

## Net•Work Notes

### Week 4, Day 1: Crisis—the Spread of Disorder

Chapters 1-11 of Genesis have long been recognized as a kind of “introduction” to the whole human drama. These chapters are written to help us understand why things are as they are. The Bible tells us of our good creation, our being made in God's image to do good work and live in relationship with God and one another. But the Bible is clear that this is not all there is to life. Genesis also takes a hard look at the dark side of life: human sin and our crisis which lead to death.

So understand the purpose of these chapters. They tell stories meant to remind us of what we were created for and also tell us how badly we missed the mark! As we discussed last week: humankind is remarkable in many ways, but we find ourselves in a deep crisis. We don't want God to be God!

This week we will look at the way this crisis weaves its way through the fabric of our lives. You may not have experienced every side of sin's effect in our world, but you will, no doubt, feel the “sting” of many of them.

**Reread Genesis 3.** We have already mentioned the first effect of human crisis and sin: human beings are at odds with God. C. S. Lewis called this the “Great Divorce.” We all know that divorce is a terrible tragedy between a husband and wife; how much more between God and human beings, his treasured creation! Cut off from the source of life, we now experience death and the death of love, perfect relationship, complete meaning, innocence, trust, safety and confidence as well. We are cut off from the garden.

Instead of calling out to God, seeking God's presence and company, we try to hide from God.

What do you think of when you think of what “sin” is?

Do you think that people spend much time thinking about the reality of sin? Why or why not?

What do you think happens to people when their relationship with God has been broken?

## **Net•Work Notes**

Week 4, Day 2: Crisis: Brokenness Unfolds

### **The War between the Sexes!**

Have you ever had any problems with the opposite sex? Welcome to one of the original problems of humankind! You may remember that in the beginning this was not God's intention. When God created human beings both male and female, they together reflect the fullness of the image of God. In fact, in the intimate account of the making of human beings found in Genesis 2, we see that the creation of the first woman arose out of an original longing for partnership and companionship. Steve Hayner writes, "Loneliness is seen as a God-given longing for community." Man and woman are "suited" to one another; neither the man nor the woman is inferior to the other. After they were created "there was a transparent, perfect relationship with no hiding, no fear, no self-protection, and no shame. They were naked before each other without fear of being hurt" (Hayner). How different things are now in our human crisis!!

### **Signs of Trouble**

After sin has broken our basic relationship with our loving God, our disobedience makes us hide from one another, too. We can't stand an open relationship with one another, so there is a silly attempt to hide our "nakedness" from one another through the sewing together of fig leaves (if you have ever seen a fig leaf you will know that there is hardly a leaf less suitable for this task!). The man and the woman begin to blame one another. Their break from one another is further indicated by the sudden move of the man to dominate the woman (cf. Genesis 3:16); notice how Adam "names" the woman, showing that he believed he now ruled over her. Genesis traces the difficulties that men and woman

have with each other to their lack of trust in the goodness of God. Lacking trust in God, they no longer can completely trust and love one another.

Who in your life do you have trouble drawing close to that you believe you need to be close to or were meant to be close to?

Why is it easier to hide from others than to trust them with who you are? Name someone who you would like to be closer to.

Write down one step you can take this week to build on one of your relationships.

## Net•Work Notes

Week 4, Day 3: Crisis: Corruption Unfolds

### Crumbling Pillars

Remember the two pillars of our creation: we were created for good **work to do** and for **relationships in which to love**. We have seen from Genesis 3 that sin is at work ruining our basic relationship with God and between men and women. But the crisis does not end there. Sin corrupts our relationships, but it also poisons our work. Before our break with God, we knew who we were (children of God) and we knew the work we were called to do (exploring the creation, naming the creation, and caring for and cultivating the earth). But our separation from God also damaged our relationship with God's creation. God, anticipating our selfish acts, declares that "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17). God did not curse the ground—the earth has been cursed by our abuse and misuse of it! And we know that this crisis has never left us: in fact, our last century saw more misuse of the earth than all prior centuries combined.

Our break with the creation results in confusion with our understanding of our role and place in the earth, with our sense of understanding what our proper work is to do. Have you ever wondered what you are called to do? Since we are lost with God, we find that we have also lost our sense of who we are! We struggle to know what we are here for, to know what the purpose ought to be for our lives. The stories of the Bible often show how restless is the human heart apart from God. This terrible state of affairs is seen in the condition of humankind right before the flood in Noah's time: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil

continually." (Genesis 6:5). We are told that God was sorry he had made human beings. But the good news is that God does not give up. God makes a new start with Noah's family. (Read Genesis 6-9 for this story).

Do you ever question who you are and what you are called to do? Spend time in prayer sharing your thoughts with God.

What are some of the possibilities for your life's work? (This does not need to be limited to your 'career' or job.) Have you found this question difficult as you think about it?

What are types of work that you think are especially meaningful or important in our world?

## Net•Work Notes

Week 4, Day 4: Crisis—Corruption Unfolds

### The Birth of Violence

The breakdown in human relationships does not stop with the difficulties between men and women and humankind and their work. **Read Genesis 4.** Here is one of the oldest and best known stories of the Bible. I think the story of Cain and Abel is so familiar because it is so true. God puts us in families in order for us to love and care for one another, to support and encourage one another, but then we wake up one morning and discover that our greatest enemy shares the same house and table with us!! Brother hates brother and violence is the result. And those of you who are sisters know that this story is not just restricted to the guys.

Sin (remember sin is basically our rejection of God's presence and lack of trust in Him) works its way into all our relationships. Have you had difficulties with any of the members of your family? What makes these conflicts so painful and hurtful? Those who are closest to us know us the best. As a result they also know best what hurts us. The story of Cain and Abel also gives us a picture of how self-absorption, envy and jealousy, and lack of trust can lead us to terrible actions, even to those we are closest to.

### Crouching Sin, Struggling Souls

The story of Cain shows what happens when anger is allowed to grow and fester. God warns Cain about sin's presence (cf. 4:6-7) and reminds him to focus on "what is right." But Cain ignores God and takes matters (literally!!) into his own hands. You are familiar with the question on Cain's lips, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But you may not catch the ironic answer. We think, "Of course he is." But in the Bible there is only one keeper of human life who has the power to

decide life and death: God. Cain takes God's powers into his own hands and takes his brother's life. The lesson is: when we take on God's powers, human beings bring forth death.

Where around you do you think you see human beings trying to take on God-like powers?

What are the most common difficulties you face with the members of your family? What have you done to try to deal with these difficulties?

What relationship in your family would you like to pray for?

## Net•Work Notes

### Week 4, Day 5: Crisis—Corruption Unfolds

We have seen the effects of our broken relationship with God flow out to corrupt our relationship with self, with creation, with the opposite sex, and with our families. But sin's power to ruin does not stop there. We know vividly in our day that sin leads not only to violence within families, but also to war between nations.

There are three stories in these first 11 chapters of Genesis which speak to the spread of sin's effects to the world. First there is the story of Lamech (a descendent of Cain; read **Genesis 5:17-24**) who killed someone for wounding him (notice the continued breakdown in male-female relationships with his taking of two wives!). A second story (Genesis 6:1-4), somewhat mysterious and confusing, probably shows the dominance of the powerful over the weak as the "sons of God" take wives for themselves from among the "daughters of men". Humankind's problem has grown to the point where God concludes: "how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). That's pretty bad!!

The last story speaks to the division in human kind and the conflict of nations. **Read Genesis 11:1-9**. Here we see human beings growing in knowledge and technology (the making of bricks) and the building of a city (the rise of human civilization). But notice the core motivation and spirit of this endeavor: "so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered..." (Genesis 11:4). The desire to make a name for themselves was nothing more than human pride, the desire to be their own gods. This story

concludes with the confusion of human speech and the division and scattering of nations.

The startling thing about all these stories in Genesis 1-11 is that throughout it all, God remains a part of the story. God, ultimately, does not leave humankind to go it alone. God is there, questioning, seeking, listening, watching, and caring.

In what ways do you see evidence for human sin in the clash of the nations of our world?

How do you think human pride gets in the way of how communities (schools, cities, nations, etc.) get along and cooperate with each other.

What do you think God may be calling Christians to do in the midst of the conflict between nations in our day and age?