

Theology of Manhood: Purpose in a Place

Created to Know God in a Place

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—⁷ **then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.** ⁸ **And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.** ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

- Genesis 2:4-14

In this passage we find another meaning of the image of God in man. God is trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three distinct persons who are all equally God. The three persons of the Trinity know and are known by one another. The reality of relationship is inherent within God. God has made us in His image to also know and be known.

We see this in the unique way in which man was created. God spoke the rest of creation into existence. God created man face to face, by breathing directly into his nostrils. The breath of God not only gives us life. It also makes us spiritual beings. We are like God in this way because God is spirit. God has created us not only with the capability, but also to invite us into a relationship with Himself. The face-to-face imagery is a picture of this purpose He has for us. Created in the image of God, we are meant to know God face to face.

With the capacity to know and be known by God, Adam was placed in the garden of Eden. The elaborate description of the garden in Genesis chapter 2 communicates the extravagant provision God had given Adam and Eve in the garden. It was all a tangible expression of God's goodness. God had given Himself and so much more.

So What?

Most men are uncomfortable discussing spirituality. We have a distorted understanding of what it means to be spiritual. Many men think it only means to be more open or expressive about our relationship with God. To share our feelings in Bible study and close our eyes in worship. In light of more superficial feelings - driven spirituality, we must not reject the core of spirituality. You are body and spirit for a reason. You have been designed by God in this way to know and be known by Him.

Read: Genesis 2:4-14

What do you think it looks like for a man to be spiritual? How are we tempted to think these things are not manly or masculine?

As a man, what specific steps can you take to cultivate a deeper relationship with God?

Commission to Protect

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ **but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- Genesis 2:15-16

Work as Worship

All of what it means to be created in the image of God was to be experienced and expressed by Adam in the garden. He was to work. Adam was to take dominion of all the resources in the garden to cultivate and bring forth life. The word work can be translated to serve or worship. His work as God’s image bearer was to be a reflection of God. He was to put God’s stamp on the garden as an act of worship.

Keep in Obedience

Adam was to keep the garden. He was to subdue and bring to order any chaos that might threaten his fellowship with God. The word keep can be translated to obey. We see his protection of the garden culminated in obeying the command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His obedience would protect the knowledge of good that permeated the garden from the knowledge of evil that would come through sin.

Adam was given these responsibilities before his helper Eve was created. This also meant he had the responsibility not only to obey God himself but also to lead his wife in obeying God.

So What?

As an image bearer, you are to work and keep the gardens God has given you. You are to receive God’s goodness in your life and work hard as an act of worship reflecting God’s glory. You must also live with a sense of gravity, understanding your obedience keeps and protects what is good, not only in your life, but also in the lives

of others. You must never see your life before God as an isolated individual whose opportunities for sin only affect yourself.

Read: Genesis 2:15-16

In what ways are you called to cultivate and protect life in these places both physically and spiritually?

Home

Church

School/Work

How does our obedience cultivate and protect the lives of others? How might our disobedience jeopardize the well-being of others both physically and spiritually?

Adam is Passive, Satan is Active

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ 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.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

- Genesis 3:1-6

God’s GOODNESS is Questioned

As Genesis Chapter 3 starts, we find an intruder in the place God had given Adam. Satan takes the form of a cunning snake. Throughout the Bible Satan and wickedness are often represented by serpents. So the presence of this snake should have been a call to action for Adam. And yet, he’s passive. He allows the snake to speak. The serpent questions the word of God, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” At this point Adam should have subdued the snake and established order by tossing the snake from the garden. What he does or doesn’t do next is even more scandalous. He allows Eve to talk to the serpent.

God Had Given Enough

In speaking to the snake, Eve does declare the abundance of God’s gift. We have this whole glorious garden. There is just one tree God has said not to eat from or go near. Notice how the temptation to sin comes to us in the context of the abundance of God’s goodness. Sin is the temptation to believe that amidst all God has given there is still something we don’t have.

God's GOODNESS is Attacked

The snake then outright attacks God's word. "God is lying to you. You will not die. You will actually live on in a way you have yet to experience." Adam does continue to live physically for some time. He will also know good and evil. Upon eating from this tree, man will know not only what it meant to be good, whole, and complete. He would also know what it meant to be evil. But he will not be like God. God is Holy. God knows what evil is, but He himself is not evil. When Adam sins, he himself becomes evil. And by choosing sin he would choose to be separated from God. This is death. Satan is a liar.

Is Sin a Better Experience?

In verse 6, we see that sin appeals to our natural desires. Sin appeals to our appetite. Sin plays on our desire towards beauty. Satan allures Eve with the desire for **wisdom** or an experience she had not had.

The Height of Passivity

The bigger question at this point is, "Where is Adam?" The answer is he has been standing right beside Eve the whole time. Adam should have cut off the snake's head, cast him out of the garden, and declared God's Word as true and His character as good. And yet the passivity that began the moment he allowed the snake in the garden reached its peak when his wife believed Satan's lies and he followed suit.

So What?

Where you are passive, Satan will be active. He will question and attack the goodness of God. Satan's lies and sin's enticement will seek to steal what is true and good in your life and the lives of others.

For this reason, you must first take dominion of your own spiritual life. You were created to know and be known by God. Subdue and bring to order any chaos that hinders this relationship. Repent of laziness. Distractions must be replaced with consistent reading, diligent study, and constant memorization of God's Word. Order your day to be just as engaged in prayer as you are with any and all of life's demands.

Prove to yourself that walking with Jesus is better than walking toward the voice of Satan and the enticement of sin's promises.

Then you must establish an intentional presence with the Word of God for the good of others. Be ready to proclaim and protect the goodness of God at all times. Instead of being silent, combat grumbling and complaining at work. Remind others of God's goodness in life culminating in the goodness of Christ. Kindly remind fellow believers struggling with doubt that God has done enough in Christ. Be an aggressive disciple maker who attacks the lies of Satan and protects your home from the enticements of sin. Be aggressive. Be present or Satan will be active.

Read: Genesis 3:1-6

How would you describe your presence at work or school?

- I am not there
- I am just there
- I am in the background
- I am distracted by _____
- I am engaged but not influential
- I give my opinions but avoid conflict
- I am engaged and influence most decisions
- I set the course and direction in light of what God has said
- I am active in protecting from voices that compete with God's Word

How would you describe your presence at home?

- I am not there
- I am just there
- I am in the background
- I am distracted by _____
- I am engaged but not influential
- I give my opinions but avoid conflict
- I am engaged and influence most decisions
- I set the course and direction in light of what God has said
- I am active in protecting from voices that compete with God's Word

How are you doing as a leader with God’s Word? Choose all that describe your leadership.

- I rarely read the Word
- I only read the Bible by myself
- I take my family to church
- I study the Bible deeply
- I engage others with God’s Word
- I pursue accountability in obeying God’s Word
- I talk with my family about the sermons
- I engage my family when it comes to theology
- I ask my kids what they learn at school and how it compares to the Bible
- My wife and kids ask me questions about the Bible

What specific steps will you take to establish your presence as a leader with God’s Word?

Home

Church

School / Work

In your home, where do you find voices that compete with God's Word?

- Friends
- Entertainment Culture
- Work
- School
- Social Media (Facebook, Youtube, Tiktok, Instagram, Twitter, BeReal, etc), News
- Other(s) _____

How do you see these competing voices affect others? How might you intentionally combat these voices with the Word of God?

Our opportunities to sin always happen in the context of God’s goodness. How do you see that happening in your own life? How might reflecting on God’s goodness rescue you from the opportunity to sin?

How does your passivity lead to the work of Satan and sin in the life of others?

Adam Runs, God Pursues

[7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. [8] And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. [9] But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” [10] And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” [11] He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” [12] The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” [13] Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

- Genesis 3:7-13

Fig Leaves Before a Holy God

Adam's passivity continues as he tries to cover up his sin with fig leaves. As silly as this sounds, we do the same thing when we try to cover our sin before an all knowing perfectly holy God. Whether it's the list of good things we do that we believe will counterbalance our sins. Or plastic perfunctory church attendance that we think will cover what we hide from others. Or pontificating theological awareness to deflect from the reality that our private lives are marred in secret sin. It's all just fig leaves that make us look silly attempting to hide our sin from God.

Where Are You?

As the couple hears God walking in the garden, they dart away to hide. Adam is finally leading. He is just leading his wife away from God. But notice God graciously calls to Adam, "Where are you?" God is on a search and rescue mission. What Adam's guilt leads him to hide, the grace of God pursues to uncover.

So What?

As in Isaiah 1:18, God is calling *"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."* How is he calling you? Have you been convicted by the Word of God? Has someone recently confronted you and called you to repentance? Has a friend from church just called to check on you to see where you have been? Will you respond to God's question, "Where are you?"

Read: Genesis 3:7-13

What does it look like when you are running from God?

- I fill my life with work
- I fill life with other activities as distractions
- I avoid friends who hold me accountable
- I stay away from fellowship in general
- I avoid church attendance
- I do not pray
- I do not read the Word

Take steps right now to own your sin:

1. Confess your sin
2. Repent of your sin by looking to Jesus and believing the gospel.
3. Seek accountability to turn from this sin. Speak to your closest friend who is (1) a Christian (2) involved in close fellowship with you (3) has the courage and grit to hold you accountable in your repentance.

Now what steps will you take to avoid this sin at all cost?

- Spend time each morning worshiping and thanking God for the gospel
- Be in the Word daily
- Pray without ceasing
- Reading Scripture with my family
- Praying daily with my wife
- Find new friends
- Seek aggressive accountability from others, get rid of phone or internet access
- Other Steps

ADAM Gives Excuses, GOD Gives Justice

¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
 cursed are you above all livestock
 and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
 and dust you shall eat
 all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
 and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
 and you shall bruise his heel.”

¹⁶ To the woman he said,
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
 in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,
 but he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷ And to Adam he said,
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
 and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
 ‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
 in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
 and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

- Genesis 3:12-19

Blessing of Life in the Curse of Death

Adam doesn't just blame Eve. He blames God. The woman, the wife, the gift you gave me has been a curse to me. Instead of allowing the blame game to continue, God steps in and handles sin. He curses the snake, the woman, and the man. In each of the curses, we see justice, but we also see God's grace. Bringing life into the world through childbearing will be painful for Eve. Working to cultivate life in the world will be grueling for Adam. And yet in the pain there is hope. Life will still come into the world and the serpent will be crushed.

So What?

From the beginning God has brought about justice for sin. It's futile to run, hide, and blame others for your sin. Instead of blaming your parents or the way you were raised, simply confess the sin that comes from your heart. Instead of blaming your wife and kids who just won't show proper respect, admit your passivity, and take Christ-like dominion in your home. Stop excusing the fact that you are an irritable jerk by blaming the demands of work. Apologize for not guarding your tongue and seek to be harnessed by God's Word. It's better to come from hiding, tell the truth, own your sin, and walk in obedience.

Read: Genesis 3:12-19

How do we avoid responsibility for our sin by blaming others?

List ways you can see God’s grace in the curses upon the snake, the woman, and the man. How should this give you hope as you struggle in a world cursed with death?

From the beginning God issues consequences for sin. How should that affect the way in which you avoid responsibility for sin?

God Protects the Place with Grace

²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²² Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

- Genesis 3:20-24

God Takes Dominion

Where Adam was passive, Satan was active but God was aggressive. God asserts the dominion that Adam was to have. He drives Adam out the way Adam should have driven the snake out. Adam is replaced by an angel to guard and keep him from the tree of life so he can't live in this state before God forever. This is grace. Like Adam, we all die physically, so we don't have to live in sin separated from God forever. Eventually, death will be used to overcome death and usher us back into God's presence.

Signs of Grace

Adam leaves the garden with two tangible signs of grace. The first is his wife Eve, who God names the mother of all living. In a world cursed with sin and death, God will still bring forth the blessing of human life, beginning with Eve. The second is the skin of sacrifice. The garments that cover their sin and shame were produced in worship through a sacrifice for their sin. These coverings point to a better promise, who will be sacrificed to cover our guilt.

Jesus, the Greater Adam

Like Adam, we all must struggle with the curse of death brought into the world because of sin. Unlike Adam, we now live having seen God's promises in the garden fulfilled in the greater Adam, Jesus. Jesus has done what Adam did not do. Jesus was not a passive. He came and met the snake in the wilderness on behalf of His bride. Jesus trusted His Father's promises and refused the better promises of sin. Jesus did not run and hide. He exposed and owned our sin on the cross. Through His death, He defeated the death we deserve for our sin. He is the seed who was born of woman who crushed the serpent's head. We have more than animal skins to cover our guilt and shame. The skin of the Son of God ripped for our sin so that we might be covered in His righteousness. We have seen life come from death in an empty tomb.

Unlike Adam, who failed to work and keep the garden through obedience, Jesus has done the work to secure for us a better place for eternity. In John 14:2-3, *"I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."* In Revelation, we see not a garden for one man, but the city of God for the nations comes down. There we will worship and serve face to face with Jesus forever with no threat of Satan, sin, or death.

So What?

We have two older gentlemen in our neighborhood, Mr Ewers and Mr. Cecil. They both have very different approaches to the presence of snakes. Throw into the mix my wife who is from Florida and seeing a reptile of any sort in your backyard isn't a big deal. But, she just wasn't ready for the massive milk snake that crawled in our garage one summer morning.

Upon finding the snake, my wife called me. My response, "Go get Mr Cecil." Mr. Cecil sees the snake and immediately goes back to his house to get a gun. He has plenty. He comes back with a gun and shovel. At some point, Mr. Ewers walks upon the situation. Mr. Ewers is a geologist. He loves nature. He has even given my kids books on snakes. His solution was to capture the snake and let it go.

As Mr. Ewers is explaining the details of the snake to my kids, Mr. Cecil walks up with his shovel, and ‘*splat*’ goes the snake’s head as blood squirts across our garage floor. Mr. Cecil pitches the snake into the yard saying, “The only good snake is a dead snake.”

Just like Adam was tempted to doubt God’s goodness before the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will be tempted to doubt God’s goodness before the tree of life—the cross. You will hear the same slithering lipping voice question, “Has God really said there is therefore no condemnation for those in Christ?” You will hear him attack God’s goodness, “God is withholding a better experience from you.” You will begin to think holding on to guilt in isolation is better than confession and repentance. Will you be passive? Or will you be like Mr. Cecil? Not with a shovel, but with the sword of the Spirit, the truth of the gospel, lop his head off looking to God’s goodness in Jesus.

Read: Genesis 3:20-24

As you read through Genesis 3, what in this chapter points to the work of Christ?

Where in this chapter do you see God’s grace?

Do you struggle with guilt and condemnation, failing to embrace God's promises to you in Christ? How can you aggressively combat the sin of questioning and attacking God's goodness in the gospel?
