

E1 Good beginning, but...
Gen 2:4-3:24 (Miss 2:8-14?)

Introductions are really important.

The way you relate to people is shaped what you know about them.

Have you ever noticed that the way you introduce yourself shapes the way people relate to you? At junior footy, if I say "I'm Ben's dad" I get a different reaction to if I say "I'm a baptist pastor"

Last week at junior footy I was standing next to a guy called Jeremy and he turns to me and says
I've just realised who you are. And I think- Really- so who am I?

Obviously, for Jeremy, there was something important missing from the way I'd introduced myself before

I thought back- I'm sure I introduced myself to you as Ben and David's Dad

Did you just find out I'm the Baptist pastor- why so significant- Christian?

"I went to school with your brother."

Knowing I am Ian's brother is important to the way Jeremy relates to me.

It is polite to introduce yourself- it really helps people build a relationship with you.

If you don't introduce yourself, ppl can make all sorts of wrong assumptions.

When I was 16, through a strange sequence of events I ended up at a primary school reunion for a school I hadn't been to on the other side of the country.

I was hanging out at this school reunion with family friends my own age and I thought- this is boring.

So I decided to go up to people and not introduce myself.

"Hi, how's it going?"

Today we come to the very start of the Bible.

where God introduces himself.

God doesn't want to trick us-

God wants us to understand who he is and have a relationship with him

so God begins by introducing himself.

God also introduces us to his creation- the world around us

and, God introduces us to... people. God helps us understand ourselves

to help us have a relationship with him.

The Bible is God's invitation to have a relationship with him.

This is the first week of our E100 series, which gives an overview of the Bible from start to end.

Today we have the introductions and see a wonderful beginning
that very quickly goes very wrong.

Turn with me to very start of the Bible. Page 1, chapter 1, verse 1

In the beginning God.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God was there before anything else existed.

God isn't just a part of the world around us-

God's not contained in the waves and rocks and the wind.

God created the heavens and the earth- God made the entire universe- out of nothing.

That is power. That is glory. God is greater than my little head can understand.

God introduces himself, and God introduces us to the world he has created.

As God creates the world, he looks at it, and what is the world like?

v12 And God saw that it was good v18 it was good v25 it was good

The world we live in is good. The physical world is good.

Yes, the world is messed up in lots of ways, but it is still good.

God introduces himself, God introduces the good world he made
and God introduces us to the first people.

Read 1:26-27

With people in the picture, God no longer says it is good. Now in verse 31, God sees it is very good.

Do you ever feel worthless?

Do you ever think you count for nothing?

Right here, at the very beginning of God's message to you,

God makes it clear- he made people in his own image.

You bear the image of the maker and creator of the universe.

I'm not saying God has a nose like your nose, a thumb like your thumb

or that God has a thing for cars like your thing for cars.

But the maker and creator of the universe has put his stamp on you-

he has made you to be something like him.

People are a special part of the creation- but we're still part of the creation- we are physical beings.

2:7 uses a wonderful picture for this (read)

You have the breath of the almighty God in you.

Each and every person here. Each and every person in the world

is more valuable, more precious than my little mind can understand.

So God introduces himself, God introduces his creation, and God introduces people- he introduces us.

(2. Relationships)

We see the good relationships God intends for the people he makes in his image.

There is the good relationship between people and creation.

People are given the job of looking after the creation-

caring for it, ruling over it

being good, caring rulers like God himself.

God makes us for relationships and for responsibility

There is the good relationship between people-

in this case between the man and the woman, because there are no other people yet.

Look at 2:25

The man and the woman are both naked, but they do not feel ashamed, or threatened

there is no fear the other will ridicule them.

There is security and trust.

Yes, there is sex here, before the fall,
as God conducts the first wedding and the man and woman cleave together as one flesh,
but being naked and safe is about so much more than sex.

Think about opening yourself up emotionally- being emotionally naked and exposed.
When you open up emotionally to another person, you need to trust them.
If they're not trustworthy they could mock you or ridicule you
or take advantage of your vulnerability.

But in the beginning the man and woman are naked and feel no shame, because they know they can trust one another.
That trustworthiness is built on the relationship they have with God.

While the man and the woman both know the other is trusting God, who has been good to them
and they both know the other will live God's good way,
they know they are safe being naked.

The relationship between God and people is far more than the foundation for relationships between men & women.

The relationship between God and people is at the heart of everything.
To know God is to know life.

God is the one who grants us life

God trusts people with responsibility for his good creation.

God puts them in a good garden

God gives them good, fulfilling work to do

God gives them good trees to eat from

God gives the man and the woman to each other
and God conducts their wedding.

God gives good things. God gives life.

As God gives the man and woman all these good things,
God asks one thing of them in return.

God asks them to trust him when God tells them what is good and bad
God asks the man and woman to trust him when God says what is right and wrong
God commands them to trust: "do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

(3. Mistrust and rejection)

But... Will the man and the woman trust God?

Turn to Genesis 3

Read v1-3

The woman starts to doubt God: "God has given us lots of good things.

BUT God has placed some limits on us.

Maybe God is hiding something good from me. Maybe God is ripping me off."

Do you do that? Do you look at God's commands to love others before yourself,

God's commands to be holy and love him with all you are and all you have

Do you look at God's commands and think- hold it- maybe God is ripping me off

Why not put myself in charge?

Maybe if I live for myself, I'll be better off than if I live God's way.

Read v4-5

I can imagine the woman thinking "Ooh- I could be like God.
I can be in charge myself, without being under God
I can be the one to decide what is good and what is evil."

So v6a (As far as "ate it")

Some visitors came up to me last week and asked - what was the forbidden fruit? What was the original sin?

Does the fruit symbolise a specific action?

They'd realised the fruit can't be sex- there's sex in the chapter before this.

The fruit can't be murder- murder comes in the chapter after this

What is the forbidden fruit, this disastrous sin?

The original sin is an attitude more than an action.

The sin is demanding the right to decide for myself what is good and what is evil.

To put it another way, The sin is refusing to trust God and accept his authority.

To put it another way, the sin is pride that says I know better than God.

And this is a sin I see myself struggling with all the time.

I want to trust my own wisdom instead of trusting God.

I'm tempted to grasp control for myself instead of trusting God.

Let's read on

"She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

Hold it.

The man's been there the whole time.

And what did the man say during the whole conversation between the woman and the serpent?

When the serpent said (read v1b)

Did the man say- no- God has been so good to us- he's given us far more than we need

Did the man say "Why are you questioning the motives of our good God?"

No- the man said... nothing

The man personally commanded by God "you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

The man was given clear instructions and responsibility, but he is silent.

Then, when he is given the fruit he knows it is forbidden to eat, the man eats it.

(4. Broken relationships)

Look what happens next. All the relationships are broken.

v7 (read) The man and the woman no longer feel safe being naked.

She's thinking- if he's going to decide for himself what is good and what is evil

how do I know he won't take advantage of my nakedness?

We soon see the woman has good reason not to trust the man.

Look at what happens when God comes to speak to them-

v8 They both know they have done wrong.

v9-11 Here's the chance for the man to stand up and say-

"Yes, I admit broke your command. I disregarded the one boundary I was given. I am sorry and I take responsibility for what went wrong"

But is that what the man says? No

v12

He blames the woman.

We've all seen men in their sinfulness blaming women instead of taking responsibility.

But its not just the man who blames someone else instead of admitting his own sin.

The woman does the same thing, blaming the serpent.

God does not accept their blame shifting.

Jesus tells us each of our responsibilities starts with the log in our own eye.

If I fight with my wife, I know every single time-

some of it is her fault, and some of it is my fault.

And my first responsibility is to address my own sin.

We are all sinners who need to repent.

We all face the consequences of sin.

And here, after the very first sin, God sets out the disastrous consequences of sin.

The relationship between people and creation is broken.

The man is told v17b

Work will now be painful.

As we've already seen, the relationship between people is messed up.

If you decide for yourself what is good and what is bad

sometimes you are going to choose what is bad for me-

even what is really bad for me.

But the worst problem is that

the relationship with God is broken.

The man and the woman are cast out of God's presence,
they are expelled from the garden.

That very day they are removed from the source of life.

Instead of life and joy in God's presence

people now face conflict and death.

Things look pretty dire.

In the next chapter, Genesis 4, Adam and Eve's first son kills their second son

People keep sinning.

They deserve death and God's judgement

By Genesis 6 we read 6:5-8

Noah shows incredible faith in God- he trusts God and he and his family are saved.

We have a promising new beginning.

But by the end of Genesis 9 Noah gets drunk, disgraces himself and curses one of his own sons.

People keep sinning.

They deserve death and God's judgement.

Then by Genesis 11, even Noah's descendants have decided that they will set themselves up against God

They'll build a great tower to show their own glory.

It's all about making themselves into little "gods"
and ignoring the one true God.
People keep sinning.
They deserve death and God's judgement.

And I look at the ways they sin-
and I can identify with it so much:
I'm right there with the pride and self-sufficiency of the tower of Babel-
- I'm an engineering project manager- that's my sort of sin.
You may identify more with Noah's drunken-ness.
Or Adam's passive denial of responsibility
Or Eve's rapid fall into doubting God and refusing to trust.

As Genesis shows us the consequences of sin-
consequences for sinners who are just like you and me
it looks pretty dark and pretty dire, doesn't it?

We started by saying:
God wants a relationship with you.
But Genesis 1-11 leaves us with a burning question-
How can God have a relationship with us?
We fail to trust God, just like the first man and the first woman.
We are sinful and don't deserve life with God.

It's pretty clear- people cannot fix this problem ourselves.
We all refuse to trust God and fall into sin again and again.

But Genesis 1-11 also shows us something else.
God does not give up on people.

Even as God removes the man and woman from the garden,
we read in 3:21 (read)
Even as God punished Cain for killing Abel, he promises to protect him.
Even as God sends the flood, he saves Noah and his family.

God has such love for the people he has made in his image,
that no matter how much they betray and reject him
God seems intent on saving people and enjoying a relationship with them.

We get a little hint about the way God will do this in Genesis 3:15, where God tells the evil serpent
the woman's offspring will strike his head,
while the serpent will only be able to strike the heel of his attacker.
Evil will not have the final word. God will crush evil
God will rescue people and restore their relationships
God will bring people to trust him and live with him forever.

The rest of the Bible is the story of how God will do this.
The Bible is also God's invitation to you to trust him and know life
The great news is: everything we lose through sin does not have to be lost forever.
God still wants you to enjoy the restored relationships you were designed to enjoy.