

BAPTISTWAY

Bible Study for Texas



God's Message in the Old Testament

Hollie Atkinson

Amelia Bishop

Ellis Orozco

BAPTISTWAY

Dallas, Texas

Bible Study for Texas, God's Message in the Old Testament

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BAPTISTWAY Management Team

Executive Director, Baptist General Convention of Texas: Charles Wade

Director, State Missions Commission: James Semple

Director, Bible Study/Discipleship Division: Bernard M. Spooner

Publishing consultant: Ross West, Positive Difference Communications

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How to Make the Best Use of Bible Study for Texas

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Look at the table of contents, read the study introduction, and read the unit introduction for the lesson you're about to study. Try to see how each lesson relates to the unit and overall study of which it is a part.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for each unit. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

- A. Do all of the things just mentioned, of course.
- B. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying with your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on page 5 and on the first page of each lesson.
- C. You may want to get the enrichment teaching help that is provided in the *Baptist Standard* and/or on the Internet. Call 214-630-4571

GOD'S MESSAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

to begin your subscription to the *Baptist Standard*. Access the Internet information by checking the the *Baptist Standard* website at <http://www.baptiststandard.com> or the *Bible Study for Texas* website at http://www.bgct.org/sunday_school/bstmain.htm. (Other class participants may find this information helpful, too.)

- D. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, which is a companion piece to these lesson comments. The teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- E. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- F. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

God's Message in the Old Testament

<i>How to Make the Best Use of Bible Study for Texas</i>	3
<i>Introducing God's Message in the Old Testament</i>	7

UNIT 1

God's Message in the Law

Date of Study

LESSON 1	_____	<i>How Life Goes Wrong</i> Genesis 3:1–13	13
LESSON 2	_____	<i>God's Call to Faithful Living</i> Genesis 12:1–9	21
LESSON 3	_____	<i>Never Forget That God Delivers</i> Exodus 14:21—15:2,20–21	31
CHRISTMAS	_____	<i>A Child Is Born!</i> Isaiah 9:2–7; Luke 2:8–14	41
LESSON 4	_____	<i>Obey God and Share Your Faith</i> Deuteronomy 6:1–12,20–25	51

UNIT 2

God's Message in the Former Prophets

LESSON 5	_____	<i>The Cycle of Sin</i> Judges 2:11–19	61
LESSON 6	_____	<i>God's Sure Promise</i> 2 Samuel 7:1–17	71
LESSON 7	_____	<i>When People Reject God</i> 2 Kings 17:5–19; 24:1–4,18–20	79

GOD'S MESSAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

U N I T 3

God's Message in the Latter Prophets

LESSON 8	_____	<i>God's Wake-Up Call</i> Amos 5:4–12, 21–24; Jeremiah 7:2–11	91
LESSON 9	_____	<i>God's Yearning Heart</i> Hosea 11:1–11	101
LESSON 10	_____	<i>God's New Covenant</i> Jeremiah 31:27–34	111
LESSON 11	_____	<i>God's Servant, Our Savior</i> Isaiah 53:1–12	119

U N I T 4

God's Message in the Writings

LESSON 12	_____	<i>To Restore the Joy</i> Psalm 51:1–17	131
LESSON 13	_____	<i>Wisdom for Daily Living</i> Proverbs 1:7; 2:1–22	141
		<i>Our Next New Study</i>	151
		<i>About Bible Study for Texas</i>	153
		<i>How to Order More Bible Study for Texas</i>	155

God's Message in the Old Testament

The Old Testament is a rich treasure. It is both enriching in itself and preparatory for the even greater richness of God's revelation in Christ.

The Old Testament is a big book, of course. In fact, it is many books—thirty-nine of them. So what can be gained by devoting thirteen lessons to its study? The answer is, much. Studying these passages may help you see in one quarter's study what God's message in the Old Testament is all about. This study of God's message in the Old Testament also may help you get in touch with parts of the Bible that you may have neglected for one reason or another, but unnecessarily.

This study will provide a survey of the Old Testament by using the categories that the Jewish people—and Jesus himself—used in describing the Old Testament. Jesus spoke of “the law and the prophets” (see Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:16; see also John 1:45; Acts 13:15; Romans 3:21). What did Jesus mean by this description? He was referring to the portions of sacred Scripture that his fellow Jews knew by those names.

“The Law” referred to the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch. These first five books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—were and are foundational for the rest of the Old Testament and for the rest of the Bible. Much of these books is indeed “law.” The latter half of Exodus, part of Numbers, all of Leviticus, and some of Deuteronomy do in fact contain what we think of as law, meaning detailed rules for guiding conduct.

“The prophets” referred to what we generally think of as prophets—the major prophets, meaning Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, plus the minor prophets like Hosea, Amos, and Micah. Jesus and his fellow Jews would have thought of these books, though, as the “latter prophets.” “The prophets” referred to more than the books containing the prophets' messages. Also included in “the prophets” were what the Hebrews called the “former prophets,” meaning the Books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.

What about “the writings”? In essence, this title refers to all the rest of the books in the Old Testament. “The writings” includes the Books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. So why doesn't the New Testament talk about “the law, the prophets, and the writings”? The main reason is that the books included in “the writings” were not definitely determined to be part of the Old Testament until about 100 A.D. This date, of course, was after Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection and in fact after seventy or so years of Christian history.

Additional Resources for This Study¹

- Edward P. Blair. *Deuteronomy, Joshua*. The Layman's Bible Commentary. Volume 5. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1964.
- Ronald E. Clements. *Jeremiah*. Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1989.
- Robert C. Dentan. *1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles*. The Layman's Bible Commentary. Volume 5. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1964.
- Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr. *Hosea*. The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 7. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1972.
- F.B. Huey. *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. The New American Commentary. Volume 16. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1993.
- L. D. Johnson. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*. The Layman's Bible Book Commentary. Volume 9. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980.
- Dan G. Kent. *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*. The Layman's Bible Book Commentary. Volume 4. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980.
- Derek Kidner. *Proverbs*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Volume 15. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964.
- Derek Kidner. *Psalms 1–72*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Volume 14a. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973.
- George A. F. Knight. *Psalms 1–72*. The Daily Study Bible Series. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1982.
- Joe O. Lewis. *1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles*. The Layman's Bible Book Commentary. Volume 5. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980.
- Eric C. Rust. *Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel*. The Layman's Bible Commentary. Volume 5. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1964.
- John H. Traylor, Jr. *1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles*. The Layman's Bible Book Commentary. Volume 6. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981.
-

This study will help you get acquainted with God's message to you through these books. You may or may not relish a study of the Old Testament, of course. There's no need to be afraid or reluctant. You will soon find that the Scriptures selected for these lessons are significant texts, choice texts for study.

Unit One, "God's Message in the Law," considers texts from Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy. Note: In the first year of release of this issue of *Bible Study for Texas*, the fourth Sunday of the study is the Sunday before Christmas. Therefore, a lesson from Isaiah with a Christmas theme is included, and your class has the opportunity to decide whether to study that lesson. If your class uses that Christmas lesson, you may need to decide whether to combine two Old Testament lessons, omit an Old Testament lesson, or study the missed Old Testament lesson at a special class meeting.

Unit Two, "God's Message in the Former Prophets," considers texts from Judges, 2 Samuel, and 2 Kings. It's an all-too-brief study of God's actions in Israel's history, but it will give you a sense of what was happening during this time and how it applies to you.

Unit Three, "God's Message in the Latter Prophets," considers texts from four of God's great prophets—Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. These lessons may help you see into God's heart.

Unit Four, "God's Message in the Writings," treats passages from Psalms and Proverbs. The texts selected focus on our need for God and provide wisdom for living.

NOTES

1. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY with all of its comments.

MAJOR ERAS IN BIBLE HISTORY¹ AND HOW THE LESSONS ARE RELATED TO THEM

Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	6,12,13	7,8,9	7,8,9,	10, 11			
I. Early Records	II. The Patriarchs (1750–1350 BC)	III. The Exodus from Egypt (1445–1250 BC)	IV. Entering the Promised Land (1300–1200 BC)	V. The Judges (1200–1020 BC)	VI. The United Kingdom (1020–922 BC)	VII. The Divided Kingdom (922–721 BC)	VIII. Kingdom of Judah Alone (721–587 BC)	IX. Exile in Babylon (587–539 BC)	X. Return and Persian Rule (539–333 BC)	XI. Greek Rule (333–63 BC)	XII. Roman Rule (63 BC–NT)
THE LAW											
Lesson 1	Genesis 3:1–13	Lesson 5	Judges 2:11–19	Lesson 8	Amos 5:4–12,	Lesson 12	Psalms 51:1–17				
Lesson 2	Genesis 12:1–9	Lesson 6	2 Samuel 7:1–17	Lesson 9	21–24;	Lesson 13	Proverbs 1:7;				
Lesson 3	Exodus 14:21–15:2,20–21	Lesson 7	2 Kings 17:5–19;	Lesson 10	Jeremiah 7:2–11		2:1–22				
Lesson 4	Deuteronomy 6:1–12,20–25		24:1–4,18–20	Lesson 11	Hosea 11:1–11						
					Jeremiah 31:27–34						
					Isaiah 53:1–12						

NOTES

1. Dates are approximate.

God's Message in the Law



Unit One consists of four lessons from the books of the Law, the first five books of the Old Testament. The four lessons from the books of the Law are from Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy.

God still speaks through these books. Lesson 1 considers what Genesis 3 indicates about how people's lives can go terribly wrong. We will learn how Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Their sin teaches us that our lives are ruined when we disobey God.

Lesson 2 provides a study of God's call to Abraham to respond in faith to God with his very life. Through Abraham we learn that God blesses when we are obedient to his call.

Lesson 3 deals with God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Moses, the original law giver, teaches us that we can count on God to deliver us.

Next in order is a Christmas lesson. This lesson is provided because in the first year of release of this issue of *Bible Study for Texas*, the fourth Sunday of the study is the Sunday before Christmas. Classes can decide whether to study the Christmas lesson and either combine two Old Testament lessons, omit an Old Testament lesson, or schedule an extra class meeting to study a lesson they might otherwise miss. In this lesson, we will be encouraged to see how God is faithful to his Word to the smallest detail in the birth of our Savior.

Then lesson 4 in the study of "God's Message in the Law" tells of God's demand that God's people obey him and share faith in him with the next generations. In this lesson, we culminate the unit by learning that we are to express our faith by obeying God in our daily lives and sharing our faith with others.

God's law is more than just rules and regulations. It is a product of God's love for us. It is the first step in God's plan to save us. Without the law, we cannot understand our need for Jesus. Without Jesus we cannot have eternal life.

GOD'S MESSAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

UNIT 1: GOD'S MESSAGE IN THE LAW

Lesson 1	How Life Goes Wrong	Genesis 3:1–13
Lesson 2	God's Call to Faithful Living	Genesis 12:1–9
Lesson 3	Never Forget That God Delivers	Exodus 14:21— 15:2,20–21
Christmas Lesson	A Child Is Born!	Isaiah 9:2–7; Luke 2:8–14
Lesson 4	Obey God and Share Your Faith	Deuteronomy 6:1–12,20–25

Focal Text

Genesis 3:1–13

Background

Genesis 3

Main Focus

Life goes wrong for people when they yield to the temptation to go a different way from God's way.

Question to Explore

How did God's good creation—and people's lives—get so messed up?

Study Aim

To describe how life ultimately goes wrong for every person

Texas Priorities Emphasized

- Share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people of Texas, the nation, and the world
- Develop Christian families

LESSON ONE

How Life Goes Wrong



Quick Read

God created the world to be in perfect relationship with him. Unfortunately, people have yielded to the temptation to go a different way from God's way. That yielding is called sin.

If you ask a rancher how a cow gets lost, chances are he will reply, “Well, the cow starts nibbling on a tuft of green grass. When it finishes, it looks ahead to the next tuft of green grass and starts nibbling on that one. Then it nibbles on a tuft of grass right next to a hole in the fence. It then sees another tuft of green grass on the other side of the fence, and so it nibbles on that one and then goes on to the next tuft. The next thing you know, the cow has nibbled itself into being lost.”

Sin leads people away from God in a similar way. We keep going from one tuft of disobedience to another, never noticing how far from God we have wandered. Each little act of sin doesn't seem like much until one day our life falls apart, and then we notice how far away we are from God.

As you study Genesis 3:1–13, note that there are some foundational pillars that keep people close to God. When we get away from these pillars, our lives fall apart.

Our Lives Go Wrong When We Wander Away from God's Proclamation (3:1–5)

The serpent came to Eve and engaged her in a theological conversation. The conversation was about the nature and character of God. The serpent was questioning God's Word. As Genesis 3:1 records it, the serpent questioned, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

Notice two things the serpent did to draw Eve away from God's Word. First, the serpent misrepresented God's Word. Note in verse 2 what Eve had heard God say. God had not said that they were not to eat from “any tree in the garden.” God had specified the tree from which they were not to eat (see Gen. 2:16–17). Satan is always twisting God's Word to further his agenda. Satan used God's Word to tempt Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:6). Paul warned that people would pervert the Word of God for their own ends (2 Timothy 4:3). Indeed throughout the ages countless people have manipulated God's Word for their own selfish purposes.

Second, the serpent questioned God's credibility. The serpent's statement in verse 4 has an edgy tone: *Surely God didn't say that! It can't be true. God must be mistaken, or you must have misunderstood what God was trying to say.* The Word of God has been attacked, criticized, scrutinized, and rationalized by some of the greatest minds the centuries have produced, and yet it still stands. Satan is constantly assaulting God's Word because he knows that therein lies the power of the church.

Genesis 3:1–13 (NIV)

¹Now 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, ³but 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.”

Eve fell into the trap by coming to God’s defense (3:2–3). There is no reason to doubt that her intentions were sincere. However, in her attempt to defend God, Eve also misrepresented God’s Word. “You must not eat fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die” (3:3). In God’s instructions in 2:16–17, God had not mentioned anything about not touching the fruit. Eve added that part. In her zeal to defend God, she revealed a weakness in her defense. She had not listened well to what God had said.

God had been very specific. There were two trees in the garden from which Adam and Eve were not to eat—the tree of the knowledge of good

The Garden of Eden

The Hebrew word *eden* means “delight.” This understanding affirms the popular view of Eden as a lush and delightful paradise.

The exact location of the garden remains largely hypothetical, primarily because of the lack of geographical details provided in the Bible. In general, Eden is to be found somewhere “in the east” (Genesis 2:8), which from the standpoint of Palestine would place it somewhere near Mesopotamia or possibly India. More precise identification depends on interpretation of the four rivers said to stem from a common source in Eden (Genesis 2:10–14). Of these four rivers only the Tigris and the Euphrates can be identified with certainty. The other two rivers, the Pishon and the Gihon, may be tributaries that flow into or out of the Tigris and Euphrates.

and evil and the tree of life. It was God's only restriction. It was God's clear proclamation. Adam and Eve began their downfall when they placed their ideas and their desires above God's Word.

We must place God's Word at the center of our lives. Few things are more effective in keeping us from wandering away from God than daily Bible reading. When we read God's Word every day, we will begin to see things through God-shaped eyes. When we live in God's Word, our spirits will be lifted and encouraged. When we spend time in God's Word, our souls will be nourished and replenished. We will never experience the fullness of God if we are not consistent in the discipline of reading God's Word.

The Bible is God's love letter to us. We will never know reconciliation with God and the intimacy of relationship with God until we open it and read it.

Our Lives Go Wrong When We Wander Away from God's Purpose (3:6–7)

After Eve's conversation with the serpent, Eve began to look at the forbidden fruit from a different perspective. She had never noticed before, but now she looked a little closer and saw that “the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom . . .” (3:6). Eve was now moving away from God's design and purpose for her life. She saw what the fruit could do for her instead of what it could do to her relationship with God.

Adam and Eve moved away from God by moving away from his purpose for their lives. God's purpose did not include the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had been clear about that. After they partook of the fruit, "the eyes of both of them were opened" (3:7). Before eating the fruit, Adam and Eve filtered everything through God. After eating the fruit, they began seeing the world apart from God. Adam and Eve began a long and tragic journey away from God's purpose.

We keep going from one tuft of disobedience to another, never noticing how far from God we have wandered.

Consider the consequences of their disobedience. The first consequence was in how they saw themselves and each other. "They realized they were naked . . ." (3:7). Before partaking of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect intimacy in their relationship. "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (2:25). There was nothing to come between them. They were totally open and completely honest with each other. After partaking of the fruit, they lost their innocence. They now saw each other from a different perspective. The change ruined the intimacy of their relationship. Before, Adam and Eve had loved each other for who they were. Once their eyes were opened they began to judge each other based on external factors. They "made coverings for themselves" (3:7). Before eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were lacking in nothing. Once they wandered away from God's purpose for their lives, they were lacking in the most basic areas of life.

Proverbs 21:30–31 says, "There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord." In other words, you can plan all you want, but if your purpose doesn't line up with God's purpose—if your plan is not God's plan—it will not work.

The Bible is God's love letter to us.

This is perhaps one of the most difficult things for the average independent, self-made, self-sufficient, twenty-first century American to understand. We love to make our own plans. We enjoy charting our own future. Planning is not a bad thing as long as we understand that ultimately, for all our planning and positioning, we can never fill the void that remains. It's a God-shaped hole at the center of our hearts that can only be filled with God's purpose.

Many people live their lives not really caring much which way they go next. They are ready to go whichever way the next cultural wind blows. But when Jesus comes into a person's life, he brings divine direction and purpose.

God's purpose must become our purpose. God's way must become our way. Adam and Eve fell when they placed their desires above God's purpose.

Our Lives Go Wrong When We Wander Away from God's Presence (3:8–10)

Notice in verse 8 what Adam and Eve did after they realized the weight of their actions. Adam and Eve immediately began to hide from God. Before their disobedience, they were constantly in God's presence. Now they

God's purpose must become our purpose.

found themselves running from God's presence. Running from God is an exercise in futility. Adam and Eve's first mistake was disobeying God's command. Their second mistake was trying to run from God.

Notice three things about Adam and Eve's sin. First, sin separated them from God. Adam and Eve, for the first time in their lives, were hiding from God. Second, God came looking for them (3:9). God always takes the initiative in seeking that which is lost. Jesus said that he came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Third, sin brought fear into their lives. Adam admitted he was hiding because he was afraid of God (Gen. 3:10). In contrast, John tells us that God's perfect love dispels all fear (1 John 4:18).

Case Study

A person in your Sunday School class who has attended regularly for years has missed several consecutive Sundays. You see the person sitting at the back of the sanctuary during the worship services. You hear that there are family problems, and someone even said they heard the person was having an affair. Do you confront the person with the gossip? Do you talk to the pastor? Do you simply pray for the person? What do you do?

When we sin, our natural instinct is to cover it up. We want to hide it from God and anyone else who might be looking. Unfortunately, the one we are hiding from is the only one who can help us. God's presence gives us hope. His presence is proof that there is something more beyond our problems and the death that sin brings to our lives.

Running from God is an exercise in futility.

In the city in Spain where Christopher Columbus died, a monument commemorates the great discoverer. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the memorial is a statue of a lion destroying one of the Latin words that had been part of Spain's motto for centuries. Before Columbus made his voyages, the Spaniards thought they had reached the outer limits of the earth. Thus their motto was "Ne Plus Ultra," which means "No More Beyond." The word being torn away by the lion is "ne" or "no," making it read "Plus Ultra." Columbus had proven that there was indeed "more beyond."

For eons before Christ, people were lacking in hope. There was no real proof of anything beyond the grave. But the day Jesus slipped off his grave clothes and walked out of the tomb, he proved that there is indeed more beyond. Paul writes, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). God has promised to be with us to the very end—and beyond.

God has promised to be with us to the very end—and beyond.

Our Lives Go Wrong When We Wander Away from Our God-given Responsibility (3:11-13)

Observe in verse 11 that God began to probe Adam and Eve for the root of the problem. The problem manifested itself when both Adam and Eve begin to shirk the responsibility for their sin. Adam tried to blame Eve. He even went so far as to insinuate that God had some blame in the whole mess: "The woman you put here with me . . ." (3:12).

God responded swiftly and decisively. God delivered to Adam, Eve, and the serpent the consequences of their disobedience (3:14-19). In so doing God was establishing the fact that we all have a sober responsibility

GOD'S MESSAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

for the consequences of our actions. God does not relish the punishment of God's children. However, God's children must learn that they are responsible for their lives.

. . . We all have a sober responsibility for the consequences of our actions.

Notice three things about the consequences of disobeying God. First, each consequence was personal and unique. God directed the consequence to each individual separately. No two consequences were alike.

Second, each consequence was meant to teach a life-long lesson. Third, for the man and the woman, God yet offered grace (3:21).

God wants the best for his children. God is going to provide for his children. But God's children have a responsibility as well. Christians have a responsibility to read God's Word. Christians have a responsibility to talk to God every day. Christians have a responsibility to submit their lives to him on a daily basis.

QUESTIONS

1. How much time do you invest in reading God's Word each day? each week?
2. What percentage of each day do you spend talking to God? How can you make more time for God?
3. Are you accountable to anyone for your personal spiritual growth?
4. What activities in your life could possibly lead you away from the Lord?
5. Do you have a mission statement for your life? What is it?