

Every day we are bombarded with voices. Voices are telling us what to think, what to believe, who we are or should be; voices that tell us we don't measure up, we aren't good enough, or we aren't enough. As we dive into week three of this series called "Worth It," we get the opportunity to listen and watch how the wrong voice deceived two people. It's the same voice that trips us up, gets in the way, and uses the same tactics he did all those years ago.

In Genesis two, God tells us we were created in God's image, and we are His image-bearers. God tells us that people matter to God; you matter to God. Two people were part of God's beginning - Adam and Eve. The only two people who knew what the world was like before sin. They knew perfect connectedness to God. But like us, they listened to the voice that doesn't matter at all, and they took it as truth. They lost sight of the divine connectedness, to be made in the image of God, to find all their worth in Him, which opened the door to sin. You and I don't know what life was like before sin. We can see the effects of sin all around us. A world where three mass shootings can happen in one week, where life is not precious or valued, where men and women devalue one another through sexism, racism, and hate; where children are used and abused by people in authority over them, where our identities are confused through what we do, who we are, how much we make, and where our worth comes from. We've traded the truth for a lie. How did we even get here? Let's go back to the beginning, to the beginning of God's story.

Sin Affected Adam and Eve.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 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. Genesis 3:1-6

We learn that sin affected Adam and Eve! First, does anyone else find it odd that a serpent talked? Eve doesn't seem bothered by it all. Did you notice what the serpent did? The first thing Satan did was cast doubt on God's Word: "Did God really say that?" We need to remember that everything Eve enjoyed came from the good word of God. God's goodness! You would think Satan wouldn't have a chance attacking the word of God. But the words of the serpent were so subtle; Eve doesn't realize the attack. Eve decides to set the record straight with the serpent. God had said in 2:16, "You are free to eat of every tree of the garden," but now Eve leaves out the "every," merely saying, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden" (3:2). Then Eve added to God's word: "and you must not touch it..." Eve was the first legalist. Eve diminished the generosity of God by adding a strict rule to what was given to them but at the same time softened God's word by taking out the word "certainly" when God told them they "would certainly die."

Then Satan contradicted God's Word:

"You will not certainly die...you will be like God." He cast doubt on God's character. Eve does the unthinkable: "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" (v.6).

I want you to notice something here. Eve often gets the raw end of the deal, but Adam was right there with her not saying a thing! He passively stood by then willfully partook. At that moment, everything changed for Adam and Eve and changed the world forever. It's here we see the first game of hide and seek as sin causes Adam and Eve to hide and God to seek.

Sin causes Adam and Eve to hide and God to seek.

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?" 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?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave

me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." vv. 7–13

As soon as they both ate from the fruit, their innocence was lost, they knew something was wrong. They went from being free and naked in Genesis 2:25, to naked and ashamed in Genesis 3:7. In their shame, they made clothing out of fig leaves. In their shame, they hid from God in the Garden. They feel guilt for the first time. Don't we do that? When we sin, how often do we hide from God because of our shame? How often do we want to hide from those who know us well?

I remember the first time I deliberately chose to lie and hide something from my mother. I was in third grade. It was winter-time, and she made this soup or stew for dinner. I didn't like it much but didn't say anything. The next morning, she warmed up the stew and placed it in my dad's old school thermos. I was given a lecture to not lose the thermos! Lunch came around, and the last thing I wanted to eat was yucky stew. So I didn't eat it, and I left the thermos in my desk at school. First thing when I got home, "Did you bring the thermos home?" "Oh, I forgot it in my desk! I'll bring it home tomorrow." Next day mom asks, "Did you bring the thermos home?" "Oh, I forgot it again! It's in my desk." For about a week, I kept lying about the whereabouts of the thermos all because I didn't want to eat what was in it.

One day I snuck the thermos home and hid it in of my dresser drawers, so I wouldn't get in trouble for not eating my lunch. Most of you are thinking, "Why didn't you dump the stew out!" Well, I wasn't a brilliant third grader! My mom stopped asking where the thermos was, and about six weeks later, she kept asking about a smell coming from my room. And my response was "what smell?" I honestly didn't smell anything. Leave it to a mom's nose! A couple of months passed, and my mom couldn't understand why my room smelled like the monkey's in the zoo. One day, while I was in school, my mom decided to investigate my room. I came home through the front door, and sitting right on the kitchen table was a thermos. It was just sitting there. I stopped dead in my tracks, knowing I was caught. All of a sudden, I could hear my heart pounding in my ears. My mom quietly comes downstairs, and I knew I was busted. She found out why my room smelled! We had a long conversation about lying, and then I had an appointment with what we called "the holy rod" (wooden spoon), which was applied to the seat of knowledge. The funny thing is that dresser drawer still smells strange to this day! Even at eight years old, I knew and felt shame for lying and went way out of my way to hide it. We hide from God because of our shame and our guilt.

Look what God does through His love and grace. God was looking for them; He was seeking them out. He's not on a rampage; He draws them out with some questions?

"Where are you?"

"Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

"What is this that you have done?"

God, the seeker and pursuer, steps in. A lot of blame goes around. Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the serpent. No one is taking responsibility for their actions. That's what we do, even today. When we disobey God's word, we blame it on something or someone else and don't take responsibility for our actions. Adam and Eve, who once knew divine connectedness, were now not fit to be in God's presence.

The Fallout of Sin

So 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. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman, he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 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." vv. 14-19

God speaks to the serpent first. He curses the serpent. He doesn't question him; he curses him! Then God turns to the man and woman. It's important to note that God does not curse them like He cursed the serpent. God judges them and gives them consequences for their actions. God turns to Eve next and says,

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

This is not how God designed relationships to be! Men were not created to dominate over women, rule over them, or abuse them. Women were not created to control their husbands. God designed men and women to complement one another and show God's glory as His image-bearers.

Then God turns to Adam and says,

"Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat

food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 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."

Adam's work was once a blessing; now it would be drudgery, toil! The ground would be cursed marked with weeds, thorns, and natural disasters. What was once perfect would become painful: marriage, relationships, our self-worth, work, and nature. This pain would turn out to be a gift from God because it would drive them back to God, reminding them of their true identity and home.

Pain has a way of doing that, driving us back to God. I was sitting with a dear friend for dinner last week. We were catching up on life, and our conversation went to a deep level of pain my friend was experiencing due to one of her children. And this pain was driving her directly to God; trusting Him to guide her, to give her wisdom to be a godly mom. In her deep pain, she is reminded that God is not done with her story or her child's story and that she is driven directly to Him through this pain. She is fighting for faith in God's Word.

God's story isn't done with my friend, and it wasn't done with Adam and Eve. Verse 21 and 23 tells us,

"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken."

We see God's grace as he takes the lives of animals to make clothes for Adam and Eve before He exiles them from the Garden. It's here that Adam and Eve learn atonement comes through a blood sacrifice. That being present with God would require a sacrifice. The day they listened to the wrong voice instead of the voice that matters most is the day everything changed for all humankind. But God wasn't done! That pain, that longing, those identities we hate but have piled onto ourselves because we listen to the voice who lies to us, can only be satisfied through God.

In this world we live in, where we see the effects of sin everywhere, where we battle between the competing voice of Satan and God's voice of grace and goodness, there is hope. Did you notice what God said in verse 15 to the serpent?

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

God let Satan know that there would come a day, where a man would come and crush him. That man was Jesus. Satan tried using the same trap with Jesus as he did with Adam and Eve, "If you really are the Son of God..." Jesus knew God's voice. He heard God's voice, and He knew God's word. Satan uses the same trap with us, "Is that who you really are? Did God really say you are

a beloved child of God?" Because of Jesus, we can respond with a resounding, "Yes, I'm a beloved child of God because of Jesus."

How can you know this? Paul tells us of a 'second Adam.' A man named Jesus. Read Paul's words from the Message,

"Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right. All that passing laws against sin did was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call grace. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down. All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that's the end of it. Grace, because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life—a life that goes on and on and on, world without end." Romans 5:18-21 MSG

I love that phrase that Jesus invites us into life—A life that goes on and on and on! We have a choice to listen to the voice of death or listen to the voice that invites us into life.

I love how in the book, *The Truest Thing about You: Identity, Desire, and Why It All Matters*, David Lomas states,

"Here's the good news of all good news: our identity is the same as Jesus'! Beloved. Child of God. In whom God is well pleased. Don't believe me? Too good to be true? Jesus became human to take on the powers that try to make us into what we are not. Jesus became human to go under: under the limitations of flesh and bone, under the waters of baptism, under the wrath of God ... and ultimately under the curse of death."

Jesus shed his blood for our sins for all of the world's sin; it would be the final blood sacrifice to be in God's presence. He was buried, three days later conquered death, and rose again. He gives us a new life on earth and an eternal life in heaven. Hard to believe? It can be. Especially if you have listened to the lies about who you are. It can be challenging to hear the truth that God loves you no matter what you have done! It can be challenging to shed the identities you have let yourself believe about you. Sin poisoned God's perfect world, but God's perfect plan would not be undone. Let me illustrate this with one of my favorite scenes from the Narnia tales.

In the book, written by C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader*, a boy named Eustice comes on the scene. He's not a very nice boy, and most of the characters despise his attitude. In the story, Eustace wanders away. Lost in the hills, Eustace shelters from a downpour in a cave. It is the cave of a dragon, and Eustace, "sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart," transforms into a dragon."

Now that Eustice is transformed into a dragon, he has an epiphany, that he has been made for something else. During this time, all of the things he hated while being a boy, he now wants as a dragon; friends, purpose, and working well with others. So he makes a change, and as a dragon, he serves his friends on the ship. He tries to be the perfect dragon, which, when he was a boy, was a much-needed improvement. The reality is that Eustice is exchanging one identity for another.

Eustice eventually wants to go back to being a boy, so he tries to “undragon” himself. He said,

“So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper and, instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully, like it does after an illness, or as if I was a banana. In a minute or two I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bathe. “But just as I was going to put my feet into the water I looked down and saw that they were all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as they had been before. Oh, that’s all right, said I, it only means I had another smaller suit on underneath the first one, and I’ll have to get out of it too. So I scratched and tore again and this underskin peeled off beautifully and out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down to the well for my bathe. “Well, exactly the same thing happened again. And I thought to myself, oh dear, however many skins have I got to take off?”

A new character comes on the scene named Aslan. Eustice had heard of Aslan, the lion but had never seen or experienced him. Aslan is the messiah character of the story and is described in another story as “never safe, but always good.”

Aslan has been watching Eustice trying to “undragon” himself; “Then the lion said, ‘You will have to let me undress you.’

So Aslan does some surgery on Eustice, taking his claw and ripping through the many layers of “dragon” skin that Eustice wore and was turned into a boy again. Eustice tells his friends,

**“After a bit the lion took me out and dressed me—”
“Dressed you. With his paws?” “Well, I don’t exactly remember that bit. But he did somehow or other: in new clothes—the same I’ve got on now, as a matter of fact.” p. 111-118**

Way back in the Garden, God had a plan to “undragon” each of us just as Aslan “undragoned” Eustice. Romans 5:8 says, “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” Jesus cuts through the layers and lies we’ve believed about ourselves. He washes away our sin, gives us new clothes, a new life and most of all, a new identity. Through Jesus, we are a beloved child of God. Two weeks ago, Mark Mitchell asked us all in his sermon, “What is the truest thing about you?” How did you answer?

The only one who can undress us from a lifetime of layers, who knows the truest things, and everything about us, is the one who created us. In our lives, He has been watching, waiting for the moment we put away our claws to reveal His. This is truth, and it is the truest thing about you. If you have come with your scales and scars to Jesus, to the Lion of Judah, then you have been ‘undragoned.’