

Community Busters 1

Genesis 3-11 10/12/03

Will you take your Bibles and turn to Genesis 3. Let me just say a word. I really encourage you to bring your Bibles each week. Underline, jot notes in them. It will make your study much more impacting. Now, the first five books of the Bible are called the Pentateuch. Penta= five and teuch = scrolls. Called the Torah by Jews it is what during Jesus day was referred to as the books of the law. We believe that it was essentially written by Moses although there are parts that were compiled by editors. This includes the story of Moses death in Deuteronomy and these words in *Numbers 12:3 (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)*

The first 11 chapters are an introduction to the establishment of God's community people. Last week we looked at the beginning seeds this morning we take a very different road as we examine four different settings. The story of the fall with Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, Noah and the Tower of Babel. What we will see is the downward effect of sin. Like a downward spiral mankind moves further and further away from their initial relationship with God. Let me make one last introductory comment. Although we are going to cover a lot of material over the next four semesters you should know we will only be touching on the major themes and stories of the Old Testament. There will be so much we do not have time to cover so I encourage you to take a shot at the first reading plan that has you read all of the OT.

Let's pick it up with Genesis 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 of it you will surely die."* I don't know about you, but I read this and two questions come to my mind. Why did God put this one tree in the garden with the prohibition not to eat it? Secondly, Why wouldn't God want mankind to be able to discern between good and evil? Isn't discernment a good thing? Yes it is but that is not the issue. To eat the tree was to say to God,

“We don’t need you any more. We can make decisions apart from the community you created us to live in.” Basically they wanted to be their own gods.

3:1 The enemy comes to the woman at this point. The Christian church identified the serpent as Satan and we discover in this story a brilliant demonstration of how sin works. *He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"* verse 3:1 Is that what God said? No! He said they could eat from any of the trees in the garden and they all looked great to eat. Satan misquotes God. What is that all about? Remember the ? mark sign? **He wants to twist the truth** and plant a seed of doubt in the woman’s mind about the goodness of God. To have her think that God does not have her best interests at heart. I can’t count on him I better take matters into my own hands. *Verse 2: The woman said to the serpent, "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.'* " The woman corrects Satan but do you notice the twist. God said don’t eat but the woman adds, “don’t even touch”. This is the second tactic. **He wants us to see God as more severe than he is.** That makes it easier to justify. Next: **He attacks our vulnerable spots and isolates us.** Now, when the command was given it was given to the man, not to both of them. It was Adam’s job to pass the command on. Now let me ask the women some questions. How many of you have a man in your life? OK. How many of you have ever known a man that has some communication difficulties and perhaps never gives you all of the information or details of an event when you ask? What goes on here is that Satan goes after the one who was not there when God spoke. Eve does not ask Adam. Eve does not ask God, rather she tries to go it alone and when ever we try to go it alone we dramatically increase our vulnerability to sin. **Verse 6 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,** I would call this obsessing on the fruit. Next tactic of Satan: **He wants us to fixate on sin.** She thinks, “Just what am I missing” and “I’ve got to have it.” Now,

does it strike you that Adam is a little passive here because she turns to Adam, **He entices us to invite others into our sin,** who was right there, gave him some fruit and he ate it. I often wonder what Adam would have said if someone asked him, “why did you eat it?” “I don’t know!”

Unthinking. The folly of sin, the hymn writer calls it. And immediately they sense **the consequences.** *Verse 7 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.* They look at each other and **the imago dei is marred.** The beauty of God’s image was horribly twisted in both of them. They had never known **shame** before but they are both ashamed. Shame is to look at oneself and feel like there is something inherently wrong, spoiled or inadequate about yourself. They feel shame and so the next step immediately follows. They want to hide. They feel **alienated** from each other and from God. Now, there is a real important point that I want to make here. There is a theological term that describes this state. It is the word depravity. All humanity suffers from the impact of Adam and Eve’s choice. Our world says that all humans are basically good and that they would choose to do good if it were not for the pressures of the environment. They believe we are morally neutral who can freely choose good or bad. The Scripture teaches and the Christian church believes that we are not morally neutral, nor do we naturally choose good over evil. In fact our propensity from the earliest of age is to choose what we think is best and what we want. In the fall all humans would be affected. Dallas Willard puts it this way. **“Depravity is a spiritual condition that involves our readiness to harm others or at least let harm come to them if that will help us reach our goals of security, ego-gratification, our satisfaction of our deep desires.”** I believe the Bible teaches total depravity, which doesn’t mean we are as bad as we can be but that there is no area of our lives that is not impacted by sin.

Next step: **fear.** *Verse 8 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 And God calls out: Adam, where are you? Why does God say this? Certainly Adam couldn't hide from God. I believe that he was inviting Adam to come and receive grace. But Adam refuses. *Verse 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."* This is the first mention of fear. I was naked. *"Adam, who told you that?"* And here Adam has a chance to step forward and take responsibility for his actions. And so he turns to God and says. It is the woman's fault. The woman you put here. You know God, everything was just fine when it was you and me and the animals, but you gave me this woman. **Blame of self and others.** Do you think this will be the end of the blame game for husbands and wives? I don't think so. And so God places curses on each of them. The woman would experience pain in the bringing forth of life and then this. *Verse 16 Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* Now I was always raised to believe that the husband was the boss and because I was a man I thought that was a pretty good deal but it is real clear here that this is a result of the fall and I believe, we believe that Christ came to set us free from the effects of the curse. Do we still struggle with this and every other part of the curse? Yes, but by the power of the Holy Spirit we are to live the way God desires. The man will have his daily work now be filled with frustration. **Emotional and physical pain is the final consequence of sin.** But look there is a hint of grace even in the curse. *Verse 15 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 refers to Christ.

One last thing. They are running around in some really bad clothes so God clothes them. But how? By shedding innocent blood he takes the skins and clothes them. God is setting the stage of a future event that will be a grace filled event. One last part of this story. *23-24 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword*

flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. God drives them away from community to the east.

Chapter 4 begins on a note of hope. Adam must have wondered if with the curse and the removal from the garden and the promises would be canceled. Would they spend their days alone or would they begin to fill the earth. One day something began to happen to Eve. She felt a little sick to her stomach in the middle of the morning. Adam felt she was getting a little moody at times and asked for some pretty strange food to eat. And then one day he said “Say Eve, that skin is getting a little tight on you. Maybe I better go out and kill a bigger animal, like a buffalo, to make you some new clothes. Think about it. Eve had no book and no mother in law to help her out.

And the child is born and listen to the naming. Big deal in Scripture. *Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.* This is often the case around the birth process. God’s name is mentioned a lot and the man is kind of forgotten. And then Able is born. Verse 2b. Able keeps flocks and Cain works the field. Notice they each bring something to God but if you look real close at the wording you will see the issue. Cain brought some of his harvest whereas Able brought first fruit. Principle of Scripture. Your offering is to be from your first fruits. All the first born belonged to God because to give the first was a statement of trust that God would continue to provide. The issue of sin arose because of the nature and cost of the gift. And you notice that it was fatty portions. In our culture we miss that. In a culture living day to day fatty was the very best. God sees the heart of the bothers and accepts what Able brought but not Cain because it was not a statement of trust. Cain could have done a heart check. In verse 6 God comes and extends grace to Cain, but he refuses to accept it. Envy enters the picture. Not his brother’s wealth or success but his heart. That can happen among Christians. God says that sin is like a crouching lion so you must master it. *Verse 8 Now 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. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Notice the use of the word brother. And God says where is your brother. An invitation to come clean again. I don't know. Distort God's intent and judgment comes. He is sent away driven from community. Sin spirals down. Adam and Eve are tempted by the serpent; Cain's temptation comes from within. Adam and Eve accept their punishment Cain fights with God.

Lets move on quickly. With Cain sin got deeper with the story of Genesis 6:11 sin got wider. Verse 12. God comes down and looks but unlike the other response of Genesis 1-2 that it was good just the opposite is true. It is rotten through and through. All that was so good is now ruined and God is going to start over. But there's Noah. He will keep his dream and plan alive. So he sends him to Home Depot to get a really big order, the flood comes, the waters eventually recede and the command is given again. Go forth and fill the earth and the sign of a covenant is given, the rainbow. But it goes south from there. Father gets drunk, son disrespects father, father curses son. A classic dysfunctional family moves from bad to worse.

One last story. Babel. *Verse 4 of Genesis 11 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."* To not do exactly what God had said, to fill the earth. So, being so smart they build with bricks rather than stone. A lot of sarcasm here about the folly of men. God looks down from the heaven they are trying to reach and sees this little blot. Better get closer to see what this bump is. He declares that their capacity must be restrained or they will destroy themselves so all of a sudden some guy says give me a brick and the response is "no comprende." They used to all speak Swedish, the language of heaven but now they are divided. The downward spiral continues.

Can we take just a few minutes for private reflection and a talk with God? Where is sin crouching at your door this morning? Pride, deceit, substance abuse, envy, gossip, anger. Something that perhaps no one else knows but it is destroying you. God still shows mercy today and will receive your confession. Grace is still available. In fact as long as you have breath in your lungs grace is offered. Take it today .