

## Session 3

### What went Wrong – and What is God doing about it?



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**Session Goal:** To understand the relationship between human sin and poor stewardship, and that the solution for sin – redemption – also applies to environmental problems.

**Key Scriptures:** Genesis 3, Isaiah 24:1-13 (esp. vs. 4-6), Romans 3, Colossians 1:15-20

**Background Reading:** *Our Father's World*, chapters 4 & 5 (p. 63-83)

### Warm Up

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**Share insights** from your outdoor devotional experiences this past week.

**Report** on evidences of problems in God's creation that you found in the media last week.

## Content

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We need to understand that Creation really is groaning (Romans 8:24):

**Video Resources:** Gaining an awareness of the realities of the environmental crisis in a short time is difficult. One of the best ways for your group to do this may be by **watching a short video together**. There are some resources available online, or if you can, get a hold of one of these DVD resources from your library. Don't take too much time – 5 or 10 minutes of total video is plenty:

- [The Wonder of Soil, a Tree, and the Wilderness videos from RBC ministries.](#)
- Planet Earth (Discovery Channel)
- National Geographic has a [long list of short videos](#) here. These can be downloaded or watched on-line. Select two or three to highlight issues of interest to you and your group.

### What went Wrong? The Curse of Sin

The Bible explains why these things are happening:

#### 1. Sin infects and affects everything we do as human beings.

Most of us are familiar with verses like “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) – but we still don't quite grasp how insidious sin is. In the following passages, circle or underline the different descriptions of sin and the effects of sin on us, on creation and on God:

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. [Genesis 6:5-6]

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

<sup>11</sup>there is no one who understands,  
no one who seeks God.

<sup>12</sup>All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one."

<sup>13</sup>"Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

<sup>14</sup>"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

<sup>15</sup>"Their feet are swift to shed blood;

<sup>16</sup>ruin and misery mark their ways,  
<sup>17</sup>and the way of peace they do not know."  
<sup>18</sup>"There is no fear of God before their eyes." [Romans 3:10-18, quoting a variety of Old Testament sources including Psalm 14, 53, 5, 140, 10 and Isaiah 59.]

## 2. What is happening in the world is a direct result of our sin:

The Bible actually predicts ecological problems as a result of humanity's sin. The Biblical story of the fall of man tells us that there are consequences to our sin, and some of these are visited on the non-human parts of God's creation. These practical effects of sin are spelled out in God's curse on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. In this passage, underline or circle all of the ways in which sin affects creation and human beings:

<sup>17</sup> To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'  
"Cursed is the ground because of you;  
through painful toil you will eat of it  
all the days of your life.  
<sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.  
<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow  
you will eat your food  
until you return to the ground,  
since from it you were taken;  
for dust you are  
and to dust you will return." Genesis 3:17-19

### Let's Discuss.

- a. The idea that sin "infects and affects" everything we do is biblical, but it's not something we think about much. Explore with each other how you see this principle at work in your own life, the lives of your children, and even in your work-life.
- b. In what ways are you "sinning against God's creation" in the way you live? Remember, sin doesn't have to be intentional to be sin. [Consider energy consumption, consumer goods you've bought but may not need, harm you may be causing to other creatures by how you live...] Explore together whether and how these are the result of "sinful actions", "sinfulness" or a combination of both.
- c. There are many people in the world right now trying hard to solve these problems. If it is true that the roots of the crisis are spiritual – having to do with sin, what implications does this have for solutions?

## What God is doing about it: Reversing the Curse

God's work in redemption is centered on the salvation of human beings: **Jesus died to save us from the consequences of our sin.**

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." [I Timothy 1:15]

But we are about to discover that **this is not all he came to do**. Let's go back to Colossians 1:15-20, a passage we examined at in Session 1. At that time, we were focusing on Jesus as our Creator. Read the passage again (below or in your own Bible), and this time underline every occurrence of "creation" or "things" in one color. Then circle everything that Jesus is or does in connection with the phrases or words you already marked in a different color.

...He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.<sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.<sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.<sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.<sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,<sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Here is a summary:

- Jesus is **the Creator** of all things.
- Jesus **holds all things together**.
- Jesus is **the purpose** of all things.
- Jesus is **supreme** over all things.

And most interesting of all,

- Jesus has **reconciled** all things **to God by his blood**, shed on the cross.

This leads to an inescapable conclusion: God's redemptive plan includes the same non-human creation that he created and that was stained by our sin.

This explains quite well what Paul means in Romans 8:

<sup>19</sup>The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that **the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.**

### **Let's Discuss.**

This concept is quite different from what most of us think about redemption and salvation. It will be important to take some time to explore this with each other to be sure that you understand what Paul is saying here, and what he is not saying.

- a. Redemption is God's answer to sin. If animals do not sin, how or why do animals need to be "redeemed"? [Hint: It has to do with the effects of our sin on the rest of creation...]
- b. If our salvation (personal and individual forgiveness of sins) is part of a bigger plan that encompasses all of creation, does this affect how we think about our own salvation? Does it make it less "special"? or more so? Why?
- c. How does the idea of full redemption affect what we do with our 'in-between' time – that is, the time after we are saved until Jesus returns?

### **Digging deeper: Four Relationships**

In *Our Father's World*, the concept of four relationships is introduced. This concept helps us to understand the reason why God's plan of redemption has to be more than salvation.

To explore this further, read pages 66-68 about these relationships broken by sin; and pages 74-77 on how the same relationships are restored in redemption.

### **Prayer Time**

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It would be very appropriate at the end of this meeting to spend your prayer time both confessing to God our sin and thanking him for the full redemption he offers us in Jesus.

### **Prepare Ahead**

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**Read** next session's materials ahead of time.

**Outdoor Time:** Spend some of your 'outdoor time' in a place that has been degraded and fouled by human activity. I suggest you go to your local shopping mall and walk around the entire outside perimeter of the parking lot, noting trash, dirty streambeds or storm drains, and so on. Contrast this with the clean, fresh appearance the stores present at the front. Think about how you feel compared to how you feel when walking in a park or nature area. You can make this into a positive experience by bringing along gloves and a container to pick up some of the trash you find.