

There is a wonderful option for our cell phones and email. It is called “Block.” We can block phone numbers or emailers we don’t want. That comes in real handy with scam and junk messages that want to give us an offer too good to be true or try to trick us in to giving them information that we need to keep private. These scams usually work on greed or fear. I don’t know how these groups find my cell phone number or email address. But I do know that I don’t have to let them keep coming. I can simply block them. (I’ll come back to this idea later.)

Genesis is the book of beginnings in the Bible. Genesis tells us everything begins with God and that God created a perfect world for the first man and woman. They had a perfect relationship with God and with each other. It was literally paradise. It doesn’t get any better than that.

That all changed one day when Satan began speaking to them through a snake and asked, “**Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?**” (vs. 1) God did tell them, “**You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.**” (vss. 16-17) God gave them this instruction so they could avoid death. God wanted the first people to trust Him. We might think of it like a Mom who tells her young children, “**You can play anywhere you want in the back yard, but don’t go outside the fence because you could get lost or hurt.**”

Satan lied when he said, “**You won’t die!**” (vs. 4) Then he told them, “**God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.**” (vs. 5) Satan wanted them to question whether or not God was telling the truth. Would they really die? Could they become like God?

People don’t always make good choices. Adam and Eve listened to the wrong voice. They took a bite and couldn’t get the taste out of their mouth. They ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and tasted evil. For the first time they experienced fear, guilt and shame. Their perfect relationship with God was gone. Before this happened they enjoyed being with God. Then they tried to hide from God. When God asked him why he was hiding, Adam said, “**I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.**” (vs. 10)

If Adam and Eve had a do over, they would have blocked Satan’s voice. But they didn’t. They disobeyed God and it had unintended consequences. Not only were they afraid of God, but they turned on each other. Adam tried to blame Eve. Eve tried to blame Satan. But that only made matters worse. Adam and Eve wanted one thing, to be like God. They got something else, to be cut off from God. Having children would be a literal pain for Eve. Adam was going to have to work in a literal weed patch to grow food for himself and his family. Paradise was lost.

God created us with free will. He doesn't demand that we obey Him. He doesn't force us to do things that we don't want to do. Like the first people, God gives us freedom to choose. We make choices every day that draw us closer to God or push us father away. Our choices have consequences. Some are obvious. If we have a few too many drinks and drive anyway, we can get in an accident or be arrested for drunk driving. If we spend too much time away from home and not enough with our spouse and family, our marriages and families will suffer. If we spend more than we make and run up our credit card debt, we place ourselves in financial jeopardy.

God who was with Adam and Eve in the Garden was also with them after He kicked them out of the garden. He gave them clothing to protect them and keep them warm before they left the garden. He didn't destroy them on the spot. God wanted to have an ongoing, lasting relationship with them. So God made the most important choice in all of history. God chose to send His Son into the world for us. Jesus gave his life for us, to restore our connection with God. He calls us to follow Him, to walk through life with Him. He gives us His Word and Spirit to show us how to live as children of God. Jesus promises to always be with.

God loves us despite our sin and rebellion. God loves us too much to leave us the way that we are without him. The Apostle Paul tells, **“Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”** (2 Corinthians 5:17) God has given us a new life that should show. Paul wrote, **“Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”** (Romans 12:2)

When we copy the ways of the world, we are not living the new life we have in Christ. How many times do we complain about what is going on in our society without taking a look at how much we are like the people around us? We need to take a good look at ourselves. We can't influence the people around us for Christ if our lives have not been changed by Him.

- If we talk like everyone else, use foul language or tell lies to hide the truth, we've conformed. But if we are known for using decent, respectful language and always telling the truth people will notice that we are different because of Christ.
- If we are constantly drawing attention to ourselves and posting things about how wonderful we are, we've conformed. But if we point people to the good things others are doing and quietly serve others people will notice the difference.

It is not about what we do to draw attention to ourselves. It is about living in a way that gives glory to God and leads people to him.

We need to be careful that we don't become judgmental and keep people away from the Lord. The Gospel of John says that Jesus was full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) Think about how Jesus treated people.

- Grace told the adulterous woman, “I do not condemn you.” Truth told her, “Go and sin no more.” (John 8:11)

- Grace invited a swindler named Zacchaeus to lunch. Truth promoted him to sell half of his possessions and give to the poor. (Luke 19:1-8)
- Grace washed the disciple's feet. Truth told them to do for others what Jesus did for them. (John 13:15)

Grace and truth still go together. God's Grace and Truth reach out to us and thought us today. God found a way to accept Adam and Eve after they did the one thing he told them not to do. God finds a way to accept us to, to welcome us back through Jesus Christ.

Did Jesus really say, "God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him."? (John 3:17) You better believe it.