of His Son
 - Share any personal prayer concerns.
- Consider sharing this prayer of confession aloud as a group:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

For further study:

- Bible Project Video – *Genesis 1 – 11*. Humanity's downward spiral into sin, restoration, and redemption. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-1-11/>
- Bible Project Video – *The Tree of Life* <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/tree-of-life/>
- Listen to the song *Out of Hiding* by Steffany Gretzinger & Amanda Cook <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFkDqQtfs0w>

Additional resources, including books, videos, and podcasts, are found at cccomaha.org/origins

² Some suggest that v16 ('he shall rule over you') is a creation-bound, long-term requirement for marriages, but I would suggest that if we use that line of reasoning, men would be required to farm, and women would be required to give birth without pain relievers.

³ Its significance may be because it is the first time blood is spilled (a blood sacrifice) to cover sin. The climax in God's redemption story is when Christ died on the cross for our sins.

⁴ <https://churchleaders.com/worship/worship-articles/176569-jd-greear-fruits-of-true-forgiveness.html>