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The Beginning

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was ^aformless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.

⁶And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day.

⁹And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning — the third day.

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning — the fourth day.



HE IS:

creator

1:1 Meet God, the *creator* of everything. He who decided that things should be and they were. He who set the hands of time in motion. The One whose imagination created the heavens and the earth and all they contain: stars, plants, seasons, trees . . . penguins. When he reviewed his creation, God saw that “it was very good” (v. 31).

God, who created everything, created everyone—including you. You may look in the mirror and see flaws. But God designed every freckle, every wrinkle, every crinkle and even numbered the hairs on your head (see Luke 12:7). When he created you, he considered it “very good.” Do you?

For the next He Is, go to p. 18.

²⁰And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”

²³And there was evening, and there was morning — the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

^a 2 Or possibly *became*

genesis 1:26

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth,^a and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

²By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested^b from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Adam and Eve

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens — ⁵and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth^c and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth^c and there was no man to work the ground,⁶ but streams^d came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground — ⁷the Lord God formed the man^e from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^f and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^g ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

¹⁸The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

^a 26 Hebrew; Syriac *all the wild animals* ^b 2 Or *ceased*; also in verse 3 ^c 5 Or *land*; also in verse 6 ^d 6 Or *mist* ^e 7 The Hebrew for *man* (*adam*) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground* (*adamah*); it is also the name *Adam* (see Gen. 2:20). ^f 12 Or *good*; *pearls*
^g 13 Possibly southeast Mesopotamia

But for Adam^a no suitable helper was found.²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs^b and closed up the place with flesh.²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib^c he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’^d
for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

²⁵The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

The Fall of Man

3 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?’”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ 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.’”

⁴“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When 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. ⁷Then 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.

⁸Then 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. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹¹And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹²The man said, “The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all the livestock
and all the wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity

atissue:marriage

2:19–24 Did you want to be Cinderella and live “happily ever after” with a handsome prince? What a shock to discover that your prince prefers football over moonlit strolls, picks his toenails in bed and considers “romance” a foreign word. So much for the fairy tale! So what is marriage all about? God designed Adam and Eve to be a team. Adam wasn’t complete without Eve, and Eve wasn’t complete without Adam. God brought them together for the benefit of each other—and for his glory. That’s the point of marriage. And it’s better than the fairy tale.





myth#

01 “I’LL NEVER BE FREE FROM MY PAST.”

I feel as if I’ve lived two or three different lives. And if any one of those past lives ever catches up with me, then everything I can safely call my own today is gone—my reputation as a leader at work, a successful marriage, loving family—my past threatens all of it. I fear someone, somewhere will claim to know what I’m “really like.” Only I’m not that person anymore. Not perfect, but thank God not what I used to be. I truly believe I’ve changed and am growing into the person Christ wants me to be.

But that person still carries a secret burden. As bright as her future is, she’s never free from her past.

I’m never free from the haunting accusations surrounding yesterday’s mistakes that may ambush me today. Imaginary scenarios and entire conversations play out in my head. They sneak into my thoughts with crafty subtlety. Sometimes when I tuck my baby girl under the covers for the night and she whispers, “I love you, Mommy,” I want so much to enjoy the moment and soak in her affection. But a faint, persistent voice inside tells me, “You don’t deserve her, you know. Not after what you’ve done . . .”

And when I meet someone that I genuinely like, whose friendship I really enjoy, the thought inevitably traipses through my head that if she knew my past, she wouldn’t think so highly of me.

When my boss compliments me at a meeting for my “innovative leadership,” I beam with a sense of accomplishment. Until I begin to remember all my failures.

It sounds hypocritical to say I believe Jesus has forgiven my past. I do believe. I just want to know, will I ever be free from it?

—Karen



HAVE YOU EVER felt like you're the only one with something to hide? That sense of isolation magnifies your feelings of guilt. Satan wants you to feel alone, crippled by a false sense of guilt. Yet the truth is that every person on earth has a "past"—even those we consider "Mother Teresa" types who seemingly never did anything wrong. The book of Genesis describes how we inherited a sinful nature. Adam and Eve instilled a sinful nature into the entire human race (see Romans 5:12,17).

However, we must understand and accept that we are free from the **penalty of our past** because we trust Christ's sacrifice as the ultimate and final payment for sin (see Hebrews 7:27). Even so, sometimes the **pain of our past** comes calling. Many women have an emotional disposition or personality type that lends itself to dwelling on bitter memories. Our adversary, the devil, often misuses this sensitivity to accuse and discourage us. He tempts our thoughts with guilt over past deeds. He calls into question the penalty of our past as if it is somehow unpaid—an outstanding debt he convinces us we must pay ourselves. We respond to his perverse persuasion by feeling as if we don't deserve the love of family or friends, much less God's love. *After what you've done? Who are you kidding?* This is the language of lies—a familiar tongue to anyone who longs to be free from a shameful past.

Satan tries to slip the chains of guilt back on our shoulders. And sometimes we again pick up those old familiar chains—our guilt feels so comfortable that we revert to it out of habit. But Christ has set us free! He paid the **FULL** penalty for our sins. Every wrong thought, word or action—all paid for.

Don't believe the lie. God set you free; Christ died that you would be free—but you must choose to live that way.

"Christ's call on our lives is a call to liberty. Freedom is the cornerstone of Christianity."

—Brennan Manning



"SO IF THE SON SETS YOU FREE, YOU WILL BE FREE INDEED."

JOHN 8:36

SEE ALSO

- Romans 8:1–4
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Galatians 5:1

For more on Forgiveness, check the index.