

# Story #2: Your Death, Pt. 1

## *The Three Stories of the Bible*

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-11

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Today your vision is going to expand! I'm excited for you. As we discussed last week, everything written, everything recorded in the Bible relates to at least one of three stories. You want to know what the Bible is about? It tells three stories: the story of *your design*, *your death* and *your deliverance*. We looked at your design last Sunday. We saw from the Scriptures that God designed you as his child whom he loves, as his companion whom he enjoys, and as his prince with whom he rules. We didn't begin to unpack what all that means; but we found that as one made in God's likeness, **you are so awesome!**

Today, we look at the second story in the Bible. We are going to discuss this second story on two Sundays. This week we are going to look at how death has visited you as a child and companion of God, and on March 4<sup>th</sup> we'll look how death has attacked you as a prince in this world.

When God created the human race and formed us as his children and companions, He designed us to live in innocence. Adam and Eve moved about the garden with no conception of anything evil. They behaved with God like toddlers who fully trust their parents. They hid nothing from God or one another. They didn't even think of hiding.

Have you ever been in a house with small children? Sometimes, you can be sitting in the living room and observe a little one streak to the bathroom. Sometimes, to the embarrassment of their parents, they'll even stop on their way and greet the guests. It doesn't occur in their little minds that there is anything unusual about them not wearing clothes. What's more, these little ones speak their minds and share their feelings without any pretension. If they're disappointed, they won't say, "That's okay;" instead, they'll sink to the floor in tears. They hide nothing from you. You can know everything about a small child because they have no shame. They'll show you their toys, the new toilet seat Dad installed, any scar they might bear, they'll show you anything. Because they have no vision of good and evil, they hold nothing back. You can know them fully because they are not guarded. They are innocent.

God made us to be that way. We were made to live in innocence which brings intimacy. We were designed to be innocent and intimate.

In Genesis, Adam and Eve strolled through the Garden of Eden. They knew no shame, and they were so intimate with God. God would come and stroll with them through the garden in the morning. The Bible says:

***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...*** (Genesis 3:8)

Think of that scene. Adam and Eve would walk with their heavenly Father and discuss their day as the sun was rising in the horizon. Can you imagine God taking a stroll and chatting with you? That is what you were designed for. You were designed to stroll throughout this world with God as your partner and counselor. You were designed to enjoy God, to enjoy one another, to enjoy this world in innocence forever, with no shame or fear.

In Genesis 3, however, death came. Adam and Eve didn't die in body at that moment, but their innocence, intimacy and companionship all passed away. Here's what happened.

According to the Bible, God put his two children in a beautiful garden. In the midst of the garden were *the tree of life* and *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

Not much is said about *the tree of life* in Genesis. We know from the second chapter of Genesis that it is in the middle of the garden and from Genesis 3 that whoever eats its fruit lives forever. The tree of life is mentioned only four more times in the Bible: all in the last book, the book of Revelation. Three of those instances talk about who eats the tree's fruit. One passage, however, describes the tree. In Revelation 22 John sees the tree of life standing on each side of a river flowing from God's throne room. Monthly, it yields fruit, and its leaves heal the nations.

Hundreds of years before John, Ezekiel saw something strikingly similar. In Ezekiel 47, the prophet saw a river flowing from the temple and producing life wherever it went. On each side of the river grew trees that both produced fruit each month and had leaves that brought healing. No doubt Ezekiel's grove was the tree of life.

When I hear these descriptions, I think of Jesus. I believe that Jesus is the tree of life. John wrote that whoever has the Son of God has life and whoever does not have the Son does not have life (1 Jn. 5:11-12). Jesus called himself the vine. Jesus told people that life was in him. Jesus told people to feed on him. His body is real food; his blood is real drink. He told a Samaritan woman, "If you knew who I am, you'd ask me for living water that quenches your thirst forever." Jesus claimed to be the bread of heaven that gives life

to the world. He is the physician sent for our healing. His deeds are those healing leaves. He is the tree of life that in some way once stood available in the garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve could never taste that fruit, however. They could never enjoy what that tree offered because they focused on the second of the only two trees named in the garden. The serpent called their attention to *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. Of all the trees of the garden, only its fruit was forbidden. All the other trees, including the tree of life, stood with their fruit available to that first couple. What other trees do you think were in that garden? Do you suppose there was *the tree of the knowledge of creation*? Do you suppose there was *the tree of the knowledge of heaven*? Do you suppose there was *the tree of parenting principles*? What kind of trees and what kind of fruit did God offer that first couple? If you are thinking exclusively in terms of apples and oranges, I don't think you understand the kind of garden God planted. It was a garden to feed and develop his children as his companions and rulers in this world.

Because they were his children, they had the right to the knowledge of good and evil; but it would destroy them if they ate its fruit.

***...you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die*** (Genesis 2:17).

Satan bated Adam and Eve. *"You won't die,"* he said. *"Your eyes will be opened and now you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* Perhaps, Eve had her eyes opened to wonderful knowledge by the other fruit she had tasted from the trees of that garden. Perhaps, she thought that the taste of this luscious fruit would bring her so much more wisdom and perspective on this world. Perhaps, she thought that finally she and her husband would be like their father.

No one knows how long Eve endured this temptation, whether it was minutes or hours or days or years; but when she and her husband took and ate the fruit, their eyes did open.

***When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 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*** (Gen 3:6-7).

From that moment on, they were no longer innocent. They felt guilt. They felt shame. They felt fear. They felt vulnerable. They worried and fretted. All of this they felt because they looked at things like they never looked at them before. They identified

everything in terms of good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust. That tree gave them a *moral vision*. These princes of the world were now judges. They were umpires concerned with right and wrong. Their moral conscience, their vision, destroyed their innocence and their intimacy, so that they feared God and hid. Their new perspective separated them from God and one another. It caused them to fight with each other because of their differing senses of justice, and it would lead them to become eternal competitors rather than companions with God. On the day that Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God lost his children. God lost his companions that day. Would it be forever?

***And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (Gen. 3:22)***

Death entered the world not because God was angry at disobedience. Death came because the only hope for the human race was that some day our vision would die. Some day we would no longer live as moral competitors. God wanted us back, and death was the only way. God's curse of death was a merciful gift. According to St. Paul in Romans 8, creation was subjected to frustration and death in hope that one day we would be gloriously free, restored as God's children.

Until our death, consider what a vision of good and evil does. The vision of good and evil makes us either self-righteous or guilt ridden and self-loathing. It is the vision of good and evil that sows disharmony in a marriage. That vision causes mates to see their partners' actions as just or unjust. Thus, they become angry and offended by each other. They become judges of each other, and occasionally, they become judges of themselves and hate and loathe themselves. It is the vision of good and evil that splits churches. *"This is right. This is wrong. This is outrageous. This is indefensible. How awful! She's innocent. He's justified."* This is all the language of good and evil. It all comes from the tree that separates us from God.

"Are you a good Christian? Are you a good pastor? Are you a good person?" Those thoughts come from the forbidden fruit. They are the perspective of good and evil, not innocence and intimacy for which we were designed. The concept of a good or bad Christian is utterly foreign to the gospel. Jesus didn't come teaching good and evil. He came not as an umpire. He came as a lifeguard. He came with one mission: to restore people to an innocence and companionship with their heavenly father. Jesus is not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He is the tree of life.

It is true that there is good in this world that brings blessing, and it is true that there is evil in this world that causes horrific harm. Life, however, is not in the discernment of good and evil. It's in the fruit from the tree of life. It's in an eye-changing, life changing relationship with Jesus.

Did you know that the gospel calls us to die in Jesus? In Jesus we bury our vision. In Jesus we begin to see and think differently. In Jesus we cease to be umpires. Instead, he sends us as lifeguards. We're to help people, not judge people. We're to help them taste the fruit from the tree of life. In Jesus we don't even judge ourselves. Quite the contrary, we have Jesus reform us.

What tree has been dominating your vision? Are you seeing things in terms of good and evil? That must die. Let yourself die. Let your sense of justice die. Come to Jesus and die. Let Christ rebirth your life and vision. When that happens, in truth, you'll never die again!