



January 12, 2022  
A Note from Pastor Jon

**Dear Friends,**

This week of The Great Story, it's all about Genesis chapter 3. If you're not sure what happens, let me give this quick summary that I would often hear growing up, which is often referred to as "The Fall of Humankind."

You know, the time when Eve took the apple and gave it to Adam, and then Adam says he was tricked by Eve, who says she was tricked by the serpent. A lot of finger pointing and blaming, where today we end up blaming Eve for taking that first bite, which has led us to the place we are now — a messed up, upside down world instead of the "perfect" creation in the garden of Eden. (I think I got that summary about right.)



I often remember hearing the story told from a patriarchal perspective of how weak Eve was, and then she tempted and lured Adam to eat the apple, too.

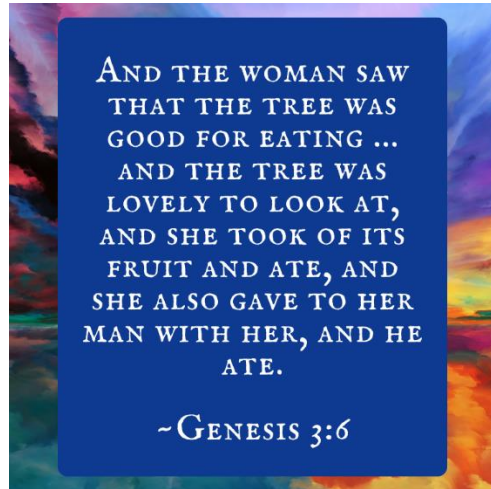
As I grew older and began to read this story a little deeper, I realized that in most of the translations Adam was right there with Eve, as a companion, thereby implying that Adam watched this entire episode play out without intervening. I've often wondered whether Adam hedged his bet to let his companion just go first to see if she would die, and then seeing that Eve lives, he maybe just thought, why not?

But this story seems to hold even greater implications, not just for those first created humans but still for us today.

As we leave Chapter 2, God has created the first human and the active counterpart with whom to share life. **Now in Chapter 3, somewhere along their journey we quickly see**

**that one of the greatest risks that God has taken in creation comes to fruition: FREEDOM.**

When I say freedom I don't mean this in the way we in this nation associate freedom with individual liberty.



You see, back in Chapter 2 God had told that first human that they could enjoy the fruit of every tree in the garden less one, the tree of knowledge, good and evil. It is there we can see that God has given God's prized creation *agency*, the ability to act or choose for oneself rather than be subjugated as servant or slave. **We are given a gift to choose to love God and act in ways according to the love of God, or not.**

And while we don't know exactly how long it took, together, those two human creations exercised their freedom independently (by taking the fruit and eating) and collectively (by failing to encourage the other to refrain from eating it).

God gave and continues to give to humankind freedom of choice and action.

At the same time, God gives to us active counterparts from whom to seek advice, to live life alongside, but also understanding that they, too, are given freedom. Sometimes our active counterparts will help us up, and sometimes they may harm us, but every day we are given this great gift of freedom by God to act in love toward God and others — or not.

Here's the good news.

**Those first two, while using their freedom to act against the wishes and love of God, were never abandoned or forsaken by God.** God continued to see that their needs were always met, and God was there still with them and for them.

In the same way, when we and our companions act against the wishes and love of God, God is still there for us.

**This is grace.**

While I will make choices, consciously and unconsciously, that will not be pleasing to God and that will not reflect my love for God toward others all the time, God continues to love me and journey with me. **God never abandons me. God Loves Me... NO MATTER WHAT!**

It is my understanding of that grace and love of God that makes me want to strive every day to be a better husband, father, pastor, neighbor, stranger, and friend... And it helps me to know that I'm not left on my own to do so.

I am so thankful for each of you who are my active companions in this life. I pray as this New Year begins to unfold that in all things that come your way that you, too, may know that God goes with you — because God Loves You... NO MATTER WHAT!!!

Pastor Jon



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