

Share

Cultivate: Time to Engage Series, October 8 & 9, 2022 | Genesis 3:8-24

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Why should we share our faith?

The ease with which humanity fell into sin can sap our hope for humanity.

In Genesis 1-2, God created the world and all the creatures in it.

God placed the man and the woman in a garden and provided them with everything they needed to live and thrive. God simply commanded them not to eat the fruit of one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then in Genesis 3, the serpent (Satan) cornered the woman and sowed doubt in her mind.

Immediately, the woman became confused and began to doubt God's goodness.

Satan jumped at the chance and told the woman that if she ate the fruit, she would not die. Instead, she would become like God and know good and evil.

First, the woman ate the fruit. Then she gave it to her husband, Adam, and he ate.

Then their eyes were opened. They knew the difference between good and evil. They knew guilt and shame. They realized they were naked, vulnerable, and in danger.

Sin entered the world surprisingly easily. If sin comes into the world that easily, what difference can we make? Can we stem the tide of sin in our day?

God is on mission immediately after the fall in Genesis 3:8-9:

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. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (NASB)

We know God is on mission because he is walking in the garden.

The LORD God is walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

The LORD God walking in the garden isn't unusual; it is God's habit. God created human beings in order to have communion with us.

The LORD God who created us was coming toward us. Let that sink in. That's who God is.

We also know God is on mission because he asks, "Where are you?"

This is an absolutely profound question with dramatic implications.

Understand that God is omniscient; God already knows what has happened. He is not surprised, nor does he need to conduct an investigation.

Adam and Eve were hiding from the presence of God among the trees God created. God knows that. God doesn't ask because he doesn't know.

God asks "Where are you" as an invitation for them to come to him. God who came to these people is calling these people to himself. God is on mission.

If God is on mission, how can we not join him on mission?

There are so many little, imperfect answers to the question, "Why should we share our faith?"

We can talk about commandments and obligations.

We can talk about what's good for us and what is good for the Church.

At the end of the day, we share our faith because God is on mission. That's His nature. He invites us to join Him. He expects us to join Him.

God is on mission, even as he judges the first sin.

In Genesis 3:10-13, Adam and Eve ducked God's questions.

Adam blamed the woman God created to be his companion.

The woman blamed the serpent who deceived her.

Neither accepted responsibility, and both tried to avoid consequences.

And there would be consequences, just as God had warned.

Starting in Genesis 3:14-15, God judges the serpent and gives a promise that serves as a prophecy:

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." (NASB)

He will be cursed by being forced to slither on his belly. He will be nose level with the dust.

God will put enmity between the snake and the woman he deceived. The woman's children (that's all humanity) will be at war with the serpent and his children.

Here is where these consequences turn into prophecy. The woman's offspring will bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent will bruise the woman's offspring on the heel.

This is a reference to Jesus. Someday Satan will see Jesus hurt by crucifying and killing him. Satan will hurt Jesus. However, Jesus, in dying on the cross and then rising from the dead, will give Satan a far worse wound that will lead to Satan's ultimate defeat.

These are consequences, but God who is on mission is also giving a promise!

Then, in Genesis 3:16-20, God assures the continuity of life in the face of certain death:

To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. (NASB)

Sin brought death into the world. Death will claim all living things because of sin.

However, even as death entered the world, God assured the continuity of life.

The woman will bear children; it will hurt, but she will have offspring.

Adam will work the ground; it will be difficult, and he will eventually die, but he will provide everything the human race needs in order to survive and continue.

At the end of the consequences, Adam gives the woman a name. She will be called "Eve" which means "the mother of all the living." Even as death enters the world, life continues by God's design and according to His promise. God is on mission.

Next, in Genesis 3:21, God serves his people while foreshadowing Jesus:

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. (NASB)

Adam and Eve recognized their nakedness, plus the shame and vulnerability that came along with it, so they made loincloths for themselves from leaves, an imperfect solution.

Before sending them out into the sin-stained world, God provided them with real clothes.

God made garments of animal skin for them. These garments would be sturdier and provide them with fuller, better protection than the ones Adam and Eve had made. It's remarkable that God cared about their modesty and safety, even as they disobeyed Him and received consequences.

These garments are more than a sign of God's care, though. Animals had to die, to shed their blood, so that Adam and Eve could be clothed. This foreshadows the sacrificial system whereby humans would shed animal blood to attempt to pay the debt incurred by human sin.

However, this whole system of sacrifices would fail. No amount of animal blood can pay our entire, mounting debt to God. The failure of the sacrificial system to reconcile us fully to God would point out our need for something else, something better. Jesus is that something else, that something better.

Jesus, being fully human and fully God, died on the cross in our place to pay the full price for our sin so that we could be forgiven, reconciled, and adopted as children of God. God was on mission right here pointing the way to Jesus.

Finally, in Genesis 3:22-24, God closes the way to the Garden so that the door to eternity is open:

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. (NASB)

Adam and Eve were already suffering the effects of sin. Those effects would increase with time. Not only would their character suffer, but their bodies would deteriorate.

If they were to eat the fruit of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, they would live forever but as sinful, broken people. It would be more of a miserable existence forever.

God sent them out of the garden so that they would not find their way to eternal misery on earth. Instead, the door would still be open to Jesus and eternal life. Even in casting Adam and Eve and the rest of us out of paradise, God was on mission.

God is on mission.

It is impossible to pinpoint the beginning of God's mission within the Bible.

Some of us might think that God's mission begins with the Great Commission in the New Testament when Jesus commanded the Church to make disciples of all nations. Not true. God's mission was already well underway.

We might think that Jesus' birth is the start of God's mission. God the Son came on mission from heaven to earth to be with us, live as one of us, and die for us. However, God's mission was already well underway.

When the prophets foretold Jesus' coming, God's mission was well underway.

When God told the patriarch Abraham that He would bless him, so that Abraham would become a blessing to many nations, God's mission was already well underway.

Creation itself demonstrates that God is already on mission.

God didn't create the world and us because He needed anything. He had everything already!

God created the world and us in order to bless us, to give us life, to relate to us.

God created the world to save His people, build His Kingdom, and glorify His name!

That's who God is! God simply is on mission.

God IS the one who creates us to relate to us and love us.

God IS the one who comes to us and walks with us.
God IS the one who calls to us and calls us to himself.
God IS the one who saves His people, builds His Kingdom, and glorifies His name.

This is HIS mission to save His people, build His Kingdom, and bring His name glory.

When God sends us out to make and multiply disciples, God is calling us to join Him.
When God commands us to share our faith, God is inviting us into His work.
He's already out there ahead of us; He's just inviting us to come, join Him.

God, who is on mission, demands that we OWN HIS MISSION.

We are to own it, meaning that we join God on mission and share our faith.

Owning God's mission as our own makes God's mission a burning concern for us.
We want to see God's mission advance as much as we want anything in life.
We give our best effort, best resources, best time, best thought, and best energy to it.
We chase after God's mission with Him like it really matters to us! How will we do this?

Through World Outreach here at Valley, we can share our faith with the least reached people in the world.

The World Outreach ministry here at Valley shows God's love and shares Good News with people around the world who do not know Jesus.
Our partners emphasize going to places where there is no consistent Gospel witness.
For us, that frequently means going to places where Islam is the dominant faith.
Our World Outreach ministry invites all of us to pray, give, and go. We pray for our World Outreach partners who are on mission with God. We give to make sure they have all the resources they need to do their work. Plus, we go on mission ourselves.
World Outreach here at Valley is one way we can all share our faith and join God on mission.

Through Local Outreach here at Valley, we can help to complete the Great Commission in Hartford and Litchfield Counties.

Together, Hartford and Litchfield Counties represent our back yard.
There are 1.1 million people living in Hartford and Litchfield Counties.
At least 900,000 of them have no personal relationship with Jesus.
Our church longs to complete the Great Commission to make disciples in our own backyard.
That means we want to relationally present the Gospel to everyone in these two counties and make sure that they have access to a Gospel-preaching, Great-Commission minded church.
To do that, we are engaging in personal evangelism, we are planting churches, and we are partnering with other Great-Commission Christians to get the work done.
Local Outreach here at Valley is another way we can all share our faith and join God's mission.

We can BLESS people where we live, work, and play!

The BLESS lifestyle is where local outreach gets personal.
BLESS is an acronym that helps us to relate to the unsaved where we live, work, and play.
B stands for "Begin with Prayer." We pray for unsaved people around us.
L stands for "Listen with Care." We get to know people and listen to their stories.
E stands for "Eat Together." Hospitality builds relationships.

The first S stands for “Serve with Love.” As we get to know people, we serve them.

The final S stands for “Share Your Story.” What has God done in your life? We have to be clear and share who God is and what He has done for us.

We hope everyone will choose to BLESS at least one person where we live, work, and play.

God, who is on mission, demands that we OWN HIS MISSION.

Since we own God’s mission, let’s share our faith.

Let’s dedicate ourselves to building Valley now the way our founders built Valley years ago.

Four people came together forty-six years ago to start this church.

The original four were quickly joined by others.

No pastor came to town to recruit people to start a church.

No agency came to town to start a church.

When it comes to Valley, a group of people gathered together. They saw a need. They served our God who is on mission, and they made God’s mission their mission.

Forty-six years later, there is a great big church doing amazing things to join God on mission.

Among the many ways we can join God on mission today, can we join Him on mission by dedicating ourselves to building Valley here and now the way our founders did there and then? Can we dedicate ourselves to building Valley as our job, our mission, our piece of God’s mission? Can we make building Valley here and now a critical part of what we want from life?

Let’s invite people to join us here at Valley.

The world desperately needs what we have in Jesus Christ.

The world can be a dark place. If you think it’s dark when you have the light of Jesus Christ in your life, then imagine what it is like to live in the darkness when darkness is all you have!

Rather than simply complaining about the darkness, let’s invite people to come out of the darkness and join us in the light!

When people come out of the darkness and join us in the light, then they may become children of the light themselves! Then the light shines even more brightly!

Let’s engage fully here at Valley because engagement truly changes lives.

I said to you at the beginning of this series, “Full Valley engagement cultivates disciples who impact the world for Christ.” That’s our vision framework for these days.

Now, as we’re coming to the end of this series, we have to wonder what that really means.

Every step of engagement matters.

Coming to worship is one step. As I said a few weeks ago, though, it’s not just about attending worship. Yes, attend worship. But to worship means that we worship vibrantly.

The second part is connecting. We connect with other Christians in groups. I told you it would help to build your faith. I think some of you think it would take more faith than it would build to connect with other people.

The third part of engagement is to serve, to use our gifts here at Valley or somewhere, to cultivate disciples. Again, that sounds like an investment more than income.

And now, at the end, I am encouraging you to share your faith. More work.

I love that many of us are so in love with Jesus that we simply want to do what God wants us to do. We own God’s mission as our own and just need a reminder to engage and share our faith.

But what I want you to see is that trip one around the engagement wheel is just one trip.

When we serve people and share our faith, it sounds like something that takes energy and effort, and it does.

Interestingly, giving our best effort in serving and sharing leaves us hungry for God's presence, for prayer, for the Word of God, and for the filling that we get in worship.

And when we dine on worship like a fine meal, we are driven again to our brothers and sisters in Christ in community.

And when we are close with our brothers and sisters in community, we long to serve people.

And when we serve people, we see that what they need more than anything is Jesus.

Now the wheel is turning, it's building up speed, it's gaining momentum.

And full Valley engagement is really cultivating disciples who impact the world for Christ.

Can you see the vision? Can you see what can happen? Can you see what can happen to you? For the Kingdom? For this church?

God is on mission!

God is calling you to join Him on mission.

HOW will you be involved?