



WEEK THREE: Genesis 3:1-8

Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

Life Groups are a critical ministry of our life together at Gymea Baptist Church where we want everyone to find their place in God's family and in God's mission. These resources are produced each Monday as a companion to the sermon series. Choosing to use these resources facilitates our sense of community as we share together around common themes and passages.

Each week's resource includes a brief overview of the sermon series and of the sermon (which can be accessed on GBC's YouTube channel or via your favourite podcast platform), along with a series of activities to do together. Don't forget that The Big Ill podcast comes out mid-week as another companion to the sermon.

These range from questions to ask, prayers to pray, practices to try, and biblical passages to read (usually in the time between Life Group meetings). Feel free to pick and choose what will work well for your group – you don't have to do everything!

We also include additional things that we are encouraging our Life Group leaders, as leaders of GBC, to be sharing with your groups. These include reflecting on a particular mission commitment of GBC, promoting and praying for GBC initiatives, and celebrating what God is doing in and through our community of faith.

If you have feedback on these resources please contact Nicole Jones at LifeGroups@gymeabaptist.org.au

Origin Story – Genesis 1-11: A Brief Introduction

The stories, genealogies, and poems in Genesis 1-11 form a prologue of sorts to the main action of Genesis (and the entire Bible) that begins with the call of Abraham. Prologues are important *to* the story but are not *the* story. The things we learn in these chapters orient us inside the story that unfolds.

These origin stories are also the broadest introduction to Jesus. It is the story of *all* humanity that we encounter in these texts. For those who are beginning to explore faith this is a wonderful on-ramp to the story.

Sermon Outline: Key Text(s): Genesis 3:1-8

Genesis 1-11 functions like a prologue to the action of the Bible that begins in earnest in Genesis 12. Prologue are important *to* the story but are not *the* story. Our text this week is an excellent illustration of that. Known as The Fall, this text is important to the story in that it introduces the tension that drives the narrative; namely the disobedience of humanity and its consequences. However, it is not *the* story and is rarely referred to in the rest of the Old

Testament. Because it is so important to the story we often read later revelation back into it. The best example of this tendency is the identity of the serpent. The serpent is often/usually identified as Satan and while the action of Genesis 3 certainly fits his description as a deceiver, the emphasis in the text is actually on the creatureliness of the serpent. He is one of the wild animals that the Lord God created and over which the man and woman were to rule as God's image-bearers and from whom no suitable helper for humanity was found. The move is not from God to another supernatural being, but away from the Creator towards the creation!

While the historicity of this text is assumed elsewhere in Scripture it may be beneficial to see this as a parable; an analogy of sorts that means to depict real events in a "fictional" way (See 2 Samuel 12:1-7 for a parable that depicts real events.). In other words, this story, that has certain parallels with other ancient near eastern literature, is to be read not as straight history, but as a story that describes historical events.

The narrative begins with a description of the serpent; a rare occurrence in Scripture. He is described as "crafty" which is a wisdom term with a shadow (see Job 15:5) and there is a curious play on words with the word for "crafty" sounding like the word for "naked" in the previous verse (some English version try to capture this with the words "nude" and "shrewd"). This will come back into scope later in the story.

The other thing to note is that Adam is present throughout (the pronouns are plural) and the Lord God is absent. He is not with the first couple and is also absent from the conversation where the relational name of God – Lord – is dropped.

The serpent begins by misrepresenting God's prohibition, expanding it to include every tree in the garden. The woman corrects the serpent, affirming that they are free to eat from all the trees in the garden, except the tree in the middle of the garden. However, she subtly misrepresents the prohibition as well, expanding it to include touching it.

And the serpent strikes. He contradicts God's word and defames his character. He denies that they will die and then suggests that the prohibition is not for their good, but for God's good. God, he suggest, is holding out on them. If they were to eat from the tree their eyes would be opened and they would become like God.

The woman (and the man, who is still silent) looks and sees that the fruit is, among other things, desirable for gaining wisdom and takes it. This reference to wisdom suggests what the knowledge of good and evil is – moral autonomy. This refers to the ability to determine what is good and evil, what is true and false, what is beneficial and what is not. It is self-determination to succeed in life (which is what wisdom was all about; life skill).

She takes some and eats. She gives some to her husband who eats.

And the eyes of both of them are opened – and we assume, they have gained moral autonomy and the ability to self-determine – but they do not become like God or not in the way they thought. The first thing they "know" is that they are naked. And here we have the first consequence of their disobedience; a disruption of their self-view and of their relationship with each other. Ashamed, they sew together fig leaves and then, when they hear the Lord God walking in the garden, they hide from him. It is noteworthy that the first place that their disobedience is felt is in their sexuality; this is a theme in the Old Testament.

Walter Brueggemann points out that the prohibition has been violated, the permission perverted, and the vocation neglected. They have violated the good boundary the Lord God had put in place, they have perverted the wide permission as not being enough for them, and they have neglected their work in the garden. There is no time for that anymore; they must seek to cover themselves and to seek cover from God.

It is a tragic scene that will reverberate throughout the story.

It is also, in a way, not just their story, but ours. We too question the boundaries God puts in place – seeing them as restrictive. We too want more than God's already generous permission and provision. We too neglect our vocation and pursue our own ends.

This is our origin story.

Questions to Ask

NOTE: The questions below are arranged into two sets. The first three are very open, allowing for wide exploration and discussion. The second set are more specifically tied to the sermon. Use one, both, or a mix of the two depending on your group.

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What questions do you have about this text? [If you meet prior to Wednesday, you can access the Big III question portal and ask some of these questions there.]
3. What might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to do in response?
4. Eve over-corrects the serpent's initial statement by adding a layer of prohibition. There was some wisdom in not touching the tree, but it went further than God's original statement. How do we "over-correct" God's commands? What are the consequences? [NOTE: The Pharisees spoke about building a fence around the Law so as not to break the actual command. This might be a place to start thinking about how we do the same.]
5. The serpent casts God's wide-permission as not enough for the first couple; they deserve it all. Discuss.
6. The first couple neglect their vocation. How are we tempted to do the same?
7. What subtle misrepresentations of God are we sometimes tempted with?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other that each of you might trust God's goodness, express gratitude for his provision, and undertake his vocation this week.

A Practice to Try

Take some time each day and consider in what ways we assert our moral autonomy in the place of trusting God. Where does this lack of trust manifest itself in your life?

Readings to Read This Week

The following five passages reflect on the need to trust the Lord and his goodness.

- Psalm 19:7-14
- Psalm 20
- Psalm 22
- Psalm 25
- Psalm 49

One of the applications Marc suggested was to read the rest of the story of Scripture. He is planning to create a list of key texts with some editorial commentary to trace the story of Scripture. This should be ready by next week.

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

One of our strategic priorities is Community Engagement. This has a number of broad focuses, but one of them is evangelism. This series in Genesis is a broad introduction to the story that leads to Jesus. Is there someone in your life who you might invite to listen to these sermons, attend a service with you, or who might even join your Life Group?

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. The response to the Ministry Budget Appeal has been very encouraging. Please thank your group for their prayerful, thoughtful, and generous response and remind them it's not too late to either give a one-off gift to help us catch up and/or to consider increasing their regular giving.
2. Sunday, August 31 we will be holding our third Soundings event from 11:30-1:00. This is an opportunity to make your voice heard and to contribute to our discernment process as we begin to look towards 2026. Our focus will be on Spiritual Journey and we'll be asking participants to discuss a few questions to help us think this strategic priority through.
3. Monday, August 18 is Adam Stewart's first day on staff as an associate pastor for Community Engagement. Please pray for him as he prepares to join us!

Additional Resources

The mission commitments of GBC

We have made several references to the mission commitments of GBC. This is the title we have given to our vision, purpose, and values. These will no doubt be familiar to you, but we thought it might be helpful to provide a clear overview of them.

Our mission commitments begin with John 20:21, “As the Father sent me, I am sending you.” These words contain a central belief about what we are called to as a community of faith: that we are to continue to ministry and mission of Jesus to restore and renew everything according to the will of the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we reflected on this commission we formulated a mission statement to attempt to summarise what we wanted to do. While we don’t refer to it very often, it is helpful to see the progression of our thought. The mission we formulated was: Everywhere we go and in everything we do, we will invite everyone to follow Jesus.

Taking the pattern we find in the Gospels we affirm that anyone can begin to follow Jesus; regardless of what they believe about him, what they know about him, and without changing their lives. When Jesus called his first disciples he demanded none of these things; only inviting them to follow him. Over time they learned about him which challenged their beliefs about him and raised the implications for their lives, but initially, they only needed to be willing to follow.

The individual transformation that comes as people place their trust in Jesus and the commission that he has sent us to participate in led to a simple vision statement; what we want to see. We want to see lives changed by Jesus.

All of this took shape in our purpose as a community of faith – our “why”. To be a community of faith who courageously take up the invitation of God the Father to participate in His grand plan to restore and renew all things in Christ Jesus through the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit.

It was only as we gained clarity on our purpose that we identified a set of values that we believed were aligned with these mission commitments. The five values we identified are:

- To be On-Purpose. Intentional to create margins in our lives to participate in God’s mission.
- To be Big-Hearted. Generosity in all our resources as a reflection of God’s own generosity to us is a central value.
- To be Whole-Life Learners. As followers of Jesus we are called to ongoing transformation of our lives; learning to be more like Jesus. This also invites humility as we recognise our ongoing need of change.
- To be Others-Focused. To demonstrate love and care to others, over and above ourselves is a key characteristic of followers of Jesus.
- To be Trust-Worthy. We don’t want to get in the way as people begin to follow Jesus. We want to reflect this value in our commitment to being a Safe Church.

These are the mission commitments that we hope will serve to give us some common language that reminds us of our unity together as followers of Jesus and the community of faith here at GBC.