*The Big Picture*

*Study 1: Creation and the Fall*

*Genesis 3*

**Icebreaker**

Go around the circle, everyone say your name, where you are from, and what you are studying. And answer this question: What is your favorite story and why? (It can be from a movie, book, tv show, real life, etc)

**Introduction**

Tonight we are going to read a story from the Bible together. As Christians, we study the Bible because we believe that it is God’s word to us. We believe that humans wrote the different books of the Bible, but they did that with God’s help and guidance. God gave us the Bible so that we could use it to learn who he is and understand His plans. So the Bible is full of lots of different stories and teachings, but they all help tell a bigger story about God and about the world we live in, and how He is going to restore the brokenness we see through Jesus. It is the story of God and the story of us!

In this series, we are going to look at the big picture story we see in the Bible, starting from the very beginning. We won’t cover the whole Bible (because we won’t have time for that!) but we will look at some important passages to help understand the story of God. And we will see how the entire story leads up to Jesus. So because we believe that God wants to help us understand His story, we are going to pray and then we will get started!

**Pray**

**Intro to the Passage**

The very first book of the Bible is a book called Genesis, which was written thousands of years ago. The main point of the book is to describe who God is, how He acts, and why He acts that way. When reading Genesis, especially the first half of the book, it is important to know that it was written as a collection of connected stories to communicate truth about God, not as a historical account of everything that happened. That doesn’t mean that the events you read about didn’t happen, though. It just means that you shouldn’t read it like a textbook or newspaper article. The book was written in and to a culture that didn’t place as much emphasis on details, so when we read it, we want to focus on the main points.

The first two chapters of Genesis explain that God created the universe and everything in it, including the sun, the earth, animals, and plants. And the most important part of His creation was human beings…it says that God created humans “in his image”, which means that our thoughts and emotions reflect His own. He created man and woman and told them to raise families and fill the earth, and to rule over creation and take care of it. He cared about them. And when God looked at everything He made, He said that it was good. He had a beautiful relationship with humans, humans had a beautiful relationship with each other, and they had a beautiful relationship with the earth. God provided in every way for people, and only gave them one command: “You may eat of every tree of the garden, but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of it you shall surely die.” The passage we are going to read tonight explains what happened when people questioned God’s command.

*Have everyone read the passage silently to themselves, and write down questions they have as they read. Then, read the passage out loud, each person reading one verse.*

**Now we are going to look at questions to help us understand this passage.**

**1. Who are the people/characters in this passage?** The Serpent, The Lord, the woman, the man, the cherubim

**2. What was the serpent like?** He was “more crafty” than any of the other animals. He questioned the woman and questioned what God said. He wanted to convince the woman to eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden. From other parts of the Bible, we learn that the serpent was Satan, who is God’s enemy (and the enemy of mankind…we see that in v.15). There is not a lot of specific information in the Bible about where Satan came from or what his story is, but we do see that He wanted to be like God and rebelled, he was defeated, and now he is God’s enemy who wants to deceive people and lead them away from God.

**3. In verse 2, the serpent asked the woman if God really said that they must not eat from any tree in the garden. What did the woman say?** “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.”….So she explained that they *could* eat of any tree EXCEPT the tree in the middle of the garden. However, she added on the part about not touching it…God did not say that. Already, the serpent is causing confusion.

**4. The serpent then told the woman that she would certainly not die, going against what God had told her. And then He said that if they ate from the tree, they would be LIKE GOD and know good and evil. What do you think the serpent was really trying to do?** He was trying to get the woman to doubt God and convince her to disobey Him. He lied to her by telling her she wouldn’t die, and he lied by promising that if she ate, she would be like God.

**5. Why do you think God commanded them not to eat from the tree?** This is a difficult question. He might have commanded that because He knew that humans could not handle the knowledge of good and evil in the way that He could, because He was perfect, and they were not. It seems like a good thing for people to know good and evil, but in the end, their knowledge of good and evil did not help them…they were worse off and still did bad things. Ultimately, in chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, you can see that God had provided EVERYTHING that humans needed and that everything was good, so his command to not eat of the tree was not a bad thing…it was better for them. But they didn’t trust Him and decided to do things their own way.

**6. So the woman took fruit from the tree and ate it, and then gave some to the man. Why do you think she did this?** The serpent lied to her and promised her good things. He basically said that if you ate it, you could become like God…you could become equal to God. The problem is, human beings can never be equal to God because He is the creator and they are the created. I can create a sculpture of myself, but no matter how good of a piece of art it is, it will never be the same as me. Even if I made a robot version of myself that could do the same things I can do, it would never be equal to me because it had to be created. So the serpent promised the woman something that couldn’t happen. And it was something that didn’t need to happen…the man and woman didn’t need to be equal to God in order to be happy and enjoy everything He provided them with.

**7. So the woman took fruit from the tree and ate it, and then gave some to the man. What happened as a result of that?** Their “eyes were opened”….what do you think that means? They saw things differently, they realized they were naked, and they made clothes for themselves. Now again, that doesn’t seem like a bad thing, but their nakedness represented something more than just a lack of clothing. Being naked is being completely open, completely vulnerable with someone…you see each every part of another person. So it also represents an emotional and relational nakedness…they ate the fruit, and they were afraid of being vulnerable and open with one another, so they tried to cover themselves up physically, but also emotionally and relationally. Their good relationship was damaged.

**8. When the man and woman heard God coming, they hid. Why do you think they hid?** The man said he was afraid because he was naked. At that point, he also probably realized that he disobeyed God and was afraid of what would happen. Before they disobeyed God, the man and woman had a good, trusting relationship with God, but afterwards, they were afraid and their relationship was damaged.

**9. When God asked them if they ate from the tree that He commanded them not to eat from, what happened?** The man and women made excuses. The man blamed the woman for giving him the fruit AND he blamed God for putting the woman there with him. Then the woman blamed the serpent for deceiving her, as if she had no control over her actions. Since the very beginning, people have refused to take responsibility for their actions and their disobedience!

**10. Do you think their excuses are legitimate? (Was it the woman’s fault? Or was it just the serpent’s fault?)** No! The serpent did lie to the woman, but God had already told her the truth…she simply chose not to listen and believe to God. And the man knew the truth also, so he was just as guilty of doing something He knew he was not supposed to do.

**11. After talking with the man and woman, God declares the punishment for them and the serpent. How is the serpent punished?** He will crawl on his belly and eat dust all the days of his life. AND, on a spiritual level, He will become the enemy of mankind (‘woman and her offspring’)…this is referring to Satan. Satan will “strike the heel” of the woman’s offspring, BUT her offspring will crush Satan’s head. Most people interpret “the offspring” to be referring to Jesus. Satan “struck” Jesus, because eventually He was arrested and killed. But, Jesus “crushed Satan’s head” and defeated him by dying because he took the punishment for all the ways people disobeyed God, and made a way to fix the broken world Satan helped cause.

**12. Then God explains the punishment for the woman and man…He says that women will experience pain in childbirth and that their husbands will rule over them, and he tells the man that the ground will be cursed and he will have to work very hard just to survive. And, he also says that he will eventually die. So now, we can see more results of the man and woman’s sin: their relationship with God was damaged, their relationship with each other was damaged, and their relationship with the earth (God’s creation) was damaged…they used to be able to live easily and eat of the trees in the garden, but as a result of their sin the would have to work hard to eat food and make the ground able to use. SO, What do you think of the punishment God gives? Do you think it is fair or unfair?** This is up to you to decide. In one sense, it seems harsh, but when you remember that God had done so much for the man and woman, only for them to disregard Him and disobey, it seems fairer. They messed up His good creation. And actually, He could have been MUCH harsher…He could have killed them, He could have completely started over with new people, but instead he let them live. And, he gave them a small promise that eventually, there would be victory against Satan. And, he gave them clothing made out of animal skin to cover them and care for them.

Also, at the end of the passage, we see that God made them leave the Garden of Eden so that they would not eat from the tree of life and live forever. That seems like a punishment, but it is actually an act of kindness because God did not want humans to live forever in a cursed state of hard work and pain.

**13. So let’s back up in the story for a second…when God came to the garden and the man and woman hid, what did God do?** He called out to the man, trying to find him. **In the beginning chapters of Genesis, we see that God is all powerful and all knowing…so he wasn’t calling out to the man because he truly didn’t know where he was. He already knew what had happened…and he could have just punished them without even talking to them, or he could have completely abandoned them. BUT God called out to them and came to them, even though they had rebelled against Him. He gave them a chance to confess what they did and turn back to Him. And even when they didn’t, He still didn’t abandon them. He punished them, but He did not abandon them, and He gave them a small glimmer of hope by promising victory in the future.**

**14. So, as we said earlier, this book was written to teach about God, the world, and ourselves. What do you think it is supposed to teach us about the world that we live in?** It was created by God, it was originally supposed to be good, but it became messed up because of us. We disobeyed God and as a result, the world became broken (our relationships with each other, our relationship with the earth, our relationship with God.) Now, as a result, the world is broken. **Where have you seen brokenness in our world?**

**15. What do you think it is supposed to teach us about humans (about ourselves)?** We were created by God but we easily believe lies and disobey God. We face challenges and obstacles because of our own disobedience.

**16. What do you think it is supposed to teach us about God?** He created the world, He cares about humans enough that he wouldn’t destroy them for their disobedience, He cares about them enough to teach them the TRUTH. In this passage it is a little difficult to figure out what God thinks and feels about the world and about humans because we only see how He reacts to things. But as we continue to look at the story of God, you will be able to learn more about God’s character and His plans.

**17. Do you have any other questions?**

**Conclusion**

So as Christians, we believe that God created the world and that it was good in the beginning. There was harmony between God, his creation, and human beings...He provided everything they needed. But unfortunately, despite all He had done for them, humans doubted God’s goodness. They doubted whether or not He knew best and they decided to disobey Him and do things their own way. And when that happened, God’s good creation was broken. Our relationship with God was broken and our relationship with each other was broken. And all the brokenness we see in the world today like war, sickness, violence, and loneliness are a result of our disobedience….this wasn’t the way God intended it to be. But we wanted to be in control and do things our way, so God let us have that…and as a result, our world is messed up. HOWEVER, there is good news, because this is just the beginning of the story! God was not content to just let the world stay broken because He cares about us! So He made a plan to fix things and restore the world. This is all the time we have for tonight, but we encourage you to join us next week because we will continue on with the story and learn more about God’s plan to renew the world!

**Prayer**