

*My name is Rick and I serve as the lead pastor here at Christ Fellowship. I want to welcome you today. We are in a brand new series that we just started last week, called "Ever Wonder Why?" Today we are going back to the Book of Genesis again, because this is all part of a study of that book, that very first book of the Bible. So, even if you are new with us, you can take a Bible from the seat rack in front of you and open it to the very first book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis; or it will all come up on the screen for you. While you are turning there, let me kind of set things up by sharing this with you.*

*One night a few years back, Rhonda and I were channel surfing the TV. It was one of those nights when there was just nothing on the TV. You know what I'm talking about! But folks, I didn't give up. I kept clicking and clicking until all of sudden I landed in the middle of this movie that just sucked us into the drama. Now, mind you, this would be another one of those movies where we had missed what had happened in the beginning. But folks, that was not a problem, because it was so fascinating that this movie just drew us right into the action. By the way, the movie that we were watching is entitled, "Taken". How many of you have ever seen that movie? A lot of you have. Let me tell you this: I'm not much of a movie watcher. Too much attention deficit goes on for a two hour movie for me. But folks, this movie was different. Even though I had missed what had happened back in the beginning, the middle of the movie was so fascinating. Now, follow me here, because as far as I could tell from what I had seen, the movie was about this man who had this unique set of fighting skills. He was going into the sex-trafficking ring over in Europe, specifically I think it was in France. He was just crushing these guys' faces in. Man o man! Could this guy ever fight! Take a look. You'll see what I mean. (Shows portion of movie "Taken". "I told you I would find you!") Talk about being able to fight? I love that! But mind you, because I had missed what happened in the beginning, I really didn't know why this guy was fighting like that. I didn't know what had happened all the way back in the beginning that was compelling this guy to go all the way to Europe and to fight this war against these sex traffickers. I didn't know why that was. But mind you, I was sort of able to piece some of it together as the movie went on. I kind of figured out that something had happened to this guy's child, this guy's daughter. But I needed to know what had happened in the beginning if I was going to really be able to figure it out. So, check it out folks:*

*That summer Rhonda and I rented the movie "Taken", and we watched it all the way from the beginning, and when I saw what happened in the beginning I'm like "Aha! Now I know why this guy was fighting." I found out by going back to the beginning that his daughter, his child, had been taken. In fact, she was on this trip over to France, and*

*while she was over there she was kidnapped, and she was separated away from her father. Not only that, but by going back to the beginning and watching the whole movie, we found out that the guy who was behind this sex trafficking ring, his name of all names was Sin Clair. I knew when I heard that that I had a sermon illustration. I knew that name Sin Clair was going to fit! But he induced this girl into the sex-trafficking ring where she was not only going to be separated away from her father, but she was going to be abused for an entire lifetime. At the end of the story, if you saw the movie, you know what happened. Her father came to her rescue. What I love, love, love is that in the end this guy just crushes sin out, I mean Sin Clair out, once and for all.*

*Now, let me turn a corner and kind of draw an analogy to all of that, because when we read the gospel, sort of the middle of the Bible, we are drawn in to this fascinating reality drama about God and us, and in this drama as we read the gospel, we find out that God Almighty, our Father, our Heavenly Father in the form of Christ, comes to the earth and engages in this battle that He is uniquely qualified to fight. But in this battle, our Father actually has to lay down His life. He has to die in order to rescue us, and it is an incredible read, an incredible story.*

*But listen, when we read the gospel accounts, we may wonder why did Christ have to go to war, as it were, against Satan. We may wonder why did He have to die on the cross. We may wonder why do we have to be saved, and what are we being saved from. Listen, here is my proposition. To find out why Christ had to come to the earth to fight for us, and to find out why we had to be saved in the first place, we really need to go back to the beginning of the whole story. Back to the beginning, because just reading the gospel narratives, as beautiful as they are, and as explanatory as they are, it is sort of like me watching "Taken" in the middle of the movie, but having missed what happened all the way back to the start, to the beginning. You say, "Well Rick, what happened to us? What happened to mankind all the way back in the beginning? Simply put, folks, we got taken away from God. We're going to find out how that happened, and why that happened.*

*I want to welcome all of our campuses, by the way, who are joining us by way of video. I want to apologize for something one more time, because today, one more time, is going to come off more like teaching than preaching. Next week is going to get really practical. We are going to talk about how sin separates us from each other. We have social problems. We are going to talk about how sin separates us from ourselves. We have psychological problems. We are going to talk about how sin affects us with depression, can affect us with anxiety, can affect us with insecurity. We are going to*

*deal with all of those kinds of things, but today, one more sort of deep theological lesson that I want you to get. We are going to find out how we got taken, and what happened back there at the beginning. So, having said all of that, I want to give you two thoughts that kind of unfold from the Book of Genesis. Here they are:*

*Number one: Sin separated us from God. Now, before we unpack that truth, you need to know this truth. In the beginning, God and man were inseparable from each other. We had this relationship that was incredible. With that in mind, listen to Genesis 1:1. Here is what it says. We are winding all the way back to the beginning today. Here is what it says. It says, "In the beginning". Folks, this is what the Book of Genesis is about. Genesis is a Hebrew word that means "beginning". So this is the beginning. This is like watching "Taken" from the beginning. Watch what happens. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Stop there and let me remind you one more time. Genesis, chapter one, details God's creation work. Genesis chapter one chronicles God's design, architecture, and building of the galactic heavens, the universe, as well as our home, the planet earth.*

*After God creates everything, verse 31 sums it all up. Here is what it says. Watch what it says, Verse 31: It says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." In other words, God sort of stepped back from His creation, He just kind of took it all in, and God saw that everything that He had made was not just good, it was very good. You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning it was the quintessence of perfection. In other words, the world that God created in the beginning, where everything started, it was perfection without any mixture of wrong, or bad, or sin, sorrow, disease, death, pain, crying, tears, war, hate, death. None of that was a part of that world. I love it, because it was into this perfect world that God had created, that God then brought His most prized creation. That was us.*

*In fact, listen to Genesis 2:7: Listen to what it says. The Bible says, "Then". That is after God created His perfect world; after He got everything perfectly ready, then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. God breathed the very sound of His name into us. Yahweh. He breathed that into us and man became a living being. Folks, why did God create us? There was only one reason, wasn't there? God created us, and we say this over and over and over, God created us to have a relationship with us. God created us so that He could lavish us with His love and His grace, and His mercy. God created us so that He could favor us with His presence. In fact, folks, check this out: when God had the world just like He wanted it, in the beginning; when God had everything perfect, do you know*

*what He did? He would come down in the cool of the day to hang out with the people He had made.*

*In fact, listen to Genesis 3:8: It says, "The man and his wife, Adam and Eve, heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the Garden in the cool of the day." I love it! God was doing what God loves to do. Do you know what that is? Be with us! Hang out with us! Spend time with us! Let me say it again. By the way, if you are here today and you are not a Christian, and maybe you are not a church person; and you are not even sure you believe all of this stuff. I get that part, but here is what you need to know. When God made you, when God created you and decided to bring you into this life, He only had one purpose for doing that. That was to have a relationship with you; for you to walk with God and for God to walk with you; for you to love Him and for Him to love you; for you and God to do life together. That is the reason God brought you into this world.*

*What I love is that in the beginning, that was all God and man had. All they had was each other. All they had was this beautiful relationship. There was no religion in it. There were no rituals to it. It was just this incredible relationship with God and man; and check this out: man and God were an inseparable relationship. But something happened, didn't it? Here is what happened. Genesis 3:8: "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." You say, "What's up with that? Why are they hiding?" "The Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the Garden and I was afraid.'"*

*Stop right there, because all of a sudden instead of running to God, man is now running from God. All of a sudden, instead of being happy to see God, man is all of a sudden afraid of God. You say, "What happened? Why all of a sudden is Adam afraid of God? Why all of a sudden is Adam instead of wanting to be with God, why does he not want to be in God's presence? Listen, it's the same reason that maybe you are running from God. It's the same reason that maybe you are fearful of God. Here is the reason. Here is what caused that.*

*Sin separated us from God. Now, put your thinking caps on, because you remember from last time, God warned Adam. He said, "Adam, if you sin you will trigger death." In fact, listen to what God said. God said, "But you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if you eat of it you will surely die." Adam, if you sin, you are going to trigger death, and more than just physiological death, Adam, you are going to trigger the death of your relationship with God. Sin will put a barrier between you and God, Adam. It will put a barrier between your relationship with God. Why*

does sin do that? Here is why: It is because God is a holy God. We must never forget that. God is a holy God. The Bible says He is Holy, Holy, Holy. Folks, because of that, God cannot, and God will not coexist with sin. Folks, listen: The moment Adam sinned, the moment he sinned, he knew that. In fact, the Bible says that the eyes of them both, that is the eyes of Adam and Eve, were opened. The horrible truth that their eyes were opened to was this: Sinners, like them now, cannot stand in the presence of a holy God. Sinners should run from a holy God. Sinners should freak out in the presence of a holy God. Folks, that is exactly what Adam did. Whereas Adam had loved the presence of God, now that He was a sinner, He dreaded the presence of God. Do you know why that is? Here is what you need to know, because God has one response to sin. Judgment! He judges sin. And God will always, always, because He is holy, He will always banish sin from His presence. Folks, here is what we need to know. Here is kind of the bad news. We are all sinners. Romans 3:23 says: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Meaning what? Meaning every one of us in here are sinners. Do you know why that is? It is because when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, his blood became tainted with sin, and so every person, every child that he gave birth to, sin was passed from his blood into their blood. Every person they gave birth to, sin was passed into their blood. So we don't become a sinner. We are born sinners. It is like a crack addict mother. Her children, when they are born, don't become crack addicts. They are born crack addicts. Folks, we are born sinners, and sinners cannot survive the presence of a holy God. We cannot stand in the presence of a holy God. In fact, Isaiah, the prophet, a prophet of God, one of the most godly men on the face of the earth; when he stood in the presence of God, here is what he said. Isaiah 6:5. He said, "Woe is me!" That's like pronouncing a self judgment on himself. He said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined." The Hebrew literally means: "I'm disintegrating, I'm falling apart." Isaiah, why are you falling apart? "Because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" "I'm a sinner and I am standing in the presence of a holy God." Ezekiel had the same reaction when he saw God's glory. In Ezekiel 1:28 he said this, "When I saw it I fell face down." Meaning what? Meaning: "I passed out." Peter, the apostle, when he came face to face with Jesus the Son of God, the Bible says this: (Luke 5:8) "When Peter saw this, (when he saw the glory of Jesus) he fell down at Jesus' knees." Saying, "Hey Jesus, it's cool to see you! What's up? How's things going? How have you been lately?" Is that what he did? Was he nonchalant? No. What did he say? He said, "Depart from me." It was like saying, "Jesus, go away. Go away. I don't belong in your presence." Why? "For I am a sinful man, O Lord."

*Listen folks, the first thing we realize when we stand in the presence of God is we don't belong there. Our sinfulness causes us to want to run away from the holy God. Why? Because a holy God will not co-exist with sin. So, what I am trying to get you to realize is, and this is a simple truth, our sin puts a barrier between us and God. It keeps us from being able to get close to God. And yet, there is something in us that wants to be close to God, isn't there? There is something in you, even if you are not a Christian, even if you are not a believer, there is something in you that wants to get close to God. You say, "Why?" Because this is what we were made for. We were made to be close to God, and we want to be close to God. Listen, here is the good news. God wants to be close to us. There is something in us that wants to be close to God, and the great news is there is something in God that wants to be close to us.*

*So, here is the great news. Yeah, we are sinners and sin separates us from God, but God pursues sinful people. God pursued Adam after he sinned. Listen to Genesis 3:8. "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." So they are hiding, but watch this: "But the Lord God called to the man and said, 'Adam, where are you?' Translation: Folks, in spite of the fact that Adam had sinned against God, in spite of the fact that Adam chose to trust the word of Satan over the word of God, in spite of that, God went after him. God pursued him. God went to find him. Folks, just like that, in spite of your sins, in spite of what you have done against God, God loves you and God pursues you.*

*Here is what you need to know. That truth that God pursues us shocks Satan to this day. Let me say that again. The fact that God would pursue sinners like you and me shocks Satan to this day, because, check this out: Before Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Book of Genesis, and God pursued them, before Adam and Eve sinned, Satan sinned against God. Here is what you need to know. God did not pursue Satan after he sinned. Folks, do you know what Satan thought? Satan thought, "God did not pursue me after I sinned. He is not going to pursue Adam and Eve. He is not going to pursue all of these other people after they sin." Satan thought God would just banish us; that God would just condemn us, which is what he wanted. By the way, that is exactly what God did with Satan after he sinned. All God did to Satan after he sinned was to comprehensibly condemn him. In fact, I want to show you this, but keep your thinking caps on. We've got to think through this a little bit.*

*I want to take you to a book of the Bible called Ezekiel, Ezekiel 28:11. Here is a fascinating read here in this text. Listen to this: Verse 11: "The word of the Lord came to me. (12) "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the King of Tyre and say to him:*

*This is what the sovereign Lord says'. Stop right there, because in this text God is talking to this wicked King of Tyre. God is basically pronouncing the judgment on him. But all of a sudden God stops talking to this wicked king and God reaches behind this wicked king and starts to talk to the source of this king's wickedness. Watch what God says. Listen to Ezekiel 28:13. He was talking to the king and all of a sudden God says: (13) "You were (Where?) in Eden, the garden of God." Now, who is that? Who is He talking to? Well, it certainly can't be the King of Tyre. The King of Tyre was not even alive in the Garden of Eden. In fact, in the Garden of Eden there were only four people there. Besides Adam and Eve and God, there was only one other individual in that garden, and who was that? It was Satan. So, what God is doing, as God reaches behind the King of Tyre, He starts to talk to the source of his wickedness, Satan. Watch what he says about Satan in Ezekiel 28:14: He says, You were in Eden. "You were back there in the Garden of Eden. Not only that, but in the past, Satan, "You were anointed as a guardian cherub."*

*Before Satan sinned, do you know what he was? He was a cherub. You say, "What is a cherub?" Well, keep your thinking caps on for a moment, because a cherub is a type of angel. Stay with me, because in eternity past, before God created human beings, before Genesis ever happened, before he created the heavens and earth, God had created angels. God created them all at once. He just spoke and all at once all of the angels that ever existed and that ever will exist came into being. In other words, angels don't have baby angels. They don't procreate. There are baby angels being born. Every angel that exists was created at one point in eternity past.*

*Now, of the angels that God created, He created three types, three kinds, three orders. Here they are: The lowest level of angels is called in the Bible, a living creature. This is sort of the run of the mill angel, the least powerful. Yet, one living creature in the Bible, one run of the mill angel, slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian soldiers in the Old Testament. Do you realize that is more people than both atomic bombs took out in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? One angel stretches out his hands and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers. So, even the lowest angel is powerful beyond our ability to capture.*

*The next above that is the seraphim, the seraph. A seraph is an angel whose task is to declare God's glory. The seraph is more powerful than the living creatures, and all the seraphs do is declare the glory of God.*

*Finally, the highest order of angels is the cherub, or cherubim in the plural. These are angels whose power and glory is really beyond our capacity to even fathom. Now, of the cherubim, scripture names three: Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer. Lucifer was a*

cherub. In fact, God says to him, He's speaking of Lucifer, He says this. He says, "Lucifer, you were the anointed cherub." You say, "What does that mean?" It means, Lucifer, in eternity past was the cherub who actually was anointed to hover over God's glory. He was the protector of God's shekinah glory. That was Lucifer in the past. Now, Ezekiel 27:15. Watch what happens: God says, "You were blameless in all your ways from the day you were created, until wickedness was found in you." Meaning what? Meaning at some point before Genesis ever happened, Satan had already rebelled against God. Satan spread the seed of his rebellion. Listen to verse 16: "Through your widespread trade, you were filled with violence." Not only does Satan rebel against God. He spread the rebellion. In fact, the Bible tells us that one-third of all the angels that God had created, went with Satan in that rebellion against God. Somewhere way back there in eternity past, those angels were no longer called angels. They are called demons. Here is what I want you to get. After they sinned, God never went after those demons. God never pursued them with His love. God never said, "Where are you? Where are you?" He never did that. God never went after Satan. In fact, all God did was condemn him. Listen to Ezekiel 27:19. God says to Satan, "You have come to a horrible end and you will be no more."

I want to go back to Genesis now and I want you to listen to the death sentence that God puts on Satan. Genesis 3:1: Listen to this. The Bible says, "Now, the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made, and he said to the woman, 'Did God really say you must not eat from any tree of the garden.'" Stop right there because we talked about this. The serpent was talking to Eve, and was trying to lead her away from God. But although the serpent was talking, the source of his words was really Satan. God reaches behind the serpent this time, and condemns Satan. The first thing God did was curse the snake. Listen to what He says: "The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals. You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.'" So much for the serpent! But folks, in Genesis 3:15, God reaches behind the serpent and God curses Satan. God pronounced judgment on Satan. Watch what God says: Verse 15: God says to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (Satan, that would be demons) and hers." In other words, it's going to be this enmity between all of Eve's offspring. There is going to be this enmity, this hostility between us and Satan and demons.

But watch what he says after that. God says, "He", not they, not all of her offspring, God says, "He". (He speaks of one individual) and God says: "He will crush your head." Folks, there is the very first messianic prophecy, that there would come a Savior to

save us, and in saving us He would also crush the power of Satan. God says, 'One of her seed, namely a "He" is going to come and He is going to crush your head, Satan.' So, when Christ comes the second time – He came the first time to save us. – When He comes the second time, He is going to do what He said. He is going to crush Satan's head. In fact, Romans 16:20, talking about that prophecy in Genesis 3:15, says this: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." Do you know what God was saying to Satan? He said, "You have taken my children, and I'm going to hunt you down and find you, and kill you."

In fact, in that movie "Taken" there was a scene where the father says that to the sex predator who had taken his child. He said, "I don't know who you are; I don't know what you want. If you are looking for a ransom, I can tell you I don't have money, but what I do have, I have a very particular set of skills, skills I have acquired over a very long career, skills that make me a mite mightier than people like you. If you will let my daughter go now, that will be the end of it. I will not look for you. I will not pursue you. But if you don't, I will look for you. I will find you, and I will kill you."

I like that kind of talk: straight talk. God says to Satan, "I will look for you and I will find you. I will kill you", and folks that is exactly what will happen. Listen to Revelation 20:1: "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having a key to the Abyss (the bottomless pit) and holding in his hand a great chain. (2) He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil or Satan. (10) And the devil, who deceived them, (who has been deceiving people since Adam and Eve, and here is the end) was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur."

Folks, here is what I want you to get. Satan and his angels sinned, but God never pursued them. Not so when it came to Adam. God went after Adam. God pursued Adam. He said, "Adam, where are you?" Let me tell you, the same is true when it comes to you. I'm telling you, no matter who you are, no matter what you have done, no matter what you may have become in your life, no matter how far away from God you may think you are, God is calling you, just like He called Adam. He is saying: "Where are you?" You think He doesn't know where you are. He knows exactly where you are, but He wants you to understand where you are, and that is that you are far away from God.

Even if you are far away from God, there is something in you and maybe you are feeling it right now as we've been talking; but there is something in you that wants to be close; that longs to be close to your Creator. Why? Because you were made for that. You were made to be close to God. You were not made to be far from God. Not only that, not only do you long to be close to God, here is the greater news; God longs to be

close to you. You say, "Rick, how can I be close to God? I'm a sinner. You just said that God only has one response to sin. He judges it. How am I going to get close to God who judges sin?" Here is the great news. God has already judged your sin. He judged it with the body of Jesus when He was hanging on the cross.

In fact, let me get you to think of it this way. Stay with me. I want you to imagine the book I have here is your sins. Your birth certificate is on one side of a book and your death is on the other side of the book and in between are all of your sins. Let me tell you, we have that and more, don't we? God is keeping a record, and your sins stand between you and God. This is why you can't get close to God, but here is what God did. Here is the gospel: God took all of your sins, every one of them, thousands of them. You are a sinner. God took the sins off of you and he transferred them over to Jesus. Jesus knew no sin. He had never sinned. He was sinless. You were a sinner, but God took all of your sins off of you and put them on Jesus, and judged Jesus on the cross. If you were a sinner, He was sinless, and He became a sinner and was judged in your place on the cross, so that you could become sinless. That is what the cross was all about.

You say, "Well Rick, what do I do to be saved? What do I do to get close to God?" The truth is, there is nothing you can do, because He did it all for you. You don't have to join a church. You don't have to sign anything, or pledge anything. You don't have to get sprinkled, or dunked, or any kind of religious formality. In fact, God is saying, "Where are you?" He is looking for you. All you have to do is say, "Here I am. Here I am, God. Save me." That is all you have to do. In fact, the Bible says, "For whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." What do you have to do to be saved? "Whosoever shall call." "Here I am Lord. You are looking for me. Here I am!" Let's bow our heads in prayer. While our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, I want to ask you the most important question you will ever be asked in this life, and that is no exaggeration. Here is the question: If you were to die right now, do you know for certain, not you hope or not you thing, but do you know that you will go to heaven. Do you know that you have a relationship with God, and do you know that if you died right now that you would go to heaven? If you know that beyond any shadow of a doubt, you say, "Yes Rick, I know that." Would you just slip up your hand. While no one is looking around, just put up your hand and say, "Rick I know that. I don't hope it. I know it!" You can put your hand down.

Anytime I ask that question in a house like this, there are always people that can't raise their hand, and maybe you can't raise your hand. The reason you can't raise your hand is because you say, "Rick, I don't know that if I died that I'm going to heaven." Maybe at

*the same time, maybe you wish you did know that. Maybe you did know that that you are going to heaven. Listen, if that is your wish, and you say, "Rick, pray for me. I want to know I'm going to heaven. I want to get close to God. I want to have a relationship with Him." If that is your prayer, while nobody is looking around, just me and God, I want to pray for you. You say, "Rick, pray for me. I need what you are talking about. I need God." Would you just quietly slip up your hand and say 'Pray for me'.*

*If you raised your hand, you say, "Rick, I need the Lord." Listen, here is the good news. You can receive Christ right where you are seated. Again, you don't have to join this church; you don't have to sign anything, right there today where you are, you can say, "God, here I am." If you will ask Him to save you, He promises us, He puts His word on the line, that He will save you today, right now. So, why don't you call on Him right now, right there where you are, and ask Him into your life. Ask Him to save you. If you are not sure you know how to do that, then let me help you. Let me lead you in a prayer. This prayer is not a poem; it is not a scripted prayer. Pray this to God, not to me. Pray it to Him. Pray it quietly from your heart and He will hear it.*

*"Dear heavenly Father, I know you are calling me. I know you are looking for me. You are pursuing me. Here I am, and I long to be close to you, close to your side. I long to know I am going to live with you forever. God, in this moment, as best as I know how to do this, I'm asking you to save me. I ask you to take all of my sins off of me. Take them away by the blood of Christ. I ask you to give me everlasting life. Lord, thank you for saving me. Thank you for giving me everlasting life. Help me from this day forward to live the rest of my life loving you, and being loved by you. In your name I pray."*