

Going Deeper

LONGING FOR INTIMACY



Discipleship
Course

How Can I Experience God?

Session 1: Trouble in the Garden Centre

Two Trees

Banished from The Garden



Two Trees

In GENESIS Chapter 3 we read the story of Adam and Eve in The Garden of Eden in perfect harmony with God and the rest of creation.

In the centre of the garden stood two trees - *The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil* and *The Tree of Life*. And God told Adam and Eve they could eat the fruit from any of the trees except from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil. In fact, they were not even to touch it or they would die. But there was a problem...

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." (verses 1-4)

Questions

What four stealth tactics did Satan use to persuade Eve to disobey God's instructions?

Which of them does he use today?



Banished from The Garden

Then the Lord God said to the woman,

"What is this you have done?"

The woman said, *"The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

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 labour 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... 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."

Question

What were the consequences for Adam and Eve of their rebellion?

Three Results of The Fall of Mankind

Sin and Death

Sickness and Suffering

Separation from God and from Others

Results of Rebellion

Sin & Death

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. **ROMANS 5:12**

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God's instructions, it was sin against God which resulted not only in their physical deaths but also separation from God and loss of the intimate relationship they had enjoyed to that point.

But their rebellion also became part of the DNA they passed on to their children and to us. We each have the sin-gene in us that leads to physical death.

Sickness & Suffering

Their rebellion also resulted in **physical suffering and emotional anguish**.

Adam was forced to work hard to provide for their food and Eve was told she would bear children in painful childbirth.

Separation from God

But worst of all they were banished from God's presence and lost the intimate relationship they had enjoyed up to that point.

They now found themselves separated from the one Person who had provided all of their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

God told Eve she would now look to her husband to provide for her needs - something no human being could do.

Similarly, Adam now would look to Eve to meet his emotional need for love as he toiled to provide for their physical needs, but would discover she was unable to provide the unconditional love they enjoyed from God.



Longing for Intimacy

When Adam and Eve were banished from God's presence, they experienced loss of intimate communion with God, resulting in separation anxiety and a feeling of being abandoned.

Longing For Intimacy In Our Human DNA

The Bible account in **GENESIS 1:26-27** says that Adam was made in God's image. But in **GENESIS 5:3** we read that when Adam and Eve's son Seth was born, he was born in the image of his father Adam, not God.

Ever since the Fall mankind has inherited in our DNA the sin-gene and a longing for the intimacy he once enjoyed. This refocusing of our attention on fallen humanity rather than God is the origin of our longing for an intimacy which no human being could ever satisfy.

That is because God created us with a God-shaped hole inside us that only he can fill and a longing for intimacy only he can satisfy.

Questions

What were the three consequences of Adam and Eve's rebellion?
Which of the three do you think has been the most serious?



God wants a love-relationship

Our Longing for Intimacy & God's Longing for a Love-Relationship

Augustine, who was a real rebel in his youth, later became one of the most famous of the Early Church fathers. He wrote:

"Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You, O LORD."

We see this longing for intimacy expressed by David in the first lines of **PSALM 42**.

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (verses: 1-2).

And this longing is actually a God-initiated desire, as we see in **PSALM 27:8**

"My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.'"

And my heart responds, *"Lord, I am coming."*

The Problem of Our Rebelliousness in Our DNA

If God wants to have a love-relationship with his children, why are we so reluctant to spend time with him?

Paul says in **ROMANS 3:10-18** that we do not naturally want to have anything to do with God because of the rebelliousness we inherited from our first parents.

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.....There is no fear of God before their eyes." (NIV)

Question

What does David say about our natural rebelliousness in **PSALM 51:3-5**?

Session 2: Looking For Love in the Wrong Direction

Three Crucial Needs

Looking for a Love Substitute

The Addiction Cycle

Healing the Orphan Spirit

Separation Anxiety and Grief



Three Crucial Needs

Psychologists tell us that every human being is born with three crucial needs.

- SECURITY in the form of unconditional love
- SELF-WORTH or feeling valued for just being me
- SIGNIFICANCE by feeling my life has a purpose and meaning

The problem is that no human being or activity can provide the answers to these three needs because we have been designed with a 'God-shaped' hole inside us that leaves us feeling hungry for unconditional love and acceptance.

The Problem of Love-hunger

The gaping void inside us is our longing for the intimacy that was lost when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. It has been called 'love-hunger' because deep down we are all looking for the unconditional love that only God can provide.

Because we were born rebels this longing for intimacy results in us looking for

love in a direction other than to God and to look for substitutes to dull the pain of the love-hunger.

Looking for Love in the Wrong

Direction ECCLESIASTES 1:1-2:26

The Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament was written by King Solomon. He had tried everything to satisfy his needs. Instead of looking to God to fulfill his crucial needs, Solomon had tried

- WORK (1:3)
- WISDOM (1:13; 2:12-16)
- WINE & FOOD (2:3, 24)
- WEALTH (2:4-7)
- WOMEN (2:8)

Question

What is Solomon's conclusion to all his efforts to meet his three crucial needs?

Read **ECCLESIASTES 1:14**
(New Living Translation)

Looking for a Love Substitute

Because of our rebelliousness, in our longing for intimacy we look for a substitute for the unconditional love that only God can give us. The substitutes we choose to dull the pain of love-hunger may numb the pain for a short time, but gradually they lose their effectiveness and require more and more of them. The result is we become addicted to the substance, or activity, which only increases a feeling of guilt and shame.

The substitutes used in an attempt to dull the pain of love-hunger include:

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Exercise
- Food
- Gambling
- Money
- Occultism (Reiki, Tarot, Witchcraft)
- Relationships
- Sex
- Work

The following comments are by Dr Geoffrey Satinover, a New York psychiatrist.

"The human race has a tremendous desire to avoid pain, such as the absence or loss of love, low self-esteem, and rejection. Animals will take action to get out of a place where they are experiencing pain. Human beings take up other kinds of activity to get out. We tend to make symbolic substitutions of one thing for another— typically using appetitive drives like food or sex. For example, when we have a HUNGER FOR LOVE we will substitute HUNGER FOR FOOD. In other words, a higher thing — A SPIRITUAL NEED — is replaced by AN APPETITIVE DRIVE, which we attempt to slake." (quoted in Briar Whitehead CRAVING FOR LOVE, Monarch Books, 1993, pages 79-80)

Questions

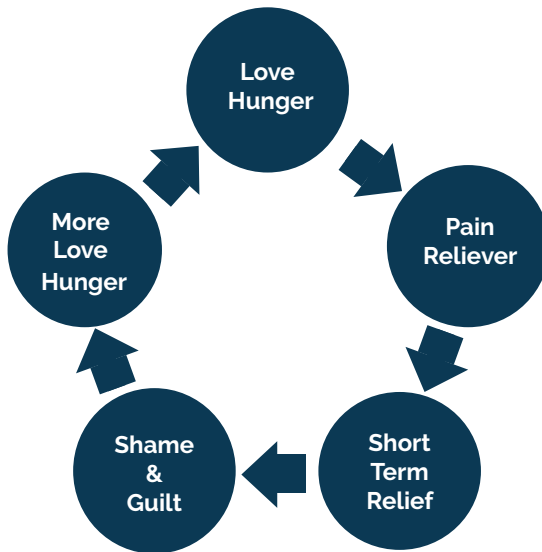
Why do people become addicted to substances and activities?

What are they subconsciously looking for?



The Addiction Cycle

The diagram below shows the cycle of addiction, driven by loss of intimacy and by love-hunger. In an attempt to fill the void, we try to use substitutes to numb the pain. The problem is they are addictive.



Questions

What kinds of things do people use to numb the pain?
Why do they become addictive?



Healing the Orphan Spirit

Jesus Promises Not To Leave Us As Orphans

Before he returned to heaven, Jesus promised he would not leave his followers as orphans, but would send the Holy Spirit to fill them with his unconditional love.

"Loving me empowers you to obey my commands. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Savior, the Holy Spirit of Truth, who will be to you a friend just like me — and he will never leave you. The world won't receive him because they can't see him or know him. But you know him intimately because he remains with you and will live inside you. I promise that I will never leave you helpless or abandon you as orphans — I will come back to you! Soon I will leave this world and they will see me no longer, but you will see me, because I will live again, and you will come alive too. So when that day comes, you will know that I am living in the Father and that you are one with me, for I will be

living in you." **JOHN 14:15-20** (The Passion Translation).

Jesus promised to send his Holy Spirit to fill the empty void inside us and to reconnect us to God as our heavenly Father.

Questions

What did Jesus promise to all who obey his commands?
Why is this important?



Separation Anxiety and Grief

Separation anxiety

Separation anxiety is a common feature of babies and young children from birth to around three years old. It is seen when a child cries on a parent or caregiver leaving a room, turning out the light at bedtime or dropping a child off for his/her first day at nursery school.

Psychologists believe that a specialised form of separation anxiety is to be seen in the grief reaction in adulthood at the death of a loved one, close friend or pet. It represents the reactivation of the feeling of separation from one to whom we have become closely bonded.

Christian grief and separation anxiety

In **1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14** Paul urges the Christians in Thessalonica not to grieve like the rest of the world that has no hope.

"Beloved brothers and sisters, we want you to be quite certain about the truth concerning those who have passed away, so that you won't be overwhelmed with grief like many others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who died while believing in him."
(The Passion Translation).

Questions

Why do babies and young children cry when an adult leaves the room?

Christians feel the pain of bereavement at the death of a loved one. But why does Paul say they should not grieve like the rest of the world?

Session 3: God's Answer to Separation Anxiety

You must be born *anōthen*

Born from above by the Spirit

Baptism in Water & in Spirit

Jesus' Baptism is an Example for us

Final Reunion with Father God



You must be born *anōthen*

The Answer to Lost Intimacy

Nicodemus was a Jewish religious leader and member of The Sanhedrin, the Council of Jews in Jerusalem. He was intrigued by Jesus' ability to draw large crowds to hear him teach and to watch him perform miracles. But he did not want the other members of the Council to know and so visited Jesus secretly at night. When he says that it is obvious Jesus is from God because of the miraculous things he is doing, Jesus is not flattered but says:

"I tell you the truth, unless you are born anōthen, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

Jesus replied, *"I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the*

Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born anōthen.' **JOHN 3:3-7** (New Living Translation)

Questions

What does Jesus mean when he said Nicodemus must be born anōthen?

Why did Nicodemus not understand what he meant at first?

Why is it important for us to be born anōthen?

What did Jesus mean by being born of water and of the Spirit?



Born from Above by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit Makes Jesus Real

Jesus promised the disciples he would send the Holy Spirit as the Helper to live inside them to fill them with Jesus' resurrection life.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our need to ask God to forgive our sins because Jesus' death on the Cross took the punishment we deserve so that God can forgive us. Then he fills us with the resurrection life of Christ.

In **ROMANS 8:10-16** Paul says *"All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."*

"If Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living

in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you."

When we are born anothen by the Holy Spirit, we receive Jesus' resurrection life and are reconnected for ever to God as our heavenly Father and nothing can separate from his love (**ROMANS 8:38**).

Questions

What is God's answer to our longing for the intimacy that was lost when Adam and Eve rebelled in the Garden of Eden?

Can you cry "Abba! Father!" to God as your heavenly Father?



Baptism in Water and in Spirit

The Promise of a Heart Transplant

God promised through the prophet Ezekiel to give his children a supernatural heart transplant to end their rebellion against him and to create the desire to seek him.

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God." **EZEKIEL 36:25-28** (New International Version)

In the New Testament John the Baptist baptized people who repented of their sins with water as a sign of God's forgiveness and that God would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and with fire to enable them to go his way.

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." **MATTHEW 3:11** (NIV)

Questions

What does baptism in water symbolize?

Why did Jesus tell Nicodemus he needed to be baptized in water and in Spirit?

What does baptism in the Spirit symbolize?

Jesus' Baptism is an Example for Us

Jesus' Baptism is an Example for Us to Follow

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, he gave us an example to follow, even though he had committed no sin, so we might know God has forgiven our sins when we repent by ending our rebellion of going our own way. As he rose up from the water, Jesus saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him in the form of a dove and heard a voice from heaven say:

"You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

And immediately afterwards we read he was filled with the Spirit and went out to the desert to confront Satan.

The Significance of Baptism in Spirit

Being baptized, or overwhelmed, by

the Holy Spirit is God's way of saying we are his beloved children and is his way of empowering us to live the Christian life in the power of the Spirit. It is the way we are reconnected to God as our heavenly Father so that we can know we will never be separated from him again and God's answer to our longing for the intimacy.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

ROMANS 8:38-39 (NIV)

Question

Do you know you are a beloved child in whom God is well pleased?

Our Final Reunion with Father God

A Glimpse of Heaven

The Bible does not give us a detailed picture of what heaven is like because it is so amazing our finite minds could not grasp it. But Jesus said:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ”

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” **JOHN 14:1-4**

Jesus has promised to come back to take us to be with him for eternity.

Question

What is your idea of heaven?

John’s Vision of Heaven

The Apostle John had several visions of heaven. Here is one:

“Then I looked, and I heard the voices of myriads of angels around the throne, as well as the voices of the living creatures and the elders — myriads and myriads! And as I watched, all of them were singing with thunderous voices:

“Worthy is Christ the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive great power and might, wealth and wisdom, and honor, glory, and praise!”

Then every living being joined the angelic choir. Every creature in heaven and on earth, under the earth, in the sea, and everything in them, were worshipping with one voice, saying:

“Praise, honor, glory, and dominion be to God-Enthroned and to Christ the Lamb forever and ever!” And everyone said: “Amen!” (The Passion Translation)

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