

# The Book of Beginnings



*Messages by various speakers on the book of  
Genesis at the Streetlight Mission Church  
in the 11a.m. services of March 2007*

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March 4, 2007  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Genesis 2:9b** “In the middle of the garden were the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.”

### *The Tree of Knowledge*

Reading: Genesis 2:8-17  
Text: Genesis 2:9b

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church:

Genesis 2: 9 says that God made all kinds of trees to grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. When the Lord God planted the garden, he made all kinds of trees. We hear often these days about people who care a lot for the environment. For example, people that love the great old grove forests of the west coast - I can sympathize with the feelings of these people because forests are extremely beautiful. There is nothing so magnificent as a towering tree or an ancient Maple. These creations of God, as with all he created, are very beautiful in their own way. This also means that *you*, being created by the hand of God, are beautiful. We know that human beings are the image of God. With this fantastic dignity, we are given wonderful abilities so that we can solve problems that we are faced with in our lives giving glory to God and not ourselves.

In verse 9, we read that the trees that God created were very beautiful. Not only were the trees beautiful, it also says that

the fruit of those trees was also very lovely. My family and I went this past Friday to visit the art gallery in Hamilton (which is free on the first Friday of the month, by the way). There is a small section dedicated to still life art, which includes paintings of a bowl of fruit on a piece of canvas. That is a good choice of things to paint since there are few things as beautiful to look at and with so much opportunity as a bowl of fruit. So God made it so that the trees were beautiful, but also the fruit was very beautiful.

Now, in the middle of the garden there was also this tree called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. I remember as a child, I used to wonder why God planted that tree there. Maybe it was a bit of a mistake because if God had not done that then there would never have been evil in the world. Without that tree, Adam and Eve (and with them the whole world) would not have sinned against God, and there wouldn't be all the trouble that we are experiencing in this world - the trouble of diseases that we may suffer from, handicaps that may limit us, etc. If only God had planted the Tree of Life and not the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, things would have been much better. But that is a child's perspective. As we mature and think about God's creation, we come to realize that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is actually at the heart of having a relationship with God.

And so this morning, we are going to focus on the significance of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in our

relationship towards God. What does this mean? God wants a particular relationship with us. God created us in his image so that we can serve to his glory in all that we do and to worship him. Now, I can cultivate a relationship with my computer. I can get my computer to glorify *me*. I could program it so that every time I turn it on, it will print a sheet that says “Paul Aasman is the smartest man in the whole world. He is the strongest person in the whole world and is better than anyone else.” But does this mean my computer loves me? No, it doesn’t because I have no deep relationship with it. So whatever it says in praise of me is meaningless. In the same way, God didn’t want to create us to be simply programmed to serve him. He wants us to worship him and sing his praise because our hearts are filled with *love*. God wants us to love him because we want to and choose to serve him. For instance, let us use the illustration of a married couple. The wife says to her husband, “My dear husband, why do you love me?” He says to her, “I love you because you were the only woman in the world left, so I married you.” Do you think she would be happy with that answer? No! The way a relationship of love should develop is that when she asks that question, her husband should reply, “I love you because you are the most delightful jewel in the whole world and there is not another woman like you among ten thousand. I know God created you just for me and I delight in your love.” This is the kind of relationship God wants with us.

God says to us, “Why do you love me?” Do we love God because we have no choice? No. We love him because we want to and choose to.

Therefore, God planted a tree called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Through this tree, man would be able to demonstrate his choice for God. God warned man against eating from the tree, but it was still man’s choice. You can either obey or disobey God. If you choose to obey, that choice is motivated by love. If you choose to disobey, that shows that you love only yourself (which is hatred for God). The tree was also especially delightful. Of all the trees in the garden, this tree was the most attractive to Adam and Eve. We see later in Genesis 3:6 that Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom. God created this tree to draw Adam and Eve to its fruit, and the only thing that would be able to stop them from eating it would be love for God and an obedient heart. God created it so that we would have a way to demonstrate our love for him and grow deeper in our relationship with him.

However, Eve ate the fruit of the tree, and then Adam also ate of the tree. Our first parents fell into sin and all their descendants after them. As a result, we were thrown out of paradise, out of the presence of God. We failed the test. But, God wanted a relationship with us and would not allow this one failure

to stop that relationship from developing. We were the ones that he loved and desired. God was even willing to send his only Son into this world, so that he would suffer the punishment that we deserved. Jesus Christ was tested just as we were tested in the garden to see if he would choose the right thing, even though we always chose the wrong thing. Jesus loved his Father, and so he demonstrated his love for God by not doing the evil things that he was tempted to do. Hebrews 5:7-10 says *“During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”* Jesus, by being faced with temptation and overcoming it, *learned obedience* through what he suffered. Brothers and sisters, may we learn obedience and grow in that relationship of love with God.

We also read in Hebrews 5:9 that Jesus became the source of Life for all those who hope in him. We read about two trees in Genesis 2:9 – the other tree is the Tree of Life. This tree also had very beautiful fruit, but that fruit was only to be eaten by someone who had already proved that he loved God. After Genesis 3, never again do we read anywhere in the Bible about the Tree of the

Knowledge of Good and Evil. But the Tree of Life is mentioned again in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. This book brings us back to the garden of paradise, and the opportunity is once again presented to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life. Over the eons of time, this tree becomes even more beautiful, growing 12 different fruits and grows on both sides of the river that is flowing from the throne of God.

Even though we had failed in paradise, we are still able to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life. How is this possible? Because Jesus Christ passed the test and learned obedience in order that he could give us the right to eat from this tree. Through Christ, we still have an opportunity to show that we love God, to demonstrate our love. In this coming week, even today, we will be drawn to evil. Perhaps the Devil will attack us in a very powerful way. It will seem so pleasant and harmless to commit these sins and do those evil things. In these situations, we will be given the opportunity to show that we love God. We can say “No! I will not do that and displease my Father, who has done so much for me.”

How deep does your love for God run in your heart? What will you do when you are faced with temptation? Let us love God. Let us obey God. In true obedience, let us learn the beauty of living in a relationship with him. You can overcome temptation, by the grace of God, which is given to you by the Holy Spirit. Let us pray often that God will give us richly of his Spirit that we may

obey him, and learn obedience through what we suffer and deepen our relationship with God.

Amen.

March 18, 2007  
*Rev. G. van Popta*

**Genesis 3:6-9** “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, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 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. 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. But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’”

### ***Where are you?***

Reading: Hebrews 10:1-10  
Text: Genesis 3:6-9

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church;

Where are you?

You might think, "Well, that's sort of a silly question. I'm right here, sitting in church." But that's not what I mean. When I ask, "Where are you?", then I mean, "Where are you in your life with the Lord?" Do you believe in him? Are you following the Lord? That's the question that comes to us this morning:

Where are you?

This morning we are going to hear about how the Lord God asked this question of Adam; and then of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and then, finally, of each of you. We read here in Genesis 3 about how Adam and Eve, our first parents, had disobeyed the LORD God. He had given them all the trees of the garden for food. They could eat from all of the trees, except one: a tree in the middle of the Garden called "the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." God said that if they disobeyed him and ate from the tree, they would die.

Maybe you know the story. Satan came into the garden in the form of a serpent. He convinced the woman to try the forbidden fruit. He said, "*You will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" Well, that was too good to miss out on—to be like God! She took some of the fruit of the tree and ate it. She gave some to her husband, Adam. And he ate. Then their eyes were opened. They now knew the difference between good and evil, all right. They knew that they had done evil and were filled with fear. They tried to hide behind some fig leaves. They tried to hide from God and from each other.

But that wasn't enough. For when they heard the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they ran in fear. They went and hid among the trees of the garden. They were afraid because they had disobeyed the commandment of God.

They were like little children who hide when they know they have done something wrong. When they hear mom or dad, they hide because of a guilty conscience, and because of fear. That's how the man and the woman acted. They hid from God.

If we had written this story, perhaps at this point we would have had God destroy Adam and Eve and start all over. Create another man and women who would obey him. Who could blame God if he had done that? No one. But that's not what God did. Instead, he came down into his creation. The holy God, came down into the unholy mess. The perfect Creator entered his ruined creation.

So often God acts in surprising ways - in ways that we would not even dream of. Here too, God acts in a completely unexpected way. He comes looking for man. God knew what had happened. He saw the woman eat some of the forbidden fruit and saw the man eat some of it. He saw their desperate attempts to hide. And he came to them. And when he came to the garden, they ran and hid. Perhaps we would expect the LORD God to say, "If that's how you want to be, fine!", and then to leave. But again, he did something very unexpected. He called for them. He called to the man, "*Where are you?*" It's not that he didn't know where they were. As we sang in Ps. 139:

*Where shall I go from your Spirit?*

*Or where shall I flee from your presence?*

*If I say, "Let only darkness cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you, the night is bright as the day; for darkness is as light with you.* Adam and Eve could not hide from God. God knew they were hiding behind the trees. And yet he called out to the man: "Where are you?" God saw the sin and the misery into which man had plunged himself. He saw that man was now in the grips of spiritual death - that he had made himself completely miserable. That man had chosen the side of Satan, God's enemy. Yet even then, God did not give man up to the devil. When God called the man, the first thing God wanted was for man to acknowledge his sin and misery. That's the first thing the Word of God does - shows us that we are sinners. It takes some people a long time to face up to the fact that they were sinners. They make excuses for their sins. And that's no wonder. Look at Adam. Even when God called him from hiding among the trees, he didn't fall down before God in repentance, confessing his sin, and asking for forgiveness. He started making all sorts of bad excuses. "*I hid because I was naked.*" And then: "*It's all the fault of that woman you gave me.*"

Many of Adam's children imitate their first Father. They make excuses for sin. They blame it all on others - husband, wife, parents, church community. They don't want to take any responsibility for their own foolish behaviour. Blame it on some one else - that's easy! But the children of Adam who open their

ears and their hearts will not act in such a ridiculous way. They will repent. They will say, "Lord, I have sinned; forgive me my sins." As I said, the first thing God wanted to do in calling the man was to bring him to a confession of his sin and his misery.

However, this call of the LORD is also the call of grace. Contrary to everything man deserved, to anything that man could expect - God, in his grace, called him. God refused to leave man lost for eternity in his sin and in his alienation from God. He came to man who, stupidly, were hiding from Him. We see here the grace, love, and tender mercy of God. For it is only as God comes to us and calls us to himself that things can ever begin to be well again in our lives. As God calls to us, he tells about the way of salvation. About salvation through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And what a Saviour we have! We have a Saviour who saves us from the power of the devil and through whom we have the complete forgiveness of all our sins. He came willingly to rescue Adam and Eve, and all their children - us included - from their sins. We read from Hebrews 10 and there it says twice that Jesus Christ came willingly. When God the Father called upon him to make sacrifice on the cross for our sins, then Jesus said: "*Here I am, I have come to do your will, O God.*" He did not run and hide. He did not make excuses. He came and did the Father's will.

Jesus was very conscious of how his heavenly Father had sent him to do his will, already from his youth. When he was twelve years old he said to Joseph and Mary, "*Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?*" Later in John 6:38 he said to his disciples, "*I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.*" Again in John 8:29, "*He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.*" In John 17:4 the Lord Jesus said in prayer to the Father, "*I have accomplished the work which you gave me to do.*"

The Father gave the Son a task. And the Son did it, willingly. He didn't hide like the first Adam did. He said, "*I have come to do your will.*" He did the will of God by becoming one of us. And as one of us, as a true man, the Lord Jesus did the will of God by being obedient to his Father in all things. He offered up the obedience the first Adam did not and was obedient even to death on the cross. While he was on the cross, he could not enjoy the very relationship he had come to restore. He came to restore harmony between God and man. While he hung on the cross, he himself could not enjoy that harmony. The relationship between God and the Lord Jesus was thrown into disharmony. It had to be in order for the relationship between God and us to be restored. The Lord Jesus had to suffer total alienation - separation from God - for us to be received again into favour. And that is why God did

not answer when the Lord Jesus cried from the cross out of the deep darkness that had descended upon him, "My God, where are you?" "Why have you forsaken me? My God, where are you?"

God did not answer. Why did God the Father not answer his Son? This was all part of the task the Father had sent his Son to do so that the Son might redeem for his Father a people. There were really only two possibilities. Either abandon Adam and Eve, and all succeeding generations - the whole human race - forever, or abandon his Son. Either remain in heaven, take a look at what Adam and Eve did there in the Garden, close the doors of heaven and let the darkness descend upon mankind, or close the doors on his only beloved Son, and let *him* suffer in darkness. Well, in his grace and love for us, God chose to abandon his Son, Jesus Christ. There at Golgotha, Jesus Christ was left for a few hours by his Father. The Lord Jesus suffered that for us that we may have life. There at the place of death, we receive life. Everlasting life in Paradise, the heavenly and eternal Eden. Christ was left alone to call out: *God, where are you*; so that we would never need to call that. So that the broken relationship between God and us would be restored.

The last thing I want to tell you about is how, today, God calls each of us to himself. Because of what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross, God has come looking for you. He is looking for you by way of the preaching of the good news of salvation. In the

preaching of the gospel that you hear on Sundays, God comes to you and he calls, "*Where are you?*" Those words of God come to each of you personally, individually. You cannot hide. Don't try to hide from God. He wants you to come to him in faith and love.

The LORD asks, "Where are you? Are you going to listen to my voice? Are you going to respond in love to the love I have shown you? Are you going to follow my Son Jesus Christ?" That's the question: "Where are you?" It will be there again this evening. Tomorrow the question will still be there. Where are you?

Are you walking in the ways of the Lord? Do you love Jesus? Are you following him? What are you doing? Where are you headed in life? Where are you going? Are you with the LORD or with the world?

Answer God with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ quoted in Hebrews 10: "*Here I am, I have come to do your will, O God*" Do not be afraid to go to the LORD. Do not be afraid to give your life to the God who calls you to come to him. Do not be afraid, no matter how great your sin. God doesn't turn anyone away. If he calls you, would he then turn you away? Leave your fear behind and respond to his question in love. As the apostle John said at the end of 1 John 4, "*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment.*" The Lord Jesus has borne the punishment we deserved. And so the

reason for fear is gone. There is only reason for love. For answering the LORD God's question, "Where are you?", with a firm and confident answer which says, "Here, LORD. Please, forgive my sins for Jesus' sake. Accept me, for Jesus' sake. Fill my life with your Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake."

Amen.

March 25, 2007  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Genesis 3:7a** "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked;"

***Adam and Eve's eyes are opened – to their shame***

Reading: Genesis 3:7-13  
Text: Genesis 3:7a

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church;

Today we come to the third lesson on the fall into sin as described in Genesis 3. We have and will in the next few weeks spend a lot of time on this topic. I hope this does not discourage you. It is only by looking sin directly that we find the beauty of grace in Jesus Christ. In the same way, many have only felt the wonder of Christ's victory over sin and death when they stand at the grave-side of a loved one. When we look at sin, we realize just how great is God's love for us.

But sin is deceitful. In chapter 17:9 of his book, the prophet Jeremiah says that "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*" At the time of writing this, he was quite depressed about what sin was doing in the world in which he lived – that's why he says it is beyond cure. But we know that that isn't really true, don't we? The sinful human heart *can* be cured by the grace of God. But sin remains deceitful. It promises so much, but never delivers. It disappoints us, and violates and hurts our relationships with God and our neighbours. It also pollutes our own hearts, making us feel guilty and dirty.

Eating from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil offered three things to Adam and Eve. Let us look at Genesis 3:6 - "*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food,*" so the first thing it was offered was nourishment. "*and pleasing to the eye,*" so the second thing it offered was pleasure, being a very delicious fruit. "*and also desirable for gaining wisdom,*" so the third thing it offered was wisdom, a wisdom so powerful that if you had it you would become like God. The last part of verse 6 says "*she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*" By doing this, they sinned against God. Genesis 3:7a says "*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked;*" Did they become like God? No, instead their eyes were opened and they saw how shame-filled they had become. They

realized that they were not wearing clothes, and suddenly this was intolerable. So they had to cover themselves with fig leaves.

How did this sin deliver on its original promises? Verse 7 makes no mention about whether or not they found nourishment in the food or found pleasure in eating or looking at it. It only says that their eyes were opened. The nourishment and pleasure were only ways to tempt them into the sin, but they gave nothing to Adam and Eve in that respect. In regards to the wisdom that was offered, in a sense they did become like God for their eyes were opened. Genesis 3:22a says “*And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.’*” (The *us* refers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as they were speaking within the trinity when God said this). God acknowledges that man sought to become like God by eating the fruit, and in a sense this did happen. Man now had the knowledge of good and evil.

But there were two ways to come to the knowledge of good and evil. Man could have been tempted and then overcome that temptation. That experience would teach them the difference between good and evil. That is the way Jesus Christ experienced life. In his human nature, he had to come to a knowledge of good and evil, and to become like God. He came to that knowledge by seeing good versus evil in those temptations.

The other way was for man to become wise was to be tempted and then choosing to do evil. In this way, you come to

understand evil versus good, therefore gaining knowledge. Even though you come to the same knowledge, you learn it in a completely different way: You learn it by becoming a victim of evil, not a victor over evil. The knowledge comes from beneath instead of above. This is what happened to Adam and Eve. They became like God, but the in the most contemptible way. Their eyes were opened and, instead of seeing how wonderful it was to stand beside God, they saw how shameful it was to oppose him.

Verse 8 says “*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.*” Adam and Eve had to hide from themselves, each other, and the Lord God because of their shameful sin. Verse 9-11 say “*But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’ And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’*” And then verse 12 describes the next level of depravity as a result of sinning against God: “*The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’*” Adam was shifting the blame away from himself - blaming God for putting the woman with him and blaming Eve for giving him the fruit. He refused to accept responsibility for his actions. Then Eve does the same thing in

verse 13: *"Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" She shifted the blame to the serpent.*

Since Adam and Eve came to a knowledge of good and evil by falling victims to evil, they become deceptive, selfish, and mean spirited. They were promised much, but were disappointed; they violated all their relationships and they were left feeling so dirty. This is the effect of sin.

Thanks be to God that there is one person that walked this earth who came to a knowledge of good and evil as a victor instead of a victim - our Saviour Jesus Christ. Christ, a powerful man, faced so much temptation and hardship and yet was most compelled by his love for his Father. Jesus was placed under terrible temptation by his own dear apostles (namely Peter). Christ was betrayed by his own disciple. He was arrested and abandoned by the rest of the disciples. People who should have loved him turned against him and cried out for his blood. They stripped him naked, nailed him to a cross. He was under powerful temptation to blame those around him for they way he was being treated, to turn away from them and condemn them to hell. But to every temptation he said "No. I will do the will of my Father. I will love him and these people." And so he endured the pain and covered my shame. He was given all authority on heaven and earth. He

enjoyed the resurrection over death. He was made the judge of the whole earth.

Brothers and sisters, sin is a deceitful thing. It always disappoints, it always violates, it always makes you dirty. Facing sin and overcoming it is something each one of us can do by the power of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is the victory over sin, no matter how big or small. Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to give us the power of Christ's victory, that we may live to the glory of God and overcome the Evil One.

Amen.