

## Hiding Your Relationship

### Genesis 3:8-15 (NIV84)

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." <sup>11</sup> And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" <sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." <sup>14</sup> So 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.' <sup>15</sup> 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."

A new pastor moved into town and went out one Saturday to visit his parishioners. All went well until he came to one house. It was obvious that someone was home, but no one came to the door even after he had knocked several times. Finally, he took out his card and wrote on the back "Revelation 3:20" and stuck it in the door. Revelation 3:20 reads, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him." The next day as he was counting the offering, the pastor found his card in the collection plate. Below his message was the reference "Genesis 3:10." The pastor looked it up. It said, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Lame pastor jokes are the best, aren't they? They even give us a little bit of insight into real life. Obviously, if the pastor were to call on you randomly and you had just gotten out of the shower, you are not going to be getting to the door until you are clothed. To have the pastor walk in on you while you are naked is so incredibly embarrassing. Who wants to even imagine such a thing? Yet that is basically where we are coming in on Adam and Eve from our first reading for today.

Eve had fallen for the devil's trap. Adam did nothing to stop her. He ate the fruit as well. They had sided with the devil. So, when they heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid from him among the trees of the garden. (verse 8) You can hear the internal thoughts: "I'm so embarrassed! God can't know what we have done. We can't tell him about the forbidden fruit that we ate. Just play it cool. He won't see us in the trees."

Then God calls out to Adam, "Where are you?" Adam sheepishly comes out. Their meeting feels more like a parent who walks in on their son or daughter making out with their boyfriend or girlfriend. The parent turns their eyes away as if to un-see what they just saw. And the boyfriend girlfriend duo try to hide themselves as if to convince the parent that nothing was going on; we were just studying. Is there anything wrong with kissing your boyfriend or girlfriend? No, but when Mom walks in, the default action is to hide what was going on, to hide the relationship that Mom knows exists.

That's what we do. We hide relationships that we are ashamed of, or ones that we know other people will look down on. Why does the college student not tell anyone that they are dating a high schooler? Because they fear the backlash of what their peers will say and what the parents will think. You never did bring home that one boyfriend or girlfriend to meet Mom and Dad because you knew what they were going to say about them and your relationship. That person who is dating more than one person at a time has a kind of juggling act to keep his or her dates from finding out about each other because if they found out, you might lose them both.

Hiding shameful relationships is as old as sin...literally. By listening to his lies, eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve had started a relationship with the devil, and that relationship compelled them to hide from the LORD God, their gracious, caring, and loving Creator, the one who had provided this huge rich garden for their enjoyment and pleasure. They couldn't let God see this new relationship that they had formed with the devil.

This new relationship drove them further and further away from God. As Adam finally comes forward to answer God's question of "Where are you?" he says, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (verse 10) The LORD God presses the question, showing that he already knows what has happened. "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" (verse 11) Adam is still trying to cover up what had happened, but he knows that the jig is up. Instead of coming clean, he throws not just Eve but also God under the bus. "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." (verse 12) If you wouldn't have put this woman here with me, this would never have happened. It's her fault. It's your fault. It's not my fault that I am afraid and ashamed.

The LORD God turns his attention to Eve. Maybe she will admit to what she has done. But Eve replies, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (verse 13) It's not her fault either. The devil made me do it. He tricked me. It's his fault, really.

Adam and Eve could not own up to what they had done, to the part they had played in forming this new relationship with the devil. Not only did they push themselves away from God, but they split their marital union with blame while taking no personal responsibility. If God knew the truth, what would he do to us? Adam and Eve are afraid. The best solution to them since they have sinned would be to try and hide what they and the devil had accomplished.

What sins are you tempted to hide? Everyone in this room is a sinner. We all do bad things, wrong things. Some of them we are so ashamed of, we can't even let the words spill out past our lips to other people to tell them what we have done. What would they think if they only knew? And so we do what now comes naturally to us. We hide it. We lock it away. We put it out of sight and out of mind. No one needs to know about my sin. Let's hide it like Adam and Eve did, among the trees in the garden, camouflaged, pretending that it's not there.

When I try to hide my sins, what I am actually hiding is a relationship with the devil. Just like with Adam and Eve, the devil and I have collaborated on something. He suggested that I stop listening to God's clear commands and instead do something that I know is wrong because it seems advantageous to me. Now I have a new friend that I don't want to bring home to God because I know that God will not approve. So, I hide it thinking that I can be with God and the devil at the same time.

But we can't have it both ways, and God makes sure of that. He knows about that relationship that we have with the devil, how we listen to his bad advice that sounds so good at the time. God knows that we have been in cahoots with the devil in our disobedience. He knows about this relationship, and he calls you out on it. Who will you be with?

Consider your options. You can keep this relationship with the devil. You can buy into his shtick, to doubt God's Word, to doubt his care and concern for you, to blur the black and white of God's commands into a muddy, indiscernible grey. You can listen to his lies, and let him goad you into doing things that he knows are going to be harmful for you. Is that the relationship you want?

Or you can be with God, someone who has given you every good thing including life itself. He never lies to you. When he has a problem with you, he confronts you on it instead of trying to ignore it or hide it. Even when he is upset with you, upset that you would choose someone else, he seeks you out. He offers you a chance to come clean, own up to what you had done. And even when you don't, he seeks out that dirt bag, the devil, and sends him packing as he drives Satan out of this world and into that everlasting dungeon pit of hell. The LORD God throws Satan into the Abyss and locks him away.

God cares about you and your relationship so much that he refuses to let us live with the wrong choice. He steps in to put himself on the line, to steal you away from the devil. This is what he did for Adam and Eve. Immediately after Adam and Eve have clearly listened to the devil and disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he doesn't curse Adam and Eve. The first thing he does is curse Satan. 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." (verse 14) God declares immediate victory over the devil. He will crawl on his belly and eat dust. This is a posture of humiliating defeat. Another one bites the dust.

But God does not stop there. He promises to Satan and Adam and Eve that this relationship that they have with the devil is coming to an immediate end. "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." (verse 15) I will put open hostility, hatred between Eve and the devil, between all those who follow the devil - all who do not want to have a relationship with me - and all those who follow the faith of Eve. From the woman an offspring will come. He will crush your head, devil. You will be completely defeated even though you mount a pitiful counterattack.

God cares so much about us that he puts himself into harm's way to destroy the one who wants to destroy us: the devil. He puts himself into harm's way to restore our once perfect relationship. The offspring of the woman is Jesus Christ, the one who is both God and Man. He crushes the head of the serpent with his perfect life lived in our place and with his innocent life sacrificed for us. The heel strike by Satan is the cross. You can picture Jesus standing on the head of the serpent with the empty tomb in the backdrop. God has destroyed Satan and restored that once perfect relationship.

This is why no matter how shameful our sins, we can confess them to God. We can come clean before him. We don't have to hide in our shame any longer. God knows what you have done, just as he knew what Adam and Eve had done. The LORD God knows when you collaborate with the devil. And that's exactly why he promised to send the offspring of the woman, Jesus, to crush the serpent's head, to destroy the one who took you away from God, to save you from a relationship with the devil.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the offspring has come and crushed the serpent's head. Hide no more. Come clean before God. He will end your relationship with Satan, and he will restore our relationship with him to be in the perfect harmony it once was. Amen.

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June 14, 2015

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