







7 studies on Genesis chapters 1-3, 1st draft

The Old Testament *does* communicate to us and it was written for us, and for all humankind. But it was not written *to* us. It was written to Israel. It is God's revelation of himself to Israel and secondarily through Israel to everyone else. As obvious as this is, we must be aware of the implications of that simple statement. Since it was written to Israel, it is in a language that most of us do not understand, and therefore it requires translation. But the language is not the only aspect that needs to be translated. Language assumes a culture, operates in a culture, serves a culture, and is designed to communicate into the framework of a culture. Consequently, when we read a text written in another language and addressed to another culture, we must translate the culture as well as the language if we hope to understand the text fully. . . .

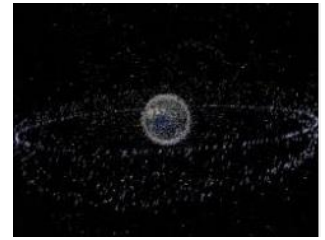
Our first proposition is that Genesis 1 is ancient cosmology. That is, it does not attempt to describe cosmology in modern terms or address modern questions. The Israelites received no revelation to update or modify their "scientific" understanding of the cosmos. They did not know that stars were suns; they did not know that the earth was spherical and moving through space; they did not know that the sun was much further away than the moon, or even further than the birds flying in the air. They believed that the sky was material (not vaporous), solid enough to support the residence of deity as well as to hold back waters. In these ways, and many others, they thought about the cosmos in much the same way that anyone in the ancient world thought, and not at all like anyone thinks today! And God did not think it important to revise their thinking.

From **The Lost World of Genesis One** by John Walton pp 7 and 14.

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In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: lecture series and DVD at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, and his books **The Lost World of Genesis One** and **Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament**, essays "On Jesus as Attuned to Life, not Good and Evil" and "From Promised Land to Reconciled Cosmos: Paul's Translation of 'Worldview', 'Worldstory' and 'Worldperson'" by Mark Strom, talks by Mark Strom "On Paul" 9/4/2011, "Good and Evil" 14/10/2011 from Gospel Conversations website, an essay by Tony Golsby-Smith called "A Theory of Sin and Evil", 2008, **Institutes of Christian Religion** Book II chapter one by John Calvin, a talk by Tony Golsby-Smith called "Augustine and Original Sin", Gospel Conversations 20/5/2016, **Born Bad** by James Boyce, a lecture by Iain Provan called "On Living in a Blighted World" at Scots Presbyterian Church, Sydney, 13/8/2016, "Marketing 101" from *The Briefing* # 381, 1/6/2010, by Braddon Upex, "The Word on . . . Suffering" Bible study by Kerry Nagel, 26/27 November 2016, Andrew Bartz at a Q and A session on "Hope and Hell" from www.gospelconversations.com, www.preceptaustin.org/greek_quick_reference_guide, Nooma video, #18, "Name", by Rob Bell, **Hosea Series Overview – 2018** by Ben Molyneux, "Father and Son" by Cat Stevens, **Lion Handbook to the Bible** Second Revised Edition, the Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study booklet **Beyond Eden Genesis 1-11** by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne, Matthias Media Pathway Bible Guide **Beginning with God Genesis 1-12** by Gordon Cheng

Study 1, Genesis chapter 1, create



Getting started

1. If you can, name something that you have done that was creative. It doesn't have to be something big like creating a cure for cancer. It can be something like trying a different ingredient in cooking a meal or working out how to keep the grandchildren amused.

2. In what different ways can we be creative?

Bible

3. What did God create (see Pss 8:3, 33:6-9, 104:24-26, 148:1-6, John 1:1-5, Col 1:16)?

4. I would like us to look at Genesis from a different point of view to the one we would normally use. My sources are a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, and his book The Lost World of Genesis One.

We normally look at things through 21st century eyes with a lot of scientific knowledge at our disposal. Try thinking like the ancient people that Moses wrote to. People who had no scientific knowledge but who were observant of the world around them. For example, what do you think the original hearers of Genesis would have understood by this picture?



What about this one?



The ancient Egyptians thought the sky god gave birth to the sun every morning and swallowed it every evening. The sky god was separate from the earth god and the air god held them apart by creating a living bubble between the two. The sky god held back the waters above from the waters below. Everybody in the ancient world believed this, even the ancient Israelites except they called "God" the person who did all these things.



Read Gen 1:6-8. The logic in their minds was that it rained sometimes so there must be someone up there holding the water back in dry weather. This is the way people thought in the ancient world and the way people thought in ancient Israel was no different. God didn't tell them anything different. God spoke to the ancient people in a way they understood.

Read Gen 1:1-2:3.

Gen 1:1 uses the word "create". Question 2 was about the different things we can create. Creating a recipe is a lot different from creating a masterpiece or creating havoc so the verb "create" means something slightly different depending on what is being created. The same thing happens in Hebrew. The Hebrew word "bara" is translated as "create" in our English Bibles and it occurs about 50 times in the Old Testament. God is always the subject of this verb, i.e. God created . . . but the objects of this verb, i.e. what God created, are not necessarily material objects e.g. God creates a pure heart (Ps 51:10) and God creates darkness/calamity (Is 45:7). "Bara" is more about organisational acts of creation rather than material acts of creation. Like creating a committee the material is already there i.e. people, but we need to organise them into working together to achieve a common goal and hence, we create a committee.

The ancient Egyptians spoke about non-existence as that which had not yet been assigned a function e.g. the desert was non-existent. The movement from non-existence to existence was about creating order and functions not creating material things. The starting point was not about a lack of objects but a lack of order/function.

When we create something there is a before and an after. For example, *before* we create a committee we have people wandering around doing their own thing but *after* we create a committee we have people united for a specific purpose.



5. (a) Read Gen 1:2. What material things do we have in Gen 1:2?



(b) What do we have *before* those things? Read Gen 1:1.

(c) So what kind of a statement is Gen 1:1?

The word translated “formless” in Gen 1:2 occurs 20 times in the Old Testament and always means lacking purpose and order, not lacking shape. The word translated “empty” or “void” only occurs 3 times and always refers back to Gen 1.

6. Read Gen 1:3-5. In v5 the word for “day” is different to the word for “light”.

(a) Why did God call the light “day”? Why didn’t he just leave it as “light”?

(b) What does “day” have to do with “light”?

(c) What might separating light from darkness mean? In Gen 1:2 we only had darkness.

(d) Considering that the ancient way of thinking was that creating meant giving something a function and ordering things, what is God creating on Day 1?

7. (a) What do you think “good” means in Gen 1:4? Other uses of the word “good” occur in Gen 1:10, 12, 17-18, 21, 25 and 31.

(b) We might understand what “good” means by comparing it with something that is “not good”. Read Gen 2:18. (i) What was “not good”?

(ii) What does “not good” mean?

(c) “Good” and “not good” in Gen 1 and 2 may refer to functioning properly or not functioning properly. How would this idea apply to Gen 2:18?

8. Read Gen 1:6-8. What function is being set up here in Day 2?



9. Read Gen 1:9-13. What function is being set up here in Day 3?

10. Read Gen 1:14-19. Ancient Israel thought of the sun, moon and stars as lights not objects. The rest of the ancient world thought they were gods. Back then no-one had the science that explained stars, planets or satellites. Light being created in Day 1 and the sun, moon and stars not being created until Day 4 may seem confusing to our scientific minds but only if you think of this as a material account of creation. If we think of this as functions being created in Days 1 to 3 then we can see the logic of next creating things to work with the functions of Days 1 to 3.

If God created time on Day 1 what does Day 4 (vv14-19) say about time?

11. Ancient people could assess the weather by looking at the sky and the sea. If God created the sky, sea and weather on Day 2 what does Day 5 say about the sky, sea and weather? Read Gen 1:20-23.

12. If God created food on Day 3 what does Day 6 say about food? Read Gen 1:24-31.

To finish

13. In conclusion, what sort of creation story is this in Gen ch 1?

Study 2, Genesis chapter 2, rest, temple, archetype

Getting started

1. How do you relax? What do you do on a day off?



Bible

2. Read Gen 2:1-3.
Why does God need to rest?

3. What does “rest” mean to you?

4. What does “rest” mean in the quotes below?

(a) Ps 95:6-11 and Heb 3:7-4:13.

Context for Hebrews: Hebrews confronts one of the pressing problems of the emerging church in the first century i.e. the ‘Judaizing’ of Christianity. The writer looks at aspects of Judaism and shows how this religious system was fulfilled and expanded by Jesus. Heb 3:7-4:13 is about the “rest” that was promised in Canaan, the Promised Land, and how much that was fulfilled by Jesus and the new covenant in Heb 7:22-8:13.

(b) Heb 7:22-8:13.

(c) Heb 12:14-24.

Context: Hebrews begins with creation (Heb 1:1-2) and ends with the new creation, Mt Zion (Heb 12:22-29).

(c) Matt 11:25-30.

Context: In the first four chapters of Matthew we read about the coming of the king heralded by angels and a scruffy prophet called John the Baptist. After being commissioned by the Holy Spirit Jesus describes, in chapters 5 to 7, what the kingdom of heaven is like under his rule. In chapters 8 to 15 we get glimpses of what it will be like to live with Jesus as king – the sick healed, the dead raised, demons cast out, evil opposed, people fed, relationships restored.

5. What might God be doing when he rests?

"We ask "Why would God need to **rest**?" That's because there are things we don't understand about God resting. See, if you gave this text [Gen 1:1-2:3] to an Egyptian or a Babylonian, ask them to read through it and they would get to Day 7 and say "Oh, this is a temple story". And you'd say "What are you talking about? Let me read it again, no, it doesn't say anything about a temple. And they would say "It's all about a temple". You'd be frustrated. You'd say "How in the world are you getting that?" . . . They know exactly what God resting has to do with creation because in the ancient world gods rested in temples and temples are constructed for the deity to rest in. If you've got divine rest, you've got a temple. . . . In the ancient world temples are not only made for deities to rest in, temples are the command centre of the cosmos."

From a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, sponsored by Gospel Conversations.

The **rest**, while it represents *disengagement* from any process of establishing order . . . is more importantly an expression of *engagement* as the deity takes his place at the helm to maintain an ordered, secure, and stable cosmos. From Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament by John H. Walton p 157.

6. What is a temple?



Worship took place at **temples**, but temples were not designed primarily to provide a place of worship. They were designed to be residences for deities and, as such, places for the performance of cultic rituals. . . .

From the standpoint of deity, the temple is his/her estate and residence. The earthly temple was a symbol, an echo, a shadow of the heavenly residence. As such it served as a link, a bond, or even a portal to the heavenly residence. . . .

The residence of the deity in the temple required the recognition of **sacred space**. This objective is evident in the earliest steps of temple building. The selection of the site was determined by oracle so that the god could designate a sacred site. In the ancient world they believed that certain locations had gained sacred status as portals through which the gods traversed. Thus sacred space was identified even before the temple was built. . . . All of the architecture of the temple was designed to represent and preserve the sanctity of the site, generally through the establishment of sacred zones, barriers between those zones and limited sight lines. . . . Likewise, the eyes of the curious were prevented from glimpsing the sacred image except as permitted in occasional festival processions. Israel shared in this ideology of sacred space at nearly every point.

From Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament by John H. Walton pp 113-118.

7. How do the ideas of temple and rest fit in with the idea that Jesus gives his people rest (check your answer to question 4 above)?

8. Read Gen 2:4-15.
If this is a temple story what work did Adam do?

9. Read and compare Gen 1:3-31 and Gen 2:4-25.
(a) What is being created in - Gen 1:3-31?

- Gen 2:4-25?

(b) Why is creation described so differently in these 2 passages?

Gen 1:3-31



Gen 2:4-25



Archetype

A prototype is the first in a series. They make one and set up an assembly line and make lots of others. That's a prototype. The difference with an archetype is that with an archetype there is representation. That is, all the ones in the group are represented in that one. So, for instance, when Paul says "we all sin in Adam" [Rom ch 5] he's treating Adam as an archetype with regard to sin. When we are told that Abraham is the father of all those in the faith [Rom ch 4], that's his archetypal role. When Jesus says he does his work and provides life – he is archetypal as the last Adam. The Bible uses archetypes. The Ancient Near East used archetypes all over the place.

From a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, sponsored by Gospel Conversations.

In Genesis 1 we asked the question, what story is the text telling and we ask the same question in Genesis 2. What part of the story is the text telling? Is it telling the individual, material story or is it telling the archetypal, representative story. And as I've developed in this material I think that it is telling the archetypal story.

From the DVD given out at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013.

10. How are Adam and Eve archetypal i.e. representative of all humanity . . .
(a) in being formed from dust (v 7)?

(b) in naming the animals (v 19)?

(c) in becoming one flesh (v 24)?

(d) in working and taking care of the Garden of Eden (v 15)?

Priestly representation

In Gen 2:15 God puts Adam in the Garden to serve and keep it. Our typical reading of that has been somehow connected to landscaping, pruning, planting, harvesting. We have to understand that in the ancient world gardens of this sort were constructed in the vicinity of sacred space. They were part of sacred space. They were not vegetable gardens or potato gardens or wheat gardens or anything of that sort. They were typically like a garden park like a good British garden or something like that. Generally trees and water courses and things of that sort represented the fertility that god's presence brought. That's what the garden is.

Adam does not need to do gardener's work. The Garden of Eden is not important as green space. God provided it to give food to people. By the way, that's the opposite in the ancient world – people would have used it to provide food for the gods rather than the gods providing food for people.

The role that people have in the Garden is not landscaping. The role they have is priestly. I know that because of the words that are used. The word that is translated "serve" is the verb "avard" and it has a wide range. It can mean to work the ground. As a matter of fact, early in the chapter in Gen 2:5-6 there's no man to work the ground. That was that verb but there it is the direct object of the ground that tells you what kind of work it is. Throughout the Pentateuch most of the uses of this verb had to do with priests who serve in sacred space. Now if we just had that verb "avard" we'd have to say ok, it's working the ground and it has to do with gardening or is it working sacred space? The next verb "keep" – "sharma" is also a priestly term because the priests are protecting/guarding sacred space, keeping is sacred. And so when we have the combination of these two verbs we conclude that this is a role in sacred space and it's a role like priests had. Priests served and preserved sacred space.

We think the main role of the priest was to offer rituals, offer sacrifices, instruct the people. All of those were connected to keeping sacred space. They kept sacred space by offering sacrifices for the offences of the people that would encroach on sacred space. They instructed the people so that the people would know what was expected of them so that sacred space could be maintained. So the priestly role had to do with preserving sacred space and that's the role that Adam was given. Adam was given that role in 2:15 and it is at that point that it says it is not good for man to be alone and we have the naming of the animals and then Eve comes along.

Eve as "helper"

The idea there is that Eve is an ally of Adam's doing these priestly roles in sacred space. When it describes her as a help mate that is not an inferior role. In the Bible the most common individual that is a helper is God. So we know that is not an inferior position. So it doesn't mean the woman is inferior because she's a helper. Likewise, it doesn't mean she's God! She's an ally in the task of preserving sacred space. When it says it's not good for man to be alone God's not saying, "Ah, they've got to reproduce, I guess he needs someone." No, it's not about reproduction. It's about sacred space. It's about priests. A priestly role is a representative role. As priests they are representative of all humanity but not because all humanity is, sort of, in them. That's archetype. That's a different sort of representation. But as priests what they do they do on behalf of humankind. And so as they do certain things in sacred space they are performing duties on behalf of humankind.

Now, if there are other humans at that time they are doing it on behalf of those other humans. If there aren't other humans at that time they are doing it representatively for all humans to come. Either way you cut it, it is the same priestly role. Priestly representation, then, is different from archetypal representation. So that's two different ways of thinking about Adam and Eve. The former accounts are archetypal. Their work in sacred space is priestly.

From a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, sponsored by Gospel Conversations.

To finish

11. How is Jesus archetypal (see Rom 5)?

Study 3, Genesis chapters 1-3, Adam & Eve

Getting started

1. (Around-the-room question) Think of a time when you changed your mind about something. What events led you to change your mind?

Bible

2. Read Gen 1:26-2:25.
From this passage only (a) what things were Adam and Eve doing?



- (b) Did they have the knowledge of good and evil?
- (c) What do you think it means to have the knowledge of good and evil?
- (d) How were Adam and Eve's lives going without the knowledge of good and evil?
- (e) What was the restriction that Adam and Eve lived under?
- (f) Since they knew about this restriction, does this mean they had knowledge of good and evil?
- (g) What was the Tree of Life for?

3. Read Gen ch 3.

When Adam & Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil they suddenly knew good and evil.

(a) How did that knowledge change them?

(b) What were the curses God put on Adam & Eve?

(c) Is the knowledge of good and evil a curse?

Humanity is condemned forever to perceive reality through the lens of 'good and evil'. We have now so hardwired 'morality' deeply into our psyche that we cannot do without it or even imagine a sphere that lies outside it. Morality seems to be the furthest horizon of holiness and character. I cannot conceive of a territory that lies beyond its borders. Every battle, every achievement lies within its borders. Thus I am condemned to evaluate every situation through this lens. 'Is this good or bad?' is the question that will always come to my mind. I evaluate myself as well as others through this lens.

Why is this a heavy burden? Well it surrenders me to the role of judging which is in fact God's heavy burden to bear not mine. I am now painfully aware of the dark side as well as the good side. I hypothesise that God did not ever intend that we know this sphere of 'good and evil'. It was not our calling nor was it necessary for us to fulfil our destiny and our role in the universe and God's scheme of things. Apparently God wanted us to partake of the tree of life not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He wanted us to feel and perceive all things intuitively and naturally through the lens of life not morality. I imagine that he wanted our sphere to be cocooned and protected from the knowledge of good and evil.

Knowing good and evil is a curse in many ways. It seems to lay upon our shoulders a heaviness that we cannot ever resolve. Judging is an interminable puzzle that no-one can unravel even with the wisdom of Solomon. I am confronted by this burden of frustration every day when I confront the messy situations of life. I observe or participate in family quarrels and tensions or in business quarrels or tensions. Some are simple but even those strain my capacity to know what is really good and what is really evil. . . .

In personal matters, the knowledge of good is as dangerous as the knowledge of evil. If I know good it will condemn me. When I am weak and undone, the knowledge of good speaks guilt and unworthiness into my soul. I have always noticed that no-one is as dangerous and reckless as the guilty soul. Once someone is racked by guilt (i.e. they know good in their situation but cannot participate in it), they will behave badly. This is always the way. Remind someone of their sins and their faults, and that person will dwindle in their capacity to do good. This is the argument of Romans 7. It demonstrates that the knowledge of good and evil (i.e. the law) cannot produce righteousness.

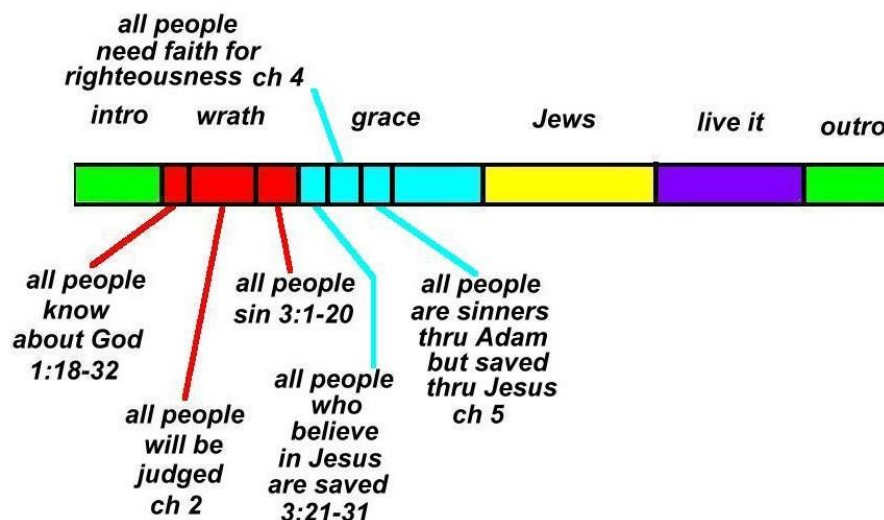
This is a vital point. Nowhere in the above argument do I suggest that there is deceit in the knowing. The curse of the tree, and the reason for its prohibition, was not that the knowing it produces is false. It is not a tree where the good is called evil and the evil is called good. It is the right knowledge of good and evil that we are warned against. The fact that we know correctly what is good and evil does not rescue us from its curse. What this tree implies is that when we know good and evil we will be 'like God – knowing good and evil'. This implies that on the created zone we were protected from cosmic forces that God was privy to but we were not. There was no need for us to know them. but once we ate of the tree we knew what was not good for us to know. It was not necessary for us to know it, because we could not do anything with that knowledge. It is too great to handle. It would just frustrate us. We are not called to be judges; we are called to be life givers.

From an essay by Tony Golsby-Smith called "A Theory of Sin and Evil", 2008.

4. These curses applied to all humanity. But these curses were reversed by Jesus in his death and resurrection. Some of these reversals have already happened and some will happen when Jesus returns and brings in a new heaven and a new earth.

Read Rom 5:12-19.

Context: Paul explains the gospel in the first 7 chapters. In chs 5-8 he writes about freedom from the wrath of God, freedom from the power of sin, freedom from the law and freedom from death.



Which curses are reversed according to this passage?

To finish

5. In Rom 5:17 it says that death reigned because of sin but now Christians reign in life because of Jesus. Perhaps Christians reign in life something like the way Adam & Eve reigned before the Fall. Perhaps we can live something like the way Adam and Eve did before the Fall. In particular, I want to look at the possibility of living without the "curse" of the knowledge of good and evil. Let's look at an example:

Imagine having dinner with friends. What would you be concerned about when you are getting ready to go to this dinner?



Sometimes you feel so at ease with your friends that it doesn't matter what you say or what you wear or what you bring. In this situation you would not be concerned with right/wrong or good/evil. All that matters is enjoying each other's company. This is like living without the knowledge of good and evil. It is like the life Adam and Eve had before the Fall. The next step is to answer the question, does the New Testament promote that life? What do you think?

Study 4, Genesis chapters 1-3, identity

Getting started

1. Someone asks you, "Who you are?" What do you say?
2. You are watching an American TV drama and a policeman comes up to an ordinary person and asks to see some identification. What does he mean?
3. In "The Bourne Identity" Jason Bourne can't remember anything but he knows he's good at fighting and driving fast cars. He has a number of passports with his photo but under different names. He wants to find out his real identity. What does he mean?
4. In the context of computers and the internet what is meant by "identity theft"?



5. In the 1970s many people were involved in a personal search called "finding yourself". A typical example of finding yourself was a song by Cat Stevens called "Father and Son".

(Father) It's not time to make a change,
Just relax, take it easy.
You're still young, that's your fault,
There's so much you have to know.
Find a girl, settle down,
If you want you can marry.
Look at me, I am old, but I'm happy.

I was once like you are now, and I know that it's not easy,
To be calm when you've found something going on.
But take your time, think a lot,
Why, think of everything you've got.
For you will still be here tomorrow, but your dreams may not.

(Son) How can I try to explain, when I do he turns away again.
It's always been the same, same old story.
From the moment I could talk I was ordered to listen.
Now there's a way and I know that I have to go away.
I know I have to go.

(Father) It's not time to make a change,
Just sit down, take it slowly.
You're still young, that's your fault,
There's so much you have to go through.
Find a girl, settle down,
If you want you can marry.
Look at me, I am old, but I'm happy.
(Son – away, away, away, I know I have to make this decision alone – no.)

(Son) All the times that I cried, keeping all the things I knew inside,
 It's hard, but it's harder to ignore it.
 If they were right, I'd agree, but it's them they know not me.
 Now there's a way and I know that I have to go away.
 I know I have to go.
 (Father – stay, stay, stay, why must you go and make this decision alone?)



(a) What does it mean to find yourself?

(b) Did you find yourself?

(c) What did you find?

Bible

The following questions refer to Adam and Eve but they also refer to humanity in an archetypal way (see p 8).

2. Read Gen 1:26-31.
 - (a) What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

There have been *many* suggestions. These verses have become a sort of all-purpose proof text for many modern doctrines and controversies. The phrase 'image of God' is seemingly so broad. What is unique about man that he can be said to be in God's image? Is it his soul, or his spiritual potential, or his capacity for rational thought, or his ability to speak, or his appearance, or his innate moral sense, or his responsibility for the world, or a chop-suey of some or all of these?

From the Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study booklet Beyond Eden Genesis 1-11 by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne p 18.

(b) Man/mankind/humanity was allowed to rule the plants and animals of the earth.
What has this got to do with being in the image of God?

(c) "Finding yourself" involved a search for the real you, what you are like, what is your purpose in life, what you look for in other people, what you think about things i.e. a search for your identity.
What does being in the image of God tell you about your identity?

3. Read Gen 2:4-7, 3:19.

(a) The people of the Ancient Near East did not think in terms of the chemistry of dust but they did think in terms of their own identity.

What does coming from dust and returning to dust say about identity (see also Ps 103:14 and 1 Cor 15:47)?

4. Read Gen 2:8-17, 3:22-24.

(a) What was the Tree of Life for?

(b) What does the Tree of Life say about identity?

(c) What was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil for?

(d) In what way did Adam and Eve become like God (see also Gen 3:4-6)?

(e) What is wisdom for Eve (Gen 3:6)?

(f) What does the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil say about our identity?

5. Read Gen 2:19-20.

(a) Why did God bring the animals to the man to name them?

(b) What does naming mean for our identity?

6. Video

This Nooma video, #18, called Name by Rob Bell is one of 24 made between 2002 and 2009. In each video Rob Bell takes an aspect of Christian life and expresses it in an interesting and challenging way. This one goes for about 14 mins.

(a) What are your first impressions of this video?



(b) What follows is a sample of the words on the back of the T-shirts.
What does each word mean to you?

designer suits

pick-up trucks

immigrant

weak

ashamed

bankrupt

(c) What have these names got to do with "identity"?

(d) What does the bare skin signify?

(e) Rob Bell tells the story of Jacob. After wrestling with the angel, the angel asks "What is your name?" Jacob answers "Jacob" (not Esau). (i) Why is this significant?

(ii) How does Rob Bell relate this story about Jacob to us?

(f) Rob Bell tells the story about how Jesus tells Peter that he is going to be a leader in his church (John ch 21) and Peter looks to John and says “What about him?” Jesus says don’t worry about John, you follow me. How does Rob Bell relate this story to us?

(g) What do you think is the take home message from the video?

May you do the hard work to discover your true self.
May you find your unique path, the one God has for you.
And in the process, may you find yourself comfortable in your own skin.

7. Read Gen 2:20-25.

Rib, Gen 2:23

There’s more than a rib going on here. . . . This word translated “rib” never elsewhere refers to anatomy. . . . The word is used quite often, not in anatomy but in architecture. In architecture it represents one side of a pair – the north side and the south side, this side of the temple and that side of the temple, this side of the altar and that side of the altar. It talks about sides where there are two of them. That means if God took one of Adam’s sides he’s cut him in half. . . . Now that would be fairly radical surgery but what makes us think that an Israelite would think of surgery? But it says God closed up the flesh {Gen 2:21}. That’s true. Could you see the sutures? Yeah but God put Adam in a deep sleep. So did the Israelites know anything about anaesthesiology? No, they don’t.

How is an Israelite thinking about this text? By looking at the Hebrew words we find information that might surprise us. The Hebrew word for a deep sleep is used 15-20 times and what we find is one of the significant things it refers to is when someone is in a visionary state. That is, they are in a deep sleep so that God can show them something in the spiritual realm so that God can show them something important.

Abraham, in chapter 15, slices up the animals and then there is deep sleep and he sees a vision – the torch in the oven passing through the pieces. This is nothing less significant than the ratification of the covenant, arguably the most important event in the Old Testament, and God shows it in a vision.

If Adam is in a deep sleep it’s not so that he won’t feel the surgical knife. It’s rather so that God can show him a vision of something that is very important for him to understand. So the text tells us “that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh [Gen 2:24]. Why is it that someone would leave the closest biological relationship that they have – parents and children – in order to start up a new family with an unrelated stranger? How’s that work? The text has an answer. It’s because humanity – this is not talking about you as an individual, this is corporate identity which is how they always think in the ancient world.

Corporate identity – humanity is halves of a whole. You leave your biological family and find a spouse. It’s because you have this drive to that which you originally were. Halves of a whole. Humanity is gendered. Ontology trumps biology. You’re going to return to your roots. And so when it says they become one flesh this is not a statement of what marriage is. This is a statement that you are returning to that one flesh that is the origins of humanity in terms of who you are as people.

Is this just true of Adam and Eve? Of course not. It’s true of everybody. That’s the nature of the statement. It’s true of everybody. So it’s archetypal. Formed from dust – true of us all. Woman from man – true of us all. Originally one flesh – true of us all. That doesn’t say that if you decide to be single or you end up single, you are out of kilter. No, this is not about individuals. This is about humanity. This is about our identity.

From a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, sponsored by Gospel Conversations.

If Adam and Eve were 2 halves to a whole, in an archetypal sense, what does this say about our identity?

To finish

8. Read Eph 1.

Context: Paul's letter to the Ephesians differs considerably from his other letters. There are none of the usual personal greetings, although Paul had spent some years in Ephesus and had many friends there (see on Acts 19). Nor does Ephesians deal with particular problems or news. Even the words 'at Ephesus' (1:1) are missing from some of the early manuscripts. So it seems likely that Ephesians began as a circular letter written to a group of churches in what is now western Turkey, of which Ephesus itself was the most important. John's 'seven churches' (Revelation 1:11) were in this general area, as was the church at Colossae.

The fact that Paul wrote from prison (probably in Rome in the early 60s) links this letter with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, the other 'letters from prison'. Of the three, Ephesians is closest in thought to Colossians. Because of its general nature the letter provides few clues to the situation in the churches. But it is clear that the Gentile Christians predominated, and that they tended to look down on their Jewish fellow Christians. Paul had been specially commissioned to work among the Gentiles, but he held no brief for a divided church.

From the Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition, p 604.

What do we find out about our identity if we are "in Christ"?

Let us look further at how the 'image of God' theme relates to us as Christians. There are 3 aspects to it.

1. We've put on a new self.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Col 3:9-10.

The image that was marred by the fall, the old self with all its destructive, anti-social practices, has now been 'put off' by Christians. There has been a radical change. We have said 'No' to our old way of life; we have made a decisive, 180-degree change in direction. The 'new self' we have put on begins the process of restoring the tainted image. It is being 'renewed in the image of its Creator'.

2. This work is not yet complete. The decisive change has been made; the direction has been set; but the transformation goes on gradually throughout our Christian lives (2 Cor 3:18).

Our bodies continue to decay but the image – the likeness – grows day by day. In other words, in this present age, the change is spiritual not physical (2 Cor 4:16).

3. When Christ comes again in glory, the process will be over (Phil 3:20-21).

At that time, we will be transformed to be like Jesus, spiritually *and* physically. He is *the* image of God, the man who rules the creation. At that time, we too, his brothers whom he purchased by his death, will rule with him, as we were created to.

From the Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study booklet Beyond Eden Genesis 1-11 by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne pp 22-23.

Study 5, Genesis ch 3, Original Sin

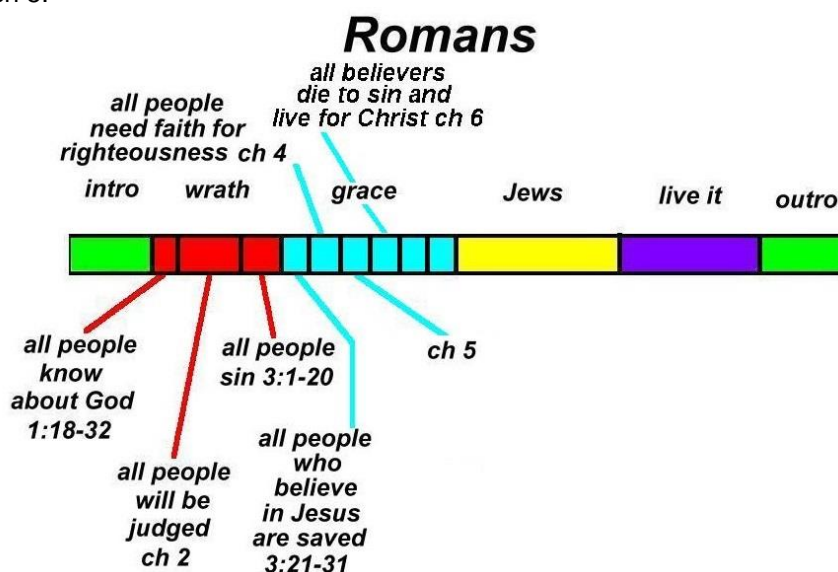
Getting started

1. Christians talk about salvation. What are Christians saved from?



Bible

2. Read Rom ch 5.



In a sentence what is Rom 5 about?

3. Read Rom 5:12-18.
 - (a) What is this passage about?
 - (b) Is the emphasis on sin or death? Give reasons.
4. Paul doesn't finish his sentence in Rom 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned . . ." (NIV). He is side-tracked possibly because he has thought of an objection his Jewish audience might have regarding sin.
 - (a) Read Rom 5:13-17. What is the side-track?
 - (b) Paul concludes his sentence from v 12 in vv 18-20. What is Paul's conclusion?

The crucial phrase at the end of v 12 is “because all sinned” (NIV) which is also translated “for that all have sinned” (KJV)

“for that all sinned” (American Standard Version)

“in that all sinned” (John Murray *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin*)

“Therefore, just as sin entered the cosmos through one man, and death through sin, so also death pervaded all humanity, **whereupon all sinned**” (David Bentley Hart)

The verb translated “all sinned” (Rom 5:12) is in the aorist tense.

[The aorist tense] is analogous to a snapshot which captures an action at specific point in time. [E.g.] 1Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy **has caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The **Aorist tense** conveys the truth that the believer’s new birth (indicative mood is mood of reality) has occurred at a point in the past without specifying when this event occurred.

From www.preceptaustin.org/greek_quick_reference_guide

So “all sinned” in the aorist tense means it happened and then it finished i.e. all sinned when Adam sinned.

The **doctrine of original sin** is explained by Tony Golsby-Smith in a talk called “Augustine and Original Sin”, Gospel Conversations 20/5/2016. “We are not judged for death by our sins – it has nothing to do with us, it is because of Adam’s sin – he did it for us all, it’s the only reason that death reigns. It’s unfair, it has nothing to do with us – that’s the reason we die.”

5. Does this mean (a) that sin was transmitted, like an infection, to all people?
OR (b) that when Adam sinned we all sinned too and the covenant relationship was broken?

(a) Calvin went for option (a):

The heavenly image was obliterated (in Adam) . . . he also entangled and immersed his offspring in the same miseries. This is the inherited corruption which the church fathers termed ‘**original sin**’ . . . therefore good men (Augustine above the rest) labored to show us that we are corrupted not by derived wickedness, but that we bear inborn defect from our mother’s womb. . . . therefore all of us, who have descended from impure seed are born infected with the contagion of sin. In fact, before we saw the light of this life, we were soiled and spotted in God’s sight.

Adam by sinning, not only took upon himself misfortune and ruin, but also plunged our nature into like destruction. . . . he infected all his posterity with that corruption.

Thus when Adam was despoiled, contagion crept into human nature. Hence rotten branches came forth from a rotten root, which transmitted that rottenness to the other twigs.

From Institutes of Christian Religion Book II, chapter one by John Calvin.

(b) An alternative to Calvin’s toxic infection model (see 5 (a) above) is the “Lost Office” model proposed by Tony Golsby-Smith (see 5(b) above).

Imagine a CEO gets sacked while he is out of town. In an instant he loses all the authority and power he had. When he gets back to his office he can’t even enter the building. This is the “**Lost Office**” model. When Adam & Eve break the covenant in Gen 3 God withdraws from the relationship he had with them. This relationship is irrevocable like a smashed vase – there is no way back. This is like the CEO losing his office. To introduce another metaphor – when our prime minister declares war we are all at war whether we like it or not. When Adam lost office he lost office for all of us. This is the covenant reading or lost office reading for Gen 3.

Paraphrasing Tony Golsby-Smith “Augustine and Original Sin” at Gospel Conversations 20/5/2016.

6. Read Gen ch 3.
(a) Is sin mentioned?

(b) Is death mentioned?

(c) What is the arrangement/covenant between God and mankind?

(d) What happens when Adam & Eve break the covenant?



The apple became identified with the forbidden fruit due to the easy Latin pun and/or mispronunciation of *malum* (apple) for *malus* (evil).

From Born Bad by James Boyce p 248.

7. Using the “Lost Office” model:

(a) How is “the Fall” for Adam like a CEO losing his/her job?

(b) Is the emphasis on sin or a broken covenant? Give reasons.

(c) What are the consequences for Adam “losing office”?

(d) From Rom 5 how did Jesus regain office i.e. how did Jesus regain what humanity lost at the Fall?

(e) What are the consequences for those of us who are “in Christ” (John 14:15-21, 17:20-26, Rom 5:12-20, 6:3-10, 2 Cor 5:16-17, Gal 3:26-28, Eph ch 1, 2:1-22, Col 1:24-29) i.e. what is our “new office”?

To finish

8. How would you describe salvation in terms of - sin?

- lost office?

9. In our day to day lives should the emphasis be on - sin/morals

OR - life/relationships? Give reasons for your answer.

Study 6, Genesis ch 3, the talking serpent

Getting started

1. Consider this scenario: You meet a middle aged married couple who come to your church for the first time. They begin to attend regularly and you get to know them fairly well. Eventually they ask you how to become a Christian. While you are trying to answer their question they interrupt you and ask what is sin?

How would you answer them?



What is sin? Here are some answers:

1. Sin = no faithfulness, love or acknowledgement of God.

From Hosea Series Overview – 2018 by Ben Molyneux.

2. The heart of sin is disobedience to the direct and gracious command of God.

From the Matthias Media Pathway Bible Guide Beginning with God Genesis 1-12 by Gordon Cheng p 63.

3. The essence of their [Adam and Eve's] sin is **a desire to become like God** [author's emphasis]. They are not satisfied with what God has given them, plentiful as that provision is. They want to know what God knows. Their sin is not simply breaking some arbitrary test of obedience; they are trying to take the place of God. They reject God's authority and his knowledge of what is good and best for them. In other words, their sin is much more than a momentary lapse of obedience. It is an act of revolution.

This is important to grasp, because it runs counter to the beliefs of most people in our society. Most people believe that sin is breaking rules. They believe that for his own mainly sadistic reasons, God had established certain rules and that we sin when we break them. Genesis 3 teaches us that sin is much more than breaking a rule – like a parking offence. Sin is revolution – it is denying the way God had made things, rejecting his authority, and trying to put ourselves in the place of God.

From the Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study booklet Beyond Eden Genesis 1-11 by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne p 49.

4. Listen to Andrew Bartz at a Gospel Conversations Q and A, 7/9/2018, HellHope7QandAsinAndrewBartz.mp3

		You don't trust them		You do trust them
They don't intend good towards you	!	enmity	!	vulnerable
They do intend good towards you	!	alienation	!	intimacy

2. (a) How big a role does sin play in your practical everyday life?

(b) Do you think more about sin when you go to church than when you live your life outside of church?
Why/why not?

(c) Do we think of ourselves as terrible sinners, constantly reminding ourselves of our sin like Hosea constantly reminds Israel of their sin, or do we think more positively about ourselves as saints, made in the image of God, sons and heirs of God?

(i) Which of these 2 ways of thinking should we use day by day?

(ii) Which one is better for our self-esteem?

(c) Are you sinning if you don't think often enough about sin? Why/why not?

Bible

4. At the beginning of Gen ch 3 Adam and Eve had not eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The only knew life. They didn't know what good meant and they didn't know what evil meant.

Read Gen 2:16-17 and 3:1-3.

Gen 2:16-17.

And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

Gen 3:1-3.

Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?' ² The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ 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."'

(a) What did Eve get wrong?

5. Read Gen 3:4-5.

(a) What did the serpent/snake say that was right?

(b) What did the serpent/snake say that was wrong?

6. Read Gen 3:6-7.

(a) What was good about the fruit?

(b) What wisdom did they gain?

(c) What has realising they were naked got to do with it?

7. Read Gen 3:8-13.
What is different now that Adam and Eve know what is good and evil?

8. Read Gen 3:14-24.
(a) What are the curses?

(b) Who is to blame?

9. (a) What is sin, do you think after considering Q1?

(b) Since Adam and Eve had no knowledge of good and evil at the beginning of Gen 3 can they be accused of sinning? Why/why not?

(c) How is the serpent hostile to Eve?

(d) How did the serpent gain control of the situation?

10. (a) The expression "The Fall" is never used in the Bible. It is an expression used to describe what happened in Gen 3 but it is an expression that was made up by theologians.
By describing what happened in Gen 3 as "The Fall" where is most of the blame placed?

(b) If the expression "The Fall" had never been used then another expression like "Hostile Takeover" could have been used instead.
By describing what happened in Gen 3 as the "Hostile Takeover" where is most of the blame placed?

The following humorous article, "Marketing 101" from *The Briefing* # 381, 1/6/2010, by Braddon Upex lends some weight to understanding Gen 3 as a hostile takeover. Most, but not all, the article is quoted here.

The assembled students were oblivious to the presence of the sharply dressed man of indeterminate age who had appeared silently in the doorway at the rear of the buzzing lecture theatre. He stood there for a few moments, surveying them with a curious mingling of desire and loathing. Then as he smoothed his greasy ponytail with one hand, he flicked a long, narrow tongue across thin lips, twisted his mouth into something approximating a smile to reveal a glimpse of abnormally pointy teeth, and made his way to the front of the room.

The students' voices died. The man placed a faux snakeskin attaché case on a table next to the lectern and addressed them.

"Greetings, class. Welcome to Marketing 101. I am Dr Stanislav Agon and I shall be instructing you this semester." His sibilants were emphasized—almost hissed—and his accent was impossible to place.

"Before we discuss more mundane matters such as reading lists and assessments, I wish to start by whetting your desire for this subject with the story of the greatest triumph in the history of the second oldest profession (that is, after horticulture). This incident is not simply of historical interest. Besides the fact that it holds many valuable lessons for aspiring advertisers, it has had—and continues to have—a lasting impact. Indeed, it was the launch of a major advertising campaign that continues to this very day. My text today will be Genesis chapter 3. . . .

Having found the passage, Dr Agon read it to the class before hurriedly shoving the Bible back into his attaché case. "Now, to appreciate fully what a triumph this was, you must grasp the two sets of difficulties faced by the Father of Advertising. The first set concerned the

target market: all their real needs and legitimate wants were already abundantly satisfied. Plus, unlike the fallen consumers you will be selling to, Adam and Eve were not a mass of fear, greed, lust, envy, covetousness and pride.

"The second set of difficulties related to the product itself how does one market fruit with such a bitter aftertaste? (Incidentally, please don't make the tediously common mistake of thinking it was an easy sell because it was 'forbidden fruit'. On the contrary, this made it harder. Fallen consumers will desire something simply because it is forbidden; not so Adam and Eve.)

"We shall now proceed to consider each set of difficulties and the ingenious strategies used to overcome them. As I said, Adam and Eve were living in paradise, with all their needs and wants abundantly satisfied. Thus, the obvious first step was to persuade them that this wasn't so by conveying the key message: 'God is holding out on you. (You'd be surprised how often this lie has - ha, ha; Freudian slip; I mean, this *line* - has worked for me over the years.) But how? If I had put it as baldly as that, I'd have been laughed out of Eden. It couldn't be stated - only insinuated. (In marketing, the frontal attack is easily repulsed - which is why advertisements tend to make their appeal to the emotions, rather than to the intellect.) In short, I mean, the serpent somehow had to get Eve to draw the inference herself. As you will find, much marketing relies on guiding consumers gently to an incorrect conclusion by encouraging them to draw a wrong inference.

"A good way to do this is with a question, such as 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"? (v 1). Questions have several advantages over statements. Firstly, a question avoids the risk of being caught out in a lie, whereas statements are usually true or false. Secondly, a question invites a response, thus engaging the consumer. Some say that advertising is about persuading people to buy your product. It's not; it's about seduction. It's about getting people to do things they'll regret in the morning, so to speak. A question sidles up to your mark, puts an arm around his shoulder and gently strokes his ego, making him think you're soliciting his thoughts on the subject. As you'll discover, fooling someone into thinking that you think he's no fool is an excellent first step in fooling him into buying whatever you're flogging.

"Now, note that the advertisement actually had an element of truth to it: God had imposed a certain restriction relating to the food (see 2:16-17). On their own, lies lack power - they must be alloyed with truth to gain strength. (We'll cover this in more detail in week 9. For now, it suffices to note that it's not just because of fear of section 52 of the Trade Practices Act that you absolutely must include as much truth in your advertisements as you think you can get away with.) Eve says as much in her response to the serpent: 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" (vv 2-3). Incidentally, while Eve purports to quote God, if you compare this verse with chapter 2 verse 17, you'll see she has actually misquoted him; he didn't say anything about dying as a result of merely touching the fruit.

"Now to the product: how to market a fruit with such a bitter aftertaste? Notice the strategy the serpent used to counter the woman's sales resistance. Firstly, he downplayed the risk: 'You will not surely die' (3:4). See that skilful mix of truth and falsehood? Its like saying 'You will not surely get lung cancer if you smoke': in all likelihood, you will, but there is always a possibility you won't. Secondly, he distracted them immediately with the benefits of the product: 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil' (v. 5; cf v. 22 - a blending of truth again). Mark that lovely bit of illogic here - the inappropriate use of the little word 'for', creating the impression (completely false, of course) that there was a basis for the implicit assertion she wouldn't die. That is, dying does not necessarily follow from their eyes being opened, causing them to be like God. Thirdly, he created demand by stimulating desire - or rather, 'desires' plural, for he brought Eve to believe that the fruit would satisfy her physical, aesthetic and intellectual desires (v. 6).

11. (a) In study 1 we asked what sort of story is described in Gen 1, in study 2 we asked what sort of story is described in Gen 2, and now the question is what sort of story is described in Gen 3?

(b) What is the purpose of Gen 3?

To finish

12. If we think of Gen 3 as a “Hostile Takeover” rather than “The Fall” . . .
(a) does this change the way we think of ourselves i.e. our identity? If so, how so, if not, why not?

(b) does this change the way we think of salvation through Jesus? If so, how so, if not, why not?

Study 7, Genesis ch 3, suffering

Getting started

1. When bad things happen what do people say to try to make sense of it?
Think of as many different explanations as you can – Christian and non-Christian?

2. I was listening to a sermon from a minister at St Barnabas, Broadway. He was preaching about suffering and made the statement: "All suffering flows out of humanity's rejection of God as described in Gen 3."
Agree or disagree? Why/why not?



3.
 - (a) Have you ever burnt yourself when cooking?
 - (b) Did you suffer pain?
 - (c) Was that suffering the result of humanity's rejection of God? Why/why not?
 - (d) What if you didn't suffer pain when you burnt yourself, would that be a good thing or a bad thing? Why?

4.
 - (a) Is gravity a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
 - (b) If you slip from a cliff and hurt yourself, is that the result of humanity's rejection of God? Why/why not?

Bible

5. Read Acts 27:1-28:6.
Context: Paul is arrested in Jerusalem but appeals to Rome because he is a Roman citizen. On the way to Rome they are shipwrecked on Malta.
 - (a) What suffering is described in this story?
 - (b) Is any of this suffering the result of humanity's rejection of God? What has caused the suffering?

(c) God made the world with gravity, storms, snakes and humans who feel pain. Do you think these things existed before Adam and Eve sinned i.e. before the Fall? Why/why not?

6. Read Ps 104.

Ps 104 describes Creation as well as the world as it existed for the psalmist. Is there any hint that the entrance of evil has visibly effected how creation functions? Why/why not?



7. **The problem of evil** is described as a problem because a good God has made a good world and he wants his creation to flourish but nevertheless there is evil and suffering in the world. We will look at what effect the Fall had in bringing suffering into the world.

Read Gen chs 1-3 and while you are doing that imagine you are reading it for the first time.

(a) After reading chapters 1 and 2 for the first time how might you have felt when you read chapter 3?

(b) What does this say about free will before the Fall?

(c) How does the origin of evil relate to free will?

(d) What was the extent of the curses?

Note on Gen 3:16: “pains in childbearing” (NIV) is not a biological change as most translations suggest. The vocabulary is not talking about childbirth but about the painful circumstances by which children are brought up in a dysfunctional world.

From a lecture by Iain Provan called “On Living in a Blighted World” at Scots Presbyterian Church, Sydney, 13/8/2016.

(e) What do the words “greatly increase” tell you about pain and suffering *before* the Fall?

(f) Read Ps 113, taking particular note of v 9.

What does Ps 113:9 tell you about the relationship of mothers with their children?

(g) One view is that there is a complete breakdown of the relationship between God and people as a result of the Fall and you need Jesus to reconcile people with God. Read Gen 4:4, 13-16, 5:24, 6:9. What do these verses tell you about the relationships between God and Abel, Cain, Enoch and Noah?

(h) Similarly, God's curse on the ground (Gen 3:17) does not involve a complete breakdown in mankind's relationship with the earth. Read Gen 5:29, 9:20-21, Ps 128. What do these verses tell you about the relationships between mankind and the earth?

Similarly, the power struggle between the man and the woman (Gen 3:16b) does not mean that all humanity has to be like that e.g. Song of Songs has no power struggle or darkness and the garden imagery may suggest a reversal of the curse in their love.

The Biblical authors knew about darkness and that we were born in the midst of dysfunction and chaos but Biblical faith does not regard it as inevitable that we must go on living in these ways and, in fact, the opposite is the case – the people of God are called not to live in those ways but to live in a different way in God's kingdom.

From Iain Provan's lecture "On Living in a Blighted World" at Scots Presbyterian Church, Sydney, 13/8/2016.

To finish

8. Read Matt 5:11-12, John 15:18-20, Rom 8:16-18, 2 Cor 4:16-18, 1 Pet 4:12-13, 19.

A Bible study called "The Word on . . . Suffering" by Kerry Nagel, 26/27 November 2016, concludes with "The passages above suggest that suffering is normal for a Christian, especially suffering for the name of Christ."

(a) Suffering for the name of Christ may have been normal for Christians in the first century but is suffering for the name of Christ normal for Christians in Australia today?

(b) What is the church's "brand" i.e. what do you think non-Christians think about church (consider also the church's stance on women and homosexuality, consider the church's history of paedophile priests and its participation in the Stolen Generations)?

(c) What aspects of Christianity in Australia may result in Christians being given a "hard time" either because of the church's "brand" or because of things prominent Christians (e.g. Fred Nile, Cory Bernadi) have said or done?

(d) Is this persecution deserved or is this suffering for the name of Christ?

(e) What can we do to alleviate this problem?