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Introduction

The sign at top of the slope said “Experienced skiers only.” The pamphlet I had read earlier on in the day had said, that this part of the ski field was once the steepest run in the region.

I peered over the ledge, boy that looks scary. But what a story I would be able to tell my sister when I met up with her later on in the day. I had conquered the resorts hardest slope! “Experienced skiers only“. Well I had been skiing every day for a week. So I was feeling pretty confident. Over the last four years, I must have skied one week every year. That’s a fair bit of experience isn’t it? But it was a black diamond run and I had never gone on one of those before. In fact if I was honest I had never even seen one before.

The longer I looked, the more bold I became. What if I take it really slowly. If I get in trouble, I could just take my skis off and go down on my backside. It looks fun. I like a challenge. I think I will give it a go. I was hooked and despite the fact that I was out of my depth, there was only one direction I was going to head, down that slope.

Temptation. It will always find your weak points. It will test you from every angle. It knows how to seduce you, how to change your thinking, how to get you to ignore the rules. Temptation in the words of a Joan Armitrading song, “will take you where you want to go“.

But it takes so many forms. It can be that outfit, that is way too expensive, but then you could put it on credit, couldn’t you? It may be that person, that guy, that girl, you are already committed to another, but this person seems to understand, their different. It may be the lure of money, I’ll spend a few extra hours at the office, and with the extra money I’ll make it up to the kids. It may be all about pleasure, its such a great day, we’ll go to the beach this afternoon rather than go off to Church.

Temptation. Its something we all face. Because it is part of the test of faith that God gives to us. He doesn’t make us robots, he doesn’t force us to follow him. He gives us a choice, a free will. We can believe his word, trust his word, follow His word and we live in relationship with God. Or we can go it alone, we can push the boundaries somewhat, we can yield to that temptation and enjoy the very thing that God is holding back from us. Its our choice.

1. Temptation.

And right at the beginning of the world, it was Adam and Eve’s choice as well. God had provided them with life itself. He had given them a world, a good world. There was water in abundance, food everywhere they looked, physical beauty within the garden of Eden. But there was one prohibition, one law, one test of faith. Don’t eat the fruit at the centre of the garden. You can eat of the tree of life, that will allow you to

live forever. But don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The moment you eat of that fruit, you will die.

Unlike creatures who have no choices to make, we had a choice from the beginning to love him back. That's what God longed for, just as every one of us longs for someone to love us back. God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the evening. That meant as much to him as it did to them. He looked forward to such intimate moments when they would ask him questions and learn from him. But he left us with that choice. Would we obey God or would we disobey God and sin.

Before we go on, isn't that the essential choice that we have each day of our lives? Will we choose to listen to God and obey God's will for our life, or will we go our own way and sin? Will we actively pursue God or just forget about him and be carried along by the everything our world has to offer? Will you and I listen to the tempter or to our Creator?

1. The act of sin. Verses 1-5

Well Eve finds herself alone in the Garden one day and the serpent slithers up to her and begins to question God. "Did God really say, You must not eat of any tree?"

Now God didn't say that. The Tempter has already misquoted God, for God had said they could eat of any tree but one. And Eve helpfully points this out to the serpent. No God didn't say that. But we can't eat of the one in the middle of *even touch it*. Which again is not entirely true.

But the tempter has cast out the line and he is luring in the bait. You won't die! God is just withholding something from you! He doesn't want to be like him, knowing good and evil.

Do you see what he is doing? He is putting doubts in the woman's mind. He is questioning God's word, his integrity, maybe even his motives. But what's more, he is half true. They won't die physically, not straight away, but they will die spiritually. And they will know good and evil but now they only know good! And evil ultimately is not worth knowing. God is only withholding the bad stuff from Adam and Eve.

But Eve is now peering over the edge, wondering if she could really ski down that slope. Verse 6 says she saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food. She starts thinking about the act she is contemplating. She notices that it is pleasing to the eye, it becomes very attractive to her desires. She wants to grow in wisdom. She wants to become like God. She starts dreaming of how she needs this piece of fruit.

Now let's stop there for a second. Eve has been tempted but until she eats the fruit she hasn't sinned. She still has a choice. She still can say no. She still can back out. She still has a free will. You see temptation is not a sin. You can't stop being tempted. You can't stop the flies from buzzing around your head, but you don't have to let them land there.

Will Eve let them land? Yes, she reaches out toward the fruit. She takes it. She eats it. And she gives it to her husband. Now temptation has led to sin. The desire has

produced an act. The line has been crossed. And God has been disobeyed.

2. The Consequences of Sin. (Verses 7 to 13)

When I was at the top of this black diamond run. I took a deep breathe, I cautiously went over the edge. Gravity forced hard on my skis, helping me to gain great speed, I turned once, then a second time, but it was too steep, too icy, too hard, I fell. I fell hard & I lost control as I went sliding all the way down the slope right to the very bottom.

Likewise when Adam and Eve sinned, they soon found themselves out of control, hurtling away from safety. Eve's sin, led to Adam's sin. Then they realised they were naked. They started building barriers between themselves. They sewed on fig leaves, trying to cover the implications of their sin. They hid in the garden from God.

Instead of drawing near to God, they tried to escape from his glare. And they hide behind the trees in the garden. Now when you think about it, it's a futile effort to hide from God isn't it? It's a bit like when the Taylor family plays hide and seek around our house. Joshua or Jemma think that if you place a towel over your head, or if you close your eyes, then Dad can't see you. But Dad can always see you. And God can always see us as well.

Man and women start hiding from each other, hiding from God. And then they begin the blame game. Have you eaten from the fruit that I commanded you not to eat, God asks Adam? The woman, you put here with me - she gave me the fruit and I ate it. Its her fault God, in fact its your fault as well, because you made her. But it wasn't God's fault, or Eve's fault, it was Adam's fault, he shouldn't have disobeyed God's word.

And the woman then blames the snake, The serpent deceived me and I ate. The Devil made me do it. Eve abdicates her responsibilities, she tries to hide her bad choices and points the finger at another. But as someone once said to me, whenever you point the finger at someone else, there are always three others pointing back at you.

Do you see what has happened? Adam and Eve now know about good and evil. Before they didn't know about buck passing, about shame, about guilt, about sin. Now they know it through experience. The desire hasn't led to an increase in life, in enjoyment, in power, it has instead led to frustration, isolation, death. Sin promised much and delivered nothing. Sin is like a mirage in the desert. It looks like the place you want to be, but when you get there it was nothing like what you hoped.

But the other thing this story points out is that sin leads to sins. Sin that desire to go it alone, that desire to trust in oneself rather than God, leads to further sins, further disobedience, further wrong actions. The pebble has now been dropped into the pond and will keep going further and further. The black diamond run has been breached and you are now hurtling down the slope unable to stop yourself and unable to get back to a place of safety.

Sin has its consequences. And something quite small can grow and grow and grow and have a massive effect. A few years ago, one of the space shuttles, the Discovery was grounded, not because of technical difficulties or the lack of government funding, but by a family of woodpeckers? Can you imagine that? This incredible machine, with

equipment worth millions upon millions of dollars, was made inoperative by a couple of woodpeckers. Apparently this family of yellow shafted flicker woodpeckers found the insulating foam on the shuttle's external fuel tank great for pecking.

This foam is critical for the shuttle's performance. Without it ice forms on the tank when it is filled with its super cold fuel. And this ice can break free after blastoff and damage the giant space craft. So something as small as a woodpecker stopped probably the biggest project of its kind from getting off the ground.

Eating the fruit may seem a really small thing. Giving that little white lie might seem a very small thing. Watching the wrong thing on TV, or opening your mouth and letting fly or having too much to drink or experimenting with drugs may just be having a bit of fun, but from little things big things grow.

Adam and Eves sin leads to Genesis 4 and Cain's sin of his brother Abel. It leads to the wickedness that brings in the flood, the building of the tower of Babel and the rejection of the world away from their creator. The flood gates are now open. The skier is now hurtling down the slope. And that leads to the

3. The Judgement on Sin.

There are natural judgements that come on ones' sin. The guilt, the blame game, the lack of trust, the hiding from God flows obviously from Adam and Eve's sin. Likewise the teenager speeds and loses control and hurts himself and those in the car. Even if the teenager doesn't hurt himself, he may be emboldened and think that nothing can hurt him - setting him up for a fall later.

The tax cheat gets away with it once and tries a bigger scheme next time. The man buys a pornographic magazine and then starts looking at women differently. The woman compares herself with the model in the magazine and more and more becomes unhappy with her own body image. Yes there are natural consequences of our sin.

But God also brings judgement on our sin. For the serpent, he has to eat dust all of his life. For the woman there will be a constant fighting between the animals and her, there will be desire and yet mistrust in the closest of her relationships. For the man he will have to toil and work and at times get no where. All of them will return to the dust. They will all die, physically yes, but also their relationship with god will die as well.

Quite simply God will not let us get away with sin. Sin will eventually lead to judgement. Man is removed from the garden of delight. Man's relationship with god is scarred, with his fellow man is damaged, with the created order is sullied. God wont sit back and say boys will be boys. He won't turn a blind eye. You can't hide from him, He sees what you do and he will punish our wrongdoing. We will get what we deserve. Justice will be done. We may not see it in this world. We may not understand the full ramifications for our sin, but on the last day, it will hit us.

But surprisingly that is not the last word. It is not the end of sin. There is one

4. Further response to sin, by God. And that is a response of grace.

Boy if I was God I would be livid, ropeable, so annoyed. And God is too. But his nature is always gracious as well. And so in the last few verses, verses 21 to 24, we see God continuing to reach out in love to mankind. He makes them garments to clothe their nakedness. Which probably means that God is the first tailor.

He allows them to live physically. But he also sets a limit to mankind's time here on earth, so that we do not live in sin for ever. It is actually a good thing that he sends Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. He doesn't want us to live in this sinful state for ever. So he drives them out of the Garden of Eden and makes sure they can't make it back.

In short, God's response to our sin, is to temper his judgement with mercy. It is to mingle justice with grace. It is to give mankind hope that the offspring (singular) will one day crush the Tempter. In short even at this point in time we get the promise that he will send us Jesus.

For on the cross God lets out his full fury on mankind's sin. The price is paid in full. The judgement is given justly. But if we choose to ask Jesus to take our place. If we acknowledge our rebellion and sin and seek to accept God's amnesty. Then that judgement will not fall on us but on Jesus. We will not just receive God's judgement we will be recipients of his grace as well.

Because when we look at Genesis 3, we see not just the story of Adam and Eve but our story. I see the temptation that comes my way and how I linger to long in front of the Tempter, how I ignore God's word and how I let my own desires control me. I know that I too reach out toward the forbidden fruit and that I then share it around with others. I know that I now live with many of the consequences of my sin. And that I too will justly receive God's judgement. But I also know that God offers me another choice, a choice of accepting his grace and when I reach out with empty sinful hands, he fills my life with good things.

Yes we are all in the Garden of Eden, we have all taken the fruit and we have all been banished from God's presence. But do you know the funny thing? Most people don't realise that anything is wrong.

I was reading this week about missing persons. Do you know that the amount of

people that are reported missing each year in Australia is something like 27,000 individuals. 27,000. Now of those 98% are found within the year. 1% have been murdered and 1% are still unfound. But the thing I found really interesting was the vast majority of people reported missing didn't even know they were missing.

The police are out there looking for them. And they are just plodding along, going to work, playing sport, doing the shopping, going on holiday. All the time they are missing, but they don't know it. Likewise the vast majority of people in Australia are missing their relationship with god. They are under his judgement, have been driven away from the tree of life because of their sin and they don't realise it. They continue to live, work, shop, marry all the way thinking that they are good enough for God. Even in the words of Crocodile Dundee that god and them are mates.

But they have never done anything about their sins. And one day they will feel the full force of God's judgement. Let us make sure that we are not one of these people. And let us make sure that our family and friends and community are also not one of them.

Let us show them the nature of sin, the consequences of sin, the judgement on sin but God's gracious response to sin. In short, let us teach them that this is God's world. That he gives us a free will but he ultimately desires for us to live in union with Him. And the only way we can do that is through His son Jesus.

