



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: Facing Our Stuff

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Message Title: Facing Dependence Pt. 2

Release Date: Wednesday 11/27/19

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (*NASB, Gen. 3:6-7)

Genesis 2 ends with the statement, “They were both naked and unashamed.” It’s beautiful. But now suddenly, we have the shame factor. And they know they’ve been had.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (vs. 8-9)

I love that question. The question was not, “What have you done?” which is about behavior. The question was “Where are you?” which is about relationship.

We started this series with a look at the story of the Prodigal Son. The father of the Prodigal Son represents the heart of God. And that was his question; that was his longing. It wasn’t so much about what his son had done; it was the longing to restore the relationship. I’m going to guess every morning he got up and thought, “Where are you, and when are you coming home?” It’s exactly the question God asked. Even though it is sin, which is offensive to God, what breaks His heart is the loss of relationship. That’s what He wants.

He said I heard the sound of You in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so, I hid myself. And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” And the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Vs. 10-13)

There’s no doubt Adam and Eve know they’ve been had. What they found on the other side of that decision was not more, it was less. It was not freedom, it was bondage. When I read through this part of the text, I find the three things that define their behavior, to be three of the things that I see consistently defined in people who choose to be their own god - people that choose to depend upon themselves, rather than God.

The first is hiding. The first thing they did was they hid. I find people who choose to become their own god, they're always hiding. They're hiding from other people that might find out, they're hiding from God, and of course, we hide from God in lots of different ways. We hide from God, we hide from life, through our addictions: through alcohol, drugs, pornography, whatever it is. It's an escape, or hiding, because we can't face it. We looked in the mirror one day and realized, "You know I just read my resume, I'm not up to the task. I've decided to be my own god and I'm not adequate." So, we escape with drugs and alcohol and pornography and whatever else. We hide behind careers, success and money and bank accounts. We become dependent on them. We hide intellectually. There's a lot of people who would say they have intellectual reasons why they don't believe in God, intellectual reasons why they won't surrender their life to Jesus. That's not an intellectual problem; there are answers to all those questions. It's just a way of hiding.

The second thing that I see in this text, that seems to be so common, is fear. Adam says, "We were afraid." People that choose to be their own god, that depend upon themselves, are characterized by fear and anxiety. I heard the other day that there are now over 30 medications on the market to deal with fear and anxiety in our culture. We are a fear filled culture. I would tell you this, if you have made the choice to be your own god, to depend upon yourself to run your own life, you have every reason to be fearful. You should be anxious, because you are totally inadequate for that job.

The third one I noticed in the text, and I see it in people all the time, is blame. People that are choosing to be their own god, it's never their fault. It's everybody else's fault. It's the boss's fault. It's the government's fault. It's this person's fault, it's that person's fault, but it's never their fault. It's part of the deal. God comes to Adam and says, "Adam what's the deal here?" And Adam says, "Well, it's not really my fault. It's that woman." As a matter of fact, he came really close to saying, "God it's that woman YOU gave me. And if you wouldn't have given me a defective woman, this never would have happened." [Laughter] That's right on the border of saying that. People that choose to go down this path always blame everybody else, but it's never their fault. At least Eve had the courage to say, "I've been had. I was deceived and I ate it."

The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field, on your belly will you go, and dust will you eat, all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel. (vs. 14-15)

We believe that Genesis 3:15 is the first hint that God is making a promise, that God will do what is necessary, that once again brings life out of death. He is in essence saying to the serpent, "If you think you've won, you are sadly mistaken. You may have won Round One, but in the end, I will win." The promise is, that this will come through the seed of a woman. That promise will be developed and ultimately fulfilled in the New Testament. There's a statement that the serpent will "bruise him on the heel," but he will crush his head.

Verse 16:

To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. Then to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you saying, "You shall not eat from it,

Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it, all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (vs.16-19)

Now we talked about this section. Often it is referred to as the curse to the man and a curse to the woman. But I find that word “curse” nowhere in the text here. I don’t think it is a curse. I think there’s a curse to the serpent, and a curse to the ground. But I think to Adam and Eve, to men and women, there are consequences, but the consequences are not there as punishment. The consequences are there for a very specific purpose. In essence, what is being said is, to the woman in conception to childbirth, and to man, in sustaining of life, there’s going to be pain, and it’s going to be hard. And we ask ourselves, you know, why are those consequences highlighted? And I think the answer is because of the imagery, from the conception of life, to the birth of life, to the sustaining of life, God has said “I’m going to make it really hard.” Why is he doing that, to punish us? No. I think it’s out of His grace and mercy. He said, “Because you were people made in My image, the greatest temptation is to think you can be God. You can be your own savior. You can run your own show. And if you do that, you will miss the salvation that I’ve promised. So I’m going to make life really hard to knock this idea out of you, so that you will recognize that you’re not God, and you do need a Savior, or you have no hope to make it back to Genesis 2, what God has always wanted for people made in His image.

We mentioned earlier that people who choose to be their own god have a tendency to hide. One of the ways people hide all the time is in religion. Religion is a great place to hide. Religion gives the appearance that I am kind of interested in God, but all the while maintaining the ability to be my own god. Religion carries the idea that once a week, I visit God at church, but the rest of the week, I am in charge. The rest of the week I am running my own show. I am really still my own god. Religion also convinces us that we can be our own savior. All you have to do is keep these rules, all you have to do is jump through these hoops, all you have to do is these religious behaviors, and you can be your own savior. Religion is a great place to hide. Religion is also a way of saying, “I can be my own god. I can save myself.” This poor temptation to believe we can be our own god is what prevents people from receiving God’s gift of salvation. Because God loves us, he uses the circumstances of life to bring us to our knees, to say, “I need help.” Adam and Eve believed.

You see it in Verse 20:

Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (vs. 20-21)

Now the name Eve means “mother of the living.” Adam and Eve had just heard that because of their sin, death now enters the picture. So why doesn’t Adam name Eve “mother of the dying.” And the answer is because Adam understood the promise that God made in Genesis 3:15. God made a promise that he would do what was necessary to once again bring life out of death. Adam’s statement of faith was in naming Eve mother of the living. That was his way of saying, “I believe God, you tell the truth.” It was a statement of faith.

It is followed in verse 21 with a reminder that it was necessary to shed the blood of these animals that cover the shame of their sin; which again is just beginning to create a picture of how God would provide this promised salvation. We only need to go as far as Genesis Chapter 15, and we

can clearly understand that this seed of a woman, meaning a man, who would shed His blood to cover our sin, was none other than God in the flesh. Genesis 15 tells us that it would be God himself who would somehow become a man. And it would be His blood that would be shed in order to cover our sins, in order that we might know forgiveness and the relationship be restored. And of course, we understand that Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of this promise. It's why on the cross Jesus said, 'Today you shall be with me in Genesis Chapter 2 - in Paradise.' That's what the plan has always been. It's what God has always wanted for people made in His image. The lie of the enemy is, that God is restrictive. He's not as good as you think He is. And if you were to take charge of your own life, if you were to be your own god and call your own shots, certainly that's freedom; certainly, that's more.

Temptation is always the invitation to meet a legitimate need through illegitimate means. It is what it always is. God has made you with legitimate needs and desires, and God has promised in His own way to fulfill those needs and desires. But if you don't really trust Him, if you don't really think He's good, if you don't really think He's going to come through, then you take matters into your own hands: "I'll do it myself". Every time we give in to temptation, what we are ultimately saying is, "God I don't think you can be trusted on this one. I don't really think you are that good. I don't really think you are going to come through. So, I think I better take matters into my own hands." The temptation is always to meet a legitimate need, but through illegitimate means.

Every single one of us, we're either going to depend on God, or we're going to depend upon ourselves. There's really no middle ground there. The offer the enemy makes is, if you choose to be your own god and depend upon yourself, that means there's more. That's freedom. It's everything you are looking for. But when you get on the other side of that decision, you're going to know you've been had. Every person has the God given opportunity to choose to be your own god, run your own show. But I've got to tell you, if that's your choice, you have resigned yourself to be stuck in the enemy's web, and there you will be destroyed.

Father, we are thankful that you are a God of unimaginable grace, a God who just keeps pursuing us because you love us. You've made it possible through Jesus' death on the cross to have a broken relationship restored, Lord, that we can be reconciled back to you, Lord, that we can be with you forever in Paradise, everything you ever wanted for us. Lord, the one thing that is going to keep every person from receiving this gift, is this deceptive lie that we can do it ourselves; that if we take charge of our own lives that there will be more. Lord, it is the very lie that will ultimately destroy us. So my prayer is that we would surrender, that we would realize that more is always found in You, that you are the God of generosity, Lord, that we would trust your goodness and surrender our lives to You each day, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Cara: Wow. Lots of good points to cover in today's message. Bryan, we need to start with a quick review of yesterday's teaching though, I think. The three lies that Satan uses on us over and over again.

Bryan: Yeah, so really important. One is, God's not as good as you think He is, so He's more restrictive than He is generous. Number two, you can be like God. You decide what's right and wrong, and the implication is, life will be better if you do that. And the third is, you surely will not die. There are no real consequences to sin.

Arnie: Bryan, it's one thing to give into temptation, but it's another thing to be caught, and right away, Adam and Eve even tried to hide from God. Hiding says that you don't really want to deal with your problem, doesn't it?

Bryan: Right. So, really important to see the first thing Adam and Eve do is they hide, and that's just so common today. It's about shame. It's about guilt, it's about embarrassment, it's about ego, it's about avoidance. But it's not good.

Arnie: Saying you're sorry without really meaning it. That's sin management, isn't it?

Bryan: I'd say it's different, but it's similar. So, maybe think of it in order is, first we hide, and then when we're discovered, then it's the "sorry" cycle. So, hiding includes ignoring, excusing, blaming. Then when we're busted, then we're sorry. There's an emotional response. We try to manage the consequences. We're embarrassed and that's all a form of sin management, managing the sin and managing the consequences.

Cara: Bryan, like you said, we're either going to depend on God or we're going to depend on ourselves. No middle ground there. But it seems like when we depend on ourselves, that's when we also start seeing a dependence on other things, like drugs and alcohol, money, status. But I heard you mention that's how we hide today then.

Bryan: Yeah, so it is how we hide today, and the things that we use to hide from God, they don't necessarily have to be bad things. It's like Ecclesiastes - they're just not things that ultimately will satisfy. They're things we're using to replace God. So, I think it's fascinating in Genesis that there's such an emphasis on the trees. In Genesis One, they're pleasurable to look at and eat from. They just seem to be such a focus. And then you get to Chapter Three and when Adam and Eve sin, they're hiding in the trees. And I think there's an imagery, that we take the very things that God gave us out of his goodness to give us pleasure, and we end up hiding in those things to avoid God. So, if you think about it, people do that all the time.

Cara: That's powerful. Knowing the enemy stalks, us and looks for those times when we're vulnerable, we really have to look out for one another. It's important being part of that family of Christ, isn't it?

Bryan: Yeah. Yeah. Very important. So, hiding is the tendency. Hiding ends up in isolation. Sin for sure makes us isolate and then we're much easier to deceive, and often just kind of get in this spiral that ends in destruction. So, it's a complicated world. The fact is, your blind spots might be different than my blind spots. So together, we can help one another.

Arnie: I love that we're talking about depending on God on a daily basis. That's the whole idea behind our discipleship app, goTandem, and we want you to try it. This discipleship app is something that reaches generations younger than us, but it's very effective. Right now, the Bible content in goTandem has been translated into 16 different languages and that's critical because we're actually reaching people with God's Word, in places where the Bible is banned, and it's

such a powerful tool. And right now, as we speak, we're working on developing this discipleship tool in a parent-child version.

Cara: Well, I use the app myself and I use it to depend on God throughout the day, at times of the day when I feel like I need something, a little spiritual kick in the pants. And then also too, I use it to evangelize people. I'll show them how to download it and help them get set up with it. But Arnie, can you just talk briefly about a good age to start your kids on goTandem?

Arnie: I think the best age is probably 13, maybe younger, but 13 seems to be a good age. Most kids have their own smartphone by then, and we have found that it's equally effective for believers. But nonbelievers as well, especially the younger ones, will actually use the app, even if they don't believe in Jesus, which stumps us as researchers, but it's pretty cool.

Cara: Well, I know this age for kids, in that age range you're talking about, is when they start wondering what they think for themselves, versus what their parents have been telling them to believe.

Arnie: It's interesting to note too, that the biggest users of our discipleship app are, I call them kids, from 18 to 24, and that's the group that's walking away from their faith, so it's kind of hitting home.

Cara: I think everyone should give it a try, download it from your app store or go to goTandem dot com.