

GOD SAID, "WHERE ARE YOU?"

by Steve Zeisler

In the summer of 1971 I was a sort of low-grade hippie. I had hair down below my shoulders. Jack Crabtree and I lived in an adobe hut near the summit of King's Mountain, just off Skyline. There was no running water. The nearest neighbors we had lived in a teepee deeper in the woods, and they often didn't wear clothes. That was an interesting era, with love-ins, be-ins, flower children, rejection of technology, and a desire to get back to the land. Looking back, we can see a longing for Eden in a lot of the thinking of that era. You might remember the song Joni Mitchell sang about Woodstock:

"We are star dust,

We are golden,

And we've got to get ourselves

Back to the Garden."

That's the subject before us now as we study through the first three chapters of Genesis. The opening verses of chapter 3 are about the deception that makes us willing to rebel against God (see Discovery Paper [4557](#)). The temptation process has essentially the same form today that it did for the first pair. We have much to learn about how we fail by looking at those verses.

In the middle section of chapter 3 we learn of sin's corrosion of the heart. Before anything particularly wicked was done, a soul sickness began, bringing ruin to how human beings viewed each other, God, and themselves.

What does chapter 3 tell us about how death made its way into our interior? We're going to look at it in a couple of ways. One is what it did to the individual. What did it do to Adam's heart as he represented the rest of us? And the second is what it did to the beautiful marriage that we saw at the end of chapter 2 (see Discovery Paper [4556](#)). Let's read verses 7-15. The woman had just taken the forbidden fruit, eaten it, and given it to her husband, who also ate.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all the livestock

and all the wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

**and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.
And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."**

This passage ends with the curse of the serpent. The serpent, the devil, was cursed, and the lowly reptiles we know as snakes that slither along the ground are reminders that the evil one was cursed. More important than the condition of snakes is the recognition in verse 15 that the serpent will be finally crushed by one who will be born of the woman.

Now let's focus on the statements that the man made. What happened to him? The devil said, "You won't die." Our forefather and foremother believed that, and acted in disobedience. What happened to them? There are three results to notice: covering, hiding, and blaming.

COVERING WHAT WE'RE ASHAMED OF

Verse 7 says their eyes were opened, they realized they were naked, and they made coverings for themselves. Consider this for a moment. "Their eyes were opened" is a statement of spiritual perception. Clearly they were able to use their eyes before this. They could see God. We have already considered what it must have been like for Adam to have life breathed into his nostrils and to be awakened, seeing the face of God near enough to him to breathe on him. And Eve had the same experience, seeing God as her Creator. They saw the garden that he had made. They saw all of the provision God had made. They saw each other and fell in love.

But what they had not seen was themselves. They were so excited and grateful to see everything else that existed, they didn't spend time on self-discovery or self-analysis, consumed with self-attention. And they certainly had never had anything in themselves to be ashamed of. But when Adam's eyes were opened, he hated what he saw. He rejected himself for what he saw. Do you know anybody like that, who looks in the mirror and finds themselves objectionable in some important way?

One commentator talks about the experience of covering and hiding, dissembling really--putting something on as a covering that prevents people from seeing us as we are because we are ashamed of what we are. The psychology of going into a room full of people tells an interesting story. We hate to go into a room full of people all talking to someone and stand in a corner being ignored. We feel affronted if we're completely left out, if people deliberately turn their shoulder and pay no attention to us. But we hate it equally if everybody in the room turns and stares at us. We want to be known and we want to be covered at the same time. We don't like ourselves and yet we believe ourselves to be important. We are the focus of our own attention, and so we cover up what we know is true on the inside.

Coverings come in a lot of guises. They certainly are physical. We do everything we can to enhance the way we look by the things we wear, the way we cut our hair, and the styles we affect. But in addition to physical appearance, we're concerned about status. We want titles. We want to be known as the exalted, esteemed Dr. So-And-So, or whatever title we can manage for ourselves as a covering, so people will see not so much us as the announcement of us. We puff up our accomplishments, magnify ordinary abilities, embellish our history: "Ah, you should have seen me back in the old days" (hoping against hope nobody actually did see us in the old days and remember what we were like). We create images of courage, integrity, kindness, and conviction that are all greater than the facts. We cover ourselves with these and hope people will see only the covering and not us.

Last week in Scott Adam's *Dilbert* cartoon strip, Dogbert was giving Dilbert advice on dating. "Women like men who have accomplishments, but they hate men who boast. I'll be your designated bragger, allowing you to appear humble."

Dilbert thinks about this. "The one potential problem with this plan is that I have no accomplishments."

Dogbert looks at him for awhile, then says, "If she isn't wearing make-up, we'll be honest, too."

One of the saddest things to watch as you raise kids is when they lose their confidence in themselves and learn to cover up and dissemble. There is nothing more attractive about kids than their unawareness of social convention. And then you see them grow up and suffer put-downs and rejections, and by the time they're teenagers, they're doing all the same stupid things that you did at that age. You would love to be able to save them and tell them it doesn't matter who's going with whom, and who's in which

social circle, and whether there's a pimple on their forehead or not, and all the other things that seem devastating. You know better, but you can't save them from it.

Van Morrison has recorded a haunting version of the old Walker Arnold tune, *You Don't Know Me* :

"You give your hand to me and then you say hello.

And I can hardly speak, my heart is beating so.

And anyone can tell you think you know me well,

But you don't know me.

You don't know the one who longs for you at night,

Who longs to hold you tight.

You know I'm just a friend, that's all I've ever been.

You don't know me.

I never knew the art of gaining love,

Though my heart yearns with love for you.

Afraid and shy, I let my chance go by--

The chance that you might have loved me, too.

You give your hand to me and then you say good-bye.

And I watch you walk away beside some lucky guy

To never, never know the one who loves you so.

You don't know me."

That song is the story of someone who forbids himself happiness in order to stay covered up. Such choices are tragic and destructive, and all too familiar.

HIDING FROM OUR FATHER

The second issue we'll consider is the experience of hiding from God. "Where are you, Adam?" God called. God came to the garden in the cool of the evening as Abba, Father, with loving concern for his child. And Adam had to admit, "I was afraid of you, because I was naked and I'm ashamed of myself, so I hid myself." Not only do we cover ourselves, but tragically, we run from God.

It's obvious that hiding from God is irrational. Where are you going to go to hide from God? How are you going to succeed at being someplace he won't find you? It's foolish. He knows everything. It's like playing hide-and-seek with a two-year-old. Instead, shouldn't Adam and Eve have run to their Father when he came in the garden looking for them? Shouldn't they have fallen on their knees and said, "Oh, Father! We've ruined everything. What can we do? Can you help us? We're suffering because of what we've done!" But instead of running toward him for help, they ran away from him in fear.

Further, the text tells us that God came in the most humble way. There is a visage of God that should terrify us. There are times when we are confronted with his forcefulness, power, and hatred of sin. But this was not a time like that. This was a time when God came looking for his own beloved children because he wanted to be with them. Yet they were afraid of him and hid.

Now, if you're going to avoid God, you'd better avoid church, and of course prayer. Stay away from the Bible. Don't be with other Christians. Get rid of your Christian music. But you're also going to have to do away with all poems and stories and the natural world, and don't go near children, and don't be alone.... The list goes on and on. Where are you going to go that has no memory of God in it? What things will you allow into your life that don't have some essence of him in them? You can't run from God, but it's something we spend a lifetime doing.

Some find religion a means of running from God. Every time there is a meeting, such people are there. They are on many committees, and they are everlastingly active in the business of the church. And secretly, the hope is that they can use religion to avoid God. He won't notice that they're really terrified of a face-to-face encounter with him, because they're so busy doing Christian things. But God keeps coming and looking for his children, calling, "Where are you?"

BLAMING OTHERS

The third issue in these verses is blame. God asked Adam, "Have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat from?"

Instead of answering the question, "Yes, I did, I am guilty as charged," Adam immediately deflected the conversation to someone else: "It was the woman. Go get her. Focus your attention on her, God, don't stare at me like that. Frighten her for awhile. I don't want to answer this question." The next phrase is equally telling: "It was the woman *you* put here with me--it's your fault! If you had given me a better woman, none of this would have happened."

We live in a day and age that has raised victimhood and blaming others to an art form. And yet the only avenue by which real help comes is to say, "I have done what I ought not to have done. I am guilty for my choices. I am ashamed of what I have become. Please help me." Saying it's someone else's fault still leaves you with the problem--you still hate yourself, you're still ashamed of what you're like, you're still frightened of God, you're still cut off from other people. The inability to say, "Help me," instead of blaming anyone and everyone else in the world is part of the corrosion of death in the heart.

A BLOW TO INTIMACY

In addition to looking at what sin did to the individual person, Adam as he represented all of us, it is useful to look at what it did to the marriage as well. First, in making coverings for themselves the first man and woman saw themselves and hated what they saw. They were hiding from themselves. But they didn't cover their faces, they covered their loins. This word translated "coverings" in Hebrew is the word for apron, a covering of the midsection, not just a covering in general. Their capacity for physical intimacy was something they were now uncomfortable with. They didn't want to be known by themselves, and they didn't want to be known by their partner. And the opportunity for physical and emotional union, for intimacy of all kinds, was dealt an awful blow by the choice made by the first pair to sin. Our hatred of ourselves means that we will be disconnected from the ones that we were intended to be intimate with.

REINFORCING SIN IN ONE ANOTHER

Their hiding from God is also interesting in the effect it had on their marriage, because they hid together. If you're married, your partner ought to be the one who leads you to God, who tells you what you need to hear, who shakes you when you are foolish, who encourages you when you are struggling. That's one of the key reasons why God gave you a partner, so he would have a voice in your life. But they hid from God together. They reinforced running from God in each other. It's tragic when a marriage partner becomes an encouragement to flee farther from God. What a gift it is when you're married to someone who won't let you just stay where you are, who believes better things about you, who wants you to face what's hard for you to face.

BLAME-CASTING IN A MARRIAGE

Blame-casting also clearly affected the marriage. One of the telling dramas of chapter 3 is that Adam did not speak when the serpent was tempting his wife. And that remains a mystery we will never understand. Why didn't Adam protect his wife, why didn't he take a stand? Why don't we hear his voice anywhere in the story of the fall? He was evidently near enough to be handed the fruit right after she ate it. He was the exact opposite of the kind of husband he ought to have been. Instead of being a source of protection, offering some sort of defense, coming to her aid, taking on the problem, he fell silent. But when it was time to blame someone for sin he said, "Blame her. It's her fault." He wouldn't speak to the enemy, but he spoke to God in a way that drove a wedge between himself and his beloved.

Husbands and wives can be overtaken by thoughts of the reasons why their partner is at fault for their struggles: undermining statements, lack of support--the list goes on and on. Yet blame-casting, which is terrible wherever it exists, is especially ruinous to a marriage.

The devil said, "You will not surely die," but he lied. This is what Romans calls the reign of death. Death has taken control of

our hearts and it's doing its work. What conclusions or application might we make from this?

First of all, as much as the flower children would have liked to have had it otherwise, there is no way back to the garden. There is no way back to innocence, to nakedness without shame. It's too late for that, and that will become very clear in the passage we'll study in the next message. Playing at innocence, imagining that if we just got rid of technology, having love-ins and be-ins and going back to the land, didn't work in 1971, and they won't work now.

The other approach, if innocence can't be regained, is to be especially good at lying. You say, "If I'm going to cover up and hide from God and blame other people, I'm going to do it so well that it makes me happy. I will be more withdrawn from God so I don't hear that awful voice calling, "Where are you?" anymore. I'll be so effective at making everybody else feel bad for my problems that I won't have to face them." But you'll die from that, too. It doesn't work, and there will always be somebody who finds you out. God's insistent voice is very difficult to mute.

DOING BATTLE WITHIN

The only real option we have is at the heart of this story. There is an enemy who is not going to go away. God cursed the serpent and announced his defeat, but he didn't destroy the serpent. In the next message we'll see that he told the woman that throughout the rest of the course of human history there would be antagonism between the serpent and all her children. And there was coming one who would finally win the battle. But we are signed up for a war, and there is no escaping it. We must do battle with all the things inside us that would ruin us. We cannot make them go away. The things that make us feel afraid, ashamed, frightened of God, and certain that it's somebody else's fault that we are the way we are, will occur in us all our lives. Today we're going to be tempted to blame somebody for things that we do. We're going to want to do anything except see God's face. We're going to want to cover ourselves up to create an image of ourselves that isn't true so people will like us better. And those things are going to happen again tomorrow.

But what we can do is let God win the battle for us. We are new creatures in Christ, and we are not who we use to be. God comes to us as he did in the garden, as our Father, tenderly seeking us. The seed of the woman, the promised individual, the second Adam, the Savior who would win the battle, has come. It was future for Adam and Eve, but it is in the past for us. Our Lord Jesus, the sinless one, has won the victory on the cross. We can cling to him, derive our strength from him, and do battle in his authority.

We can hear the voice of God, believe in the promised One he sent, and not try to go backward to the garden, but look forward to the day when there will be new heavens and a new earth, when sin is finally done away with, when all its capacity to tempt us and cause struggle for us is gone. We are called to a life of faith, trusting the God who seeks us because he wants to do good to us, the God who has sent a Savior who has won the victory. We have the certainty of an empty grave and the promise of a future. All of those are the weapons we take up.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,

His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning, new every morning,

Great is thy faithfulness, O Lord,

Great is thy faithfulness ."

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Credits: Text by Joni Mitchell, " 1969.

Text " 1955 by Walker Arnold.

The Steadfast Love of the Lord , text by Edith McNeill, " 1974, 1975.

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