Unit 1, Session 3

Sin and God’s Good News

Summary and Goal
In the previous two sessions, we saw that God created everything good, including people as the pinnacle of creation. Adam and Eve were made in God’s image and instructed to rule over the world and worship God through their work, rest, and relationships with one another and with Him. As we will see in this session, that didn’t last. Adam and Eve chose to sin against God in open defiance of His goodness and loving provision for them. Their sin had drastic consequences as it brought death to all humanity and ruptured our created purpose. But as dark as that moment was, we will see that it was pregnant with hope—hope that could only come from God in His promise to one day send Someone who would make everything right again.

Session Outline
1. Sin is defiance against God (Gen. 3:1-7).
2. Sin brought death and ruptured our created purpose, but hope remains (Gen. 3:14-21).
3. Sin and death have spread to all humanity (Gen. 4:1-8).

Session in a Sentence
People sinned against God and ruptured our created purpose, but God has provided forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

Christ Connection
God promised that one of Eve’s offspring would crush the head of the serpent. Jesus is the promised One who defeated sin and death once and for all.

Missional Application
Because we have been forgiven through faith in Christ and given His righteousness, we trust in God and His grace as we fight against sin in our lives and proclaim the reason for our hope found in Christ Jesus.
Group Time

Introduction

INSTRUCT: Prior to the group meeting, on a board or large sheet of paper, put the heading “Things Wrong with the World.” As group members arrive, ask them to add to the board/paper things that are wrong with the world (contribute 1-2 ideas of your own to help group members get the idea).

READ the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 29) as a wrap-up to the prior activity.

As a society, it seems that we sure don’t agree on much these days. Actually, about the only thing we might agree on is that something is not right with the world. The broken world we see on the news, streaming through our social media feeds, or in the lives of those closest to us hammers home one key truth: somewhere at some time in our long history, something has gone horribly, tragically wrong.

EXPLAIN: Help group members recognize that we often assume the problem is only “out there” somewhere, but the reality is the problem is within us too.

Commentary: Perhaps you think there are good people and bad people, and those bad people cause all the trouble for us good people. Or maybe you think the real problems are more systemic—poverty, lack of education, unequal opportunities, the breakdown of the family structure.

In moments when we are painfully honest, however, we have to acknowledge that the problem is not just out there; it is in us too. What if that outburst of anger you explained away wasn’t just a result of stress but reflected something you truly believed? What if that cutting remark wasn’t just a slip of the tongue but a mirror of your heart instead? What if those dark words “sneaking” out of your mouth were not exceptions but hints at the real, unfiltered you? It may just be that the problem is deeper than we know or care to admit.

INTERACT: Ask the following question. Don’t press hard for an answer from group members as this is a personal question. Depending on the dynamics of your group, you may just ask your group to record an answer in their DDG.

When have you said or done something you were ashamed of, and how did you respond afterward? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

SUMMARIZE: In the previous two sessions, we saw that God created everything good, including people as the pinnacle of creation. But in this session, we will see that Adam and Eve chose to sin against God in open defiance of His goodness and loving provision for them. Their sin brought death to all humanity and ruptured our created purpose. But God promised to one day send Someone who would make everything right again.
**Point 1: Sin is defiance against God (Gen. 3:1-7).**

**READ** Genesis 3:1-7 (DDG p. 30).

1 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the **Lord** God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’”

2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. 3 But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’”

4 “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

**SAY:** God created humanity and placed them in a beautiful, good creation. But paradise was lost in an instant—through a single act of defiance against the Creator. In the story of paradise unraveling, we see the universal nature of sin, not just in Adam and Eve but in every one of us as well.

**EXPLAIN:** The nature of sin involves three different aspects, and the woman’s interaction with the serpent resulting in her disobedience along with her husband’s illustrates these aspects: **unbelief**, **idolatry**, and **rebellion**.

- First, sin begins with **unbelief**. The serpent launched his offensive by asking, “Did God really say...?” (3:1). His aim was not so much to start an argument with Eve but to cast doubt on God’s words. You should read Satan’s question with a sneer behind it: “God said what? How absurd! Are you serious?” Many of us face this same attack today. The circumstances may vary, but the origin is always the same—a Satanic temptation to make us doubt that God is trustworthy and that His words are true.

- Second, sin moves from unbelief to **idolatry**. We see idolatry in this story primarily in the way Eve looked at the forbidden fruit. She “saw that the tree was good for food” (3:6). Up until this moment, God had been the only One to see and declare things “good.” The moment Adam and Eve took it upon themselves to make that assessment on their own, they ventured into idolatry. They declared, “I know what’s best for me,” taking some created thing and elevating it to the place of God.

- All of this culminates in the third aspect of sin, **rebellion**. At the core of Adam and Eve’s sin was a question of who was going to be the lord of their lives. God promised that if He were in charge, they would have goodness and blessing. Instead, our first parents decided to defy God and push Him off the throne of their hearts and sit upon it themselves (3:6).

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read the following paragraph in the DDG, showing how pervasive sin is, both in our culture and in our own hearts.
The lies of unbelief, idolatry, and rebellion were first believed by Adam and Eve and now bubble up from every human heart. They are everywhere in our culture. It has become almost an assumed dogma that to “follow your heart” is the best path to happiness and freedom. But Scripture shows that those who follow their heart, apart from the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, are actually following the voice of Satan.

**Fill in the Blanks:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 30), emphasizing the personal and willful nature of sin against our Creator.

**Sin as Rebellion:** Sin is **personal** and **willful** disobedience, the raising of a **clinchéd fist** toward the One who made us.

**Essential Doctrine “Sin as Rebellion”:** Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings, called to respond in faith and obedience to God’s revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describes sin in terms of rebellion against God: “I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.” Seen in this light, sin is **personal** and **willful** disobedience, the raising of a **clinchéd fist** toward the One who made us.

**Interact:** Ask group members the following question.

How have you seen these three aspects of sin—unbelief, idolatry, or rebellion—in your community? How have you seen them in yourself? (be prepared to give a couple of answers of your own to jump-start the conversation)

**Say:** As Adam and Eve demonstrated in making coverings for their nakedness, sin leads to shame and the impulse to move away from God instead of toward Him. Sin makes us want to hide and seek cover (Gen. 3:7-8), perhaps illustrated in our desire not to speak about the aspects of sin in ourselves.

**Instruct:** Ask groups of 2-3 to list in the space in their DDG (p. 30) some ways people try to hide their sin from God and from others. After a couple of minutes, call for some responses. **Below are some possible answers:**

- We hide by never being honest about our sin, by rationalizing it, or by comparing ourselves to others.
- We hide by refusing to think about the final judgment, hoping that when God said, “It is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment” (Heb. 9:27), He wasn’t serious.
- We hide by blame shifting, just as Adam and Eve did, using others as excuses for our sin (Gen. 3:12-13).
- Worst of all, we hide through religion. The fig leaves Adam and Eve sewed for themselves were the first religion, an attempt to cover shame without a true relationship with God.

**Transition:** Sin brought shame and separation from God, but it also brought other consequences, including death, just as God had said.
Point 2: Sin brought death and ruptured our created purpose, but hope remains (Gen. 3:14-21).

READ Genesis 3:14-21 (DDG p. 31), asking group members to highlight any statements or actions of grace God demonstrated in His judgments.

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than any livestock and more than any wild animal. You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. 15 I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

16 He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

17 And he said to the man, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’: The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust.”

20 The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living.

21 The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read the first paragraph in the DDG.

The sin of the first couple had devastating consequences for Adam and Eve, and it does for us as well. The Creator God handed down His punishments to the serpent, the woman, and the man for their part in this sin, and we bear those same consequences today, both for their sin and for our own.

INTERACT: Ask the group the following question about some consequences we experience as a result of sin.

How does sin damage the lives of people? (see suggested answers below)

EXPLAIN as needed the following five ways sin damages our lives.

• First, sin leads to pain. Prior to the fall, there is no mention of pain. After the fall, life itself became marked by pain and suffering of every kind—physical, emotional, and relational.

• Second, sin leads to relational conflict. Even before God declared the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin, a rift had arisen between the first couple. When God arrived, Adam blamed Eve for the whole situation. Many see God’s words in Genesis 3:16 as expressing how women and men would live in conflict, an extension of the relational conflict that Adam and Eve had already inflicted upon themselves.
• Third, sin leads to **futility**. The plants, trees, flowers, and even the animals of the world were under Adam and Eve’s stewardship and dominion. But when humanity fell, the world became cursed against them. And this extends beyond farming. Our lives are now characterized by a futility that sees “thorns and thistles” in everything we do. Apart from God, all we strive to achieve is meaningless (see Ecclesiastes).

• Fourth, sin leads to **death**. God reiterated His initial warning about disobedience to the couple: because they had sinned, they would die. In God’s mercy, Adam and Eve did not drop dead in that moment, but the certainty of their death began that day, both physically and spiritually. As their children, we are all born spiritually dead (Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:1).

• Fifth, and by far the worst, sin leads to a **loss of the presence of God**. God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, away from His presence, and barred the entrance with a flaming sword. The message was clear: to approach God again would mean death. God was now separated from His sinful image bearers.

**READ** the second paragraph in the DDG.

Sin has wrecked and ruptured our created purpose to rule over God’s creation and steward it for His glory and the good of others. The consequences of sin are severe, but from the first moment of sin, God also responded with a message of hope to His people.

**EXPLAIN:** God demonstrated grace in response to Adam and Eve’s sin, even as He punished them.

• First, the all-knowing God came looking for sinful humanity. What Adam and Eve expected was God the Destroyer. What they heard was the voice of God the Seeker: “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9).

• Second, God sought Adam and Eve to confront them for their sin but also to declare hope. In His words to the serpent, God promised to raise up one of Eve’s offspring to crush the head of the serpent. That offspring is Jesus. Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of Christ in the entire Bible. Jesus is a truer and better Adam who resists temptation and sin and brings life into the world (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:45).

• Third, God made clothing from animal skins to cover Adam and Eve’s shameful nakedness (Gen. 3:21). In essence, God performed the first atoning sacrifice on behalf of His people, foreshadowing the future sacrifice of Christ on the cross to clothe us in His righteousness.

**INTERACT:** Read the “Voices from Church History” quote; then ask group members the following question.

Looking back at how sin has damaged your life or the lives of others you know, what truths about Jesus and the gospel give you hope? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

Voices from Church History

“There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us.”

—Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)
**Point 3: Sin and death have spread to all humanity (Gen. 4:1-8).**

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 4:1-8 (DDG p. 32).

1 The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the Lord’s help.” 2 She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the Lord. 4 And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent. 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent? 7 If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” 8 Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

**EXPLAIN:** Help your group members understand the difference between Cain’s and Abel’s offerings (refer to the first paragraph in the DDG).

Cain and Abel gave God the very first offerings of the entire Bible, but God only accepted one. Perhaps the key difference between the two was the way they were offered. Abel gave some of the firstborn of his flock, his “first and best”—an act of faith before any other animals were born. Cain may have waited to see what he had before committing it to God, giving only after he knew he could spare some.

**Commentary:** God accepted Abel’s offering of the “first and best” while rejecting Cain’s offering. The text says nothing about the quantity of the offering. For all we know, Cain may have given far more than Abel. But since he gave without faith, God wasn’t impressed. It’s possible Cain gave his first and best to his own security, and God only got the leftovers. But Abel gave to God with open hands, trusting that God would take care of what he needed; in other words, he gave his offering by faith (Heb. 11:4).

**SAY:** Whomever or whatever gets our first and best reveals the true Lord of our lives. It reveals in whom we place our faith and what we treasure. If anything or anyone other than God receives our first and best, it ultimately demonstrates a heart of selfishness, which is at the center of sin.

**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 32).

**Sin as Selfishness:** When we sin, we are acting out of a selfish attitude and mind-set that assumes our action will lead us to more happiness than if we were to obey God.
**Essential Doctrine “Sin as Selfishness”:** When we sin, we are acting out of a selfish attitude and mind-set that assumes our action will lead us to more **happiness** than if we were to **obey** God. Because sin is manifested in our tendency to be “curved inward” toward self, it is the opposite of love. Love looks outwardly to place others before oneself, operating from the mind-set that others are more important (Phil. 2:3). Where sin selfishly seeks personal gratification and happiness, love works for the joy of others in the hopes of making others happy in God.

**SAY:** One of the most destructive lies whispered to us is that what we are doing is “our own business.” We harbor sinful thoughts and act on sinful motives because we think (or we hope) that no one will find out about it—we aren’t harming anyone but ourselves. What we fail to realize is that sin, by its very nature, multiplies in our lives and into the lives of those around us. On our own, our selfishness cannot be contained.

**EXPLAIN:** Show how Cain’s murder of Abel is proof of the multiplying effects of sin from Adam and Eve and from us as well.

**Commentary:** The relational conflict that began with Adam and Eve was passed on inevitably to the next generation. Cain and Abel should have inherited a legacy of worshiping God from their parents; instead, jealousy of worship consumed Cain, so he lashed out at his own brother in murder. From perfection to fratricide in a single generation.

We may find Cain’s offense abstract because very few of us have murdered. But let’s not let ourselves off the hook too quickly. What God said to Cain He says to all of us: sin is crouching at our door, desiring to overtake us. And if we are flippant toward sin, we will follow the same road Cain did. After all, which one of us has not looked upon someone with envy? The spirit of envy leads to hatred and conflict, and as Jesus pointed out, a heart of hatred is just as sinful before God as the act of murder (Matt. 5:21-22).

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read the second paragraph in the DDG, clarifying our need for salvation from our selfish sin.

When we make our happiness, our pleasure, and our freedom paramount, we become capable of almost anything. But the true fruit of selfish sin is unhappiness, hatred, worry, and despair, for both ourselves and those around us. Our sin exposes our desperate need of salvation and our need of God’s grace. We all need Someone to come who can crush the sin crouching at our door so we can rule over it and do what is right.

**INTERACT:** Ask the group the following question.

> **What are some ways people demonstrate selfish sin today?** (division, elitism, hatred, murder, envy, theft, gossip, rape, viewing pornography, adultery, laziness, abandonment)
My Mission

EXPLAIN: The Bible’s stories about the origin of sin and its deadly consequences and progression explain the state of the world in which we live. They also show us our need for and give us the hope of a Savior to save us from sin and death.

Commentary: Since the fall, sin has continued its sinister crescendo of rebellion against God and increased pain with ongoing death, but God’s grace and the hope of His promised rescue remain steadfast. Adam and Eve received mercy in Eden (Gen. 3:15,21). Cain was protected with a mark (4:15). Eve bore another son after Abel was murdered (4:25). And in the middle of the constant repetition of “he died” in Genesis 5, we read of Enoch, who was spared from death because “God took him” (5:22-24). Sin and death do not have the last word. God’s grace and His promise of a Savior (3:15) are sure and true. In His promised Savior—Jesus—we find forgiveness from sin and eternal life.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 33), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have been forgiven through faith in Christ and given His righteousness, we trust in God and His grace as we fight against sin in our lives and proclaim the reason for our hope found in Christ Jesus.

- What steps will you take to fight against sin this week?
- What can your group do for one another in your fight against sin and your remembrance of the gospel?
- What are some of the opportunities you might have this week to speak into the brokenness of others and share the hope you have found in Jesus?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, thank You for Your promise and provision of Jesus to crush our enemy, Satan, and to deal with our problem of sin and death. Help us to rule over the sin that wants to overtake us, and strengthen us to share the truth with others that sin kills but our Savior gives abundant, eternal life. Amen.

PACK ITEM 3: WHAT GOD GIVES: Cut out these bookmarks and pass them out to group members to remind them that God’s provision—chiefly in Jesus Christ—is infinitely better and it is enough.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 34-36), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 37) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 34-36) help group members get into God’s Word for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 37) helps group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 34-36) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 1 as a part of point 1 in the session: Just reading of Adam and Eve’s nakedness makes us uncomfortable. Deep down, when we read Genesis 2:25, we feel what the first couple didn’t feel in that moment—shame—revealing how deeply sin has affected us.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- Day 2: “Where are you?” That is a curious question that God asked Adam in Genesis 3:9. Our omniscient, omnipresent God knew…So why ask?”
- Day 3: “Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate from a tree, and died. Jesus obeyed God by being nailed to a tree to willingly die for us.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the DDG (p. 37) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- Encourage group members to see this as an opportunity to strengthen one another in the faith for the battle against sin and the serpent.
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

Point 1: Sin is defiance against God (Gen. 3:1-7).

“The couple did not immediately die physically (cp. 2:17). By God’s grace, their death was postponed till a later time. But their expulsion from the garden (vv. 23-24) shows that the word of God was indeed fulfilled as the immediate consequence of their disobedience. They were cut off from access to the tree of life, which symbolized the source of life (2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2,14,19). In Israel expulsion from the tabernacle in the camp, such as quarantine (e.g., Lev. 13:46), meant that the person was ceremonially dead until he was declared fit again. The human couple’s expulsion signaled their spiritual death (see Eph. 2:1). That their physical death occurred is confirmed by the refrain ‘then he died’ in Adam’s genealogy (Gen. 5:5). Physical death for humans was the result of disobedience in the garden (Rom. 5:12-21; 6:23).”

“Many modern interpreters...fail to recognize that the serpent’s trickery is ultimately the voice of Satan. Although the snake is never identified as Satan in the Old Testament, more than the principle of evil must have been intended by the serpent’s presence since 3:15 describes an ongoing war between the serpent and the seed of the woman. ‘All the days of your life’ (3:14) shows that the serpent is treated as a personal being. The role of the serpent is consistent with the adversary (ḥāḏāšāṭān) depicted in Job 1–2. Although not identified as a serpent, he impugns the character of God and attempts to destroy Job. Jesus’ rebuke of the Jews as the children of their ‘father’ (cf. ‘offspring,’ 3:15) alludes to the garden scene, where the serpent is the ‘devil,’ ‘a murderer from the beginning’ (John 8:44; cf. 1 John 3:12). This interpretation was also found in earlier Jewish wisdom (e.g., Wis. 2:24) and was shared by Paul (Rom. 16:20). In accord with the traditional opinion, the snake is more than a literal snake; rather it is Satan’s personal presence in the garden.”

Point 2: Sin brought death and ruptured our created purpose, but hope remains (Gen. 3:14-21).

“As God’s curse on the serpent was being pronounced, the reference clearly points to the coming of One who will defeat the Serpent. Verse 15 is identified by evangelicals as the protoevangelium (Lat, lit ‘the first preaching of gospel’ in the sense of ‘good news’ pointing to Christ’s coming). In generations to come, the gospel is made complete with the seed of Adam, the Messiah who will achieve the final victory. The Serpent will be defeated by Christ, the anointed One. ‘Seed’ in the Old Testament can refer to a child or offspring or to one’s descendants as a whole. Eve is ‘the mother of all living’ (v. 20), and the Messiah would come through her (see Gal. 4:4). The conception of Jesus was miraculous: The seed came to Mary through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit rather than through a man’s sperm delivered to her womb (see Luke 1:35). The striking of his heel (Gen. 3:15) refers to the sufferings of Christ, which proved merely a prelude to His ultimate victory and resurrection. The striking of the serpent’s head, however, was clearly a mortal wound and thus prophetic of Satan’s ultimate defeat.”
“God’s words of judgment on the serpent, woman, and man are immediately followed by two observations that possibly convey a sense of hope. First, the man names his wife Eve (v. 20), which means ‘life-giver.’ Second, God clothes the couple (v. 21). While this final action recognizes that the human couple is now ashamed of their nakedness in God’s presence, as a gesture it suggests that God still cares for these, his creatures. Because God provides garments to clothe Adam and Eve, thus requiring the death of an animal to cover their nakedness, many see a parallel here related to (1) the system of animal sacrifices to atone for sin later instituted by God through the leadership of Moses in Israel, and (2) the eventual sacrificial death of Christ as an atonement for sin.”

**Point 3: Sin and death have spread to all humanity (Gen. 4:1-8).**

“We are told that the Lord looked with favour on Abel’s offering, but that he rejected Cain’s (4:5). We are not told how he indicated this. However, from the dialogue that follows, we gather that at this time of sacrifice Cain and Abel met and talked with the Lord face to face (see also 4:14,16). Nor do we know why God accepted Abel’s offering and rejected Cain’s. All we know is that something was wrong. Some scholars have suggested that Cain ignored the importance of shedding the blood of an animal, but the sacrificial system recorded in Leviticus had not yet been established. Others have concluded that Cain made his offering with the wrong motive or in the wrong spirit. But the only clue in the text is that when God questions Cain he implies that Cain had not done ‘what is right.’ If he had, his sacrifice would have been accepted (4:6-7). Throughout Scripture, God makes it clear that he values the attitude of the worshipper more than the materials offered or the procedure followed (see Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-25).”

“God does not abandon human beings because they have sinned…In the same way as he had sought out Adam and Eve and questioned them in 3:9-13, he sought out Cain, asking, Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? (4:6). God knew the answer to his questions, but he wanted to give Cain an opportunity to reflect on his action. The third question was: If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? (4:7a). If Cain had dealt with the reason why his offering was not accepted and had confessed it, he would have enjoyed the inner peace of forgiveness. But Cain was not prepared to confess. Nor would he heed God’s warning that an unconfessed deliberate sin leads to greater sin: if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you (4:7b). He was not interested in God’s closing exhortation: you must master it (4:7c).”

**References**

A Word from the Editor

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For a story to be great, it must include a great beginning. The story of the Bible, which tells the true story of our world, is no exception.

In the Book of Genesis, we see God the Creator in all His majesty and goodness as He spins the world into motion and lavishes His image bearers with love. We have an “inciting incident” that introduces conflict into this good world, as the first humans raise their fists in defiance toward their loving Father and bring havoc into this peaceful paradise. But even here, we have a promise—God will make things right again. God will cover His people’s sins and crush their adversary. The rest of Genesis shows how even though sin spread throughout the world, God remained faithful to His promise to Eve, His promise to Noah, and His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Book of Genesis is a glorious and earthy tale of rebellion and redemption, of sin and salvation, of failings and faith. Here is a book that shows us who we are in our sin and who God is in His grace. May this study lead you to express gratitude for God’s love toward you and then extend His love to everyone who inhabits this world He has promised to restore.