**Turn the Page Week 1 – Rebellion to Relationship**

**Message Big Idea**: “Turn the Page” by coming back to God and committing yourself to live in relationship with him.

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:1-24

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**Introduction: The Bible**

*(TP walks on stage with a physical Bible in hand)*

*(Series graphic)* The Bible.

A lot of us aren’t entirely sure what to do with this book. It can be intimidating. Some find it confusing. In fact, for as long as it’s been around, people have disagreed about how to even approach it.

* Some see the Bible as a hammer to be used to drive their viewpoints home.
* Some consider it important but rarely ever read it.
* Some are in the habit of declaring, “The Bible clearly says…”
* And some may see it as irrelevant to modern life all together.

However we view it, the Bible remains the best selling book of all time, whether we know what to do with it or not. And research has shown that regularly reflecting on Scripture is the most catalytic practice for spiritual growth no matter where a person is in their spiritual journey. If you’ve been on this road for a long time or are brand new to this whole “faith” thing – diving deep into the Bible is critical.

It’s for that reason that we have decided to embark on an 11-week journey together in a new series we’re launching today called “Turn the Page.”

Our hope in this series is two-fold:

1. *(In dictionary format… “turn the page” verb. 1. To proceed to the next page in a book.)* First, “Turn the Page” literally means to flip from one page to the next in a book. During this series, we’ll start at the beginning of the Bible and encourage everyone to “turn the page” with us as we move through a big picture view of the story of the Bible. A little later in the service we’ll tell you about the Turn the Page Bible Experience, which will be a companion to what we experience here each Sunday. The goal of this overview is to help each of us gain clarity in our understanding of the Bible and the overall biblical narrative so we feel greater confidence engaging Scripture on our own. But the goal of engaging Scripture is never just cerebral. We engage the Bible to come to know God and to allow him, through the work of his Holy Spirit, to use the pages of this book to transform our lives.
2. *(Add – 2. (idiom) To make a fresh start.)* Second, “Turn the Page” is also an idiom. It means, “To make a fresh start.” Each Sunday we’ll focus on a particular Biblical character that is representative of the section of Biblical history where he or she appears. We’ll learn something about what that person experienced in an area of their spiritual journey and challenge one another to “turn the page” in that area of our lives as well, allowing God to give us a fresh start.

So I want to invite you to enter into this series with a hungry, teachable heart. Because, here’s the truth:

1. **Everyone is a theologian.** Every single one of us has some way we think about the nature of God, or disbelieve that he exists at all. You may not think about it with four syllable words, but we all think deeply about why we’re here, how we got here, and what happens when we’re gone. But second,
2. *(add)***Every theology is incomplete.** No single person or denomination has figured out the fullness of any of this. Every theology this side of heaven is going to miss the mark in some way, shape, or form; and it’s important for us to remember that throughout this series.

So, perhaps it would be helpful for us to think of theology as both **Art and Science.**

* Few artists ever say, “I have finished the definitive, conclusive landscape. Everyone else can now stop painting landscapes.” If artists know that landscapes evoke multiple expressions, how much more is that true of the Creator of all landscapes?
* And like art – science is fluid and dynamic. Scientists are constantly questioning, reworking theories, and proposing new ones. Theological constructs should be flexible and open to correction and growth.

Our goal then, is not an arrogant certainty in our systems but a proper and humble trust in God. Let’s approach the Scriptures with a willingness to receive, and the confidence that the Holy Spirit will teach us.

So let’s get started, as we turn to page 1…

**Video: Overview and The Beginnings**

**Creation**

*(“The Beginnings” – Genesis 1-11)* Now, these first few chapters in Genesis are some of the most debated chapters in the entire Bible, so let’s keep that in mind as we humbly approach this text. Scholars throughout the centuries have disagreed, sometimes aggressively, about what is really going on in these first three chapters and what we as the reader are supposed to do with them.

In fact, it may surprise you that there are many competing creation stories that try to explain the origins of the world in ancient literature, but the story we find in the Bible is unique. It is the only story that proclaims that creation came as a result of the actions of a loving God. A lot of the Genesis stories were written as a counter to other culture’s creation stories that depicted the gods as angry and violent. Genesis 1 shares theological vocabulary with many of these myths – but takes it and turns it on its head, as God often does.

*(Genesis 1:1)* In chapter 1, God is creating. He’s bringing order out of chaos, composition out of disarray. In six days he creates, and on the seventh day he rests. In ancient Hebrew literature, the number seven represents completeness, wholeness, shalom. So, for God to create and then rest on the seventh day, the author is making a distinct claim that resting is as integral to this completeness as the creating he does the six days prior. Another important thing to note is that seven times in this first chapter, *(God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. –Genesis 1:31)* God steps back, looks at what he made, and declares that it is good. So, right at the beginning of the story, we see that God is the one who both knows what is “good” for humankind and is intent on providing that good for them.

*(Genesis 2:18)* As we turn the page to chapter 2, God sees the man alone and declares that something is “not good” for the first time. What this show us is that not only is God the one who knows what is “good” for human beings, but he also is the one who knows what is “not good” for us as well. As Creator, he has the ultimate wisdom. Following God’s wisdom, then, is critical in experiencing God’s good for us.

**Rebellion**

If the story stopped there, there would be no more page turning. As humans we would simply trust that God knows what is good and not good for us. We’d be walking around naked and have no worries. It just got awkward, didn’t it?

But Genesis 3 begins with the introduction of a new character, the serpent. He is described as:

***“More crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.” -Genesis 3:1a***

Crafty.

That’s an important term to remember. In other translations of the text, he is described as clever (MSG) or subtle (KJV). The serpent then asks,

***“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” -Genesis 3:1b***

The serpent is cleverly asking a question that challenges everything that the woman believes up to this point.

Has that ever happened to you? It’s definitely happened to me. It’s the moment when something you’ve believed for years, maybe your whole life is questioned. In that moment nothing has really changed. But the events that follow change everything.

The woman tells the serpent:

***“We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but 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.’” -Genesis 3:2-3***

She has the right answer. She knows that God is good. Wouldn’t we all love that kind of clear instruction from God?

* You’re thinking of buying a new home – God says, “Not that one!”
* You’re deciding on a career – “Not that one!”
* You’re starting to date someone – “Definitely not that one!”

Well, here Eve actually has been told, “Not that one!” It’s not just a “sign from God,” but an actual verbal directive. And yet, much like when we choose not to see the red flags to our decisions, Eve begins to question God’s goodness. She chooses to distrust the Creator of the universe. She entertains the question, “Did God *really* say…?”

Isn’t it amazing that we’re still asking this question? When we come to a choice that we know doesn’t align with God’s wisdom but is something we desire, there’s a little voice inside that asks, “Did God really say?”

So, Eve is tempted. She gives in. The story goes on:

***“She saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye…” -Genesis 3:6a***

Now, we know this temptation couldn’t just be about a piece of fruit, right? Often this scene is depicted with an apple, but who has ever been tempted by an apple? I mean, put some caramel on it and we’ll talk. The text goes on and says that the fruit was also…

*(add)* ***“…desirable for gaining wisdom.” -Gen. 3:6b***

Instead of trusting God’s wisdom, she begins to desire her own wisdom. She takes a bite, hands it to her husband, and he eats as well. Everything changes in that moment. This is what we call “The Fall.” It’s the fall of the perfect relationship between humanity and God. Adam and Eve didn’t just break a rule; they broke a relationship. They broke shalom – the fullness that God intends for all of us. God designed a perfect creation of wholeness, health, and peace for these first humans, but out of their desire to decide for themselves what is “good” and “not good,” they set themselves apart from God.

When we trust in something or someone to define what is “good” and “not good” for us instead of trusting God, that’s called idolatry. Now, if you’re like me, my first impulse is to say, *“I don’t do that! Of course, I think God’s way is best!”* But let’s stop for a second and think about this. Challenge yourself to complete the sentence: **“Life only has meaning if…”** How would you answer that question?

* If I get that promotion and achieve career success?
* If this one person is in my life and happy to be there?
* If I have a particular kind of look or level of fitness?
* If my children or my parents are happy and happy with me?
* If I am recognized for all the good deeds I do?

This list could get very long as we think about all the places we look to find our ultimate worth and identity.

Adam and Eve chose to look for “good” apart from God. Their eyes opened to their nakedness, when God confronts them in the garden, they are hiding among the trees. God calls out:

***“Where are you?” -Genesis 3:9***

Now, I don’t think that God says this in an authoritative tone: *(stern)* WHERE ARE YOU? or like a hide-and-seek game: *(singing)* Where…are…you….? God knows their location.

If you’re a parent, you’ve probably done this. You’ve asked your kids questions you already knew the answer to, like…

* “Why is your backpack in the middle of the floor?”
* “Did you just throw that at your brother?”
* “Are you eating dirt?”

Of course, there are questions we don’t want to know the answer to like, “Why are you licking the floor?”

God knows the literal answer to the question. He knows the location of Adam and Eve. When he asks, *(soft)* “Where are you?” he knows their physical location. What he’s really asking is: “Where is your heart? Why are you not with me?”

Adam and Eve shattered their relationship with God in a quest to rely on their own wisdom…to trust in their own knowledge of what is “good” and “not good” instead of trusting him.

If we’re honest, we’ve all been in a similar place. Maybe you’re in that place today. You know God is asking, *(soft)* “Where are you? Where is your heart? Why are you not with me?”

Understand, if we choose to turn our back on the good that God has planned for us, ultimately we are missing out. N.T. Wright puts it brilliantly in his book *Simply Christian* by stating that:

***“Sin is not simply the breaking of a law, it is the missing of an opportunity.” –N.T. Wright***

What opportunity are we giving away if we choose to chase after our own wisdom instead of God’s?

This is not a question intended to make us think about all the missed opportunities of the past, or to shame ourselves for times we’ve relied on our own wisdom. We’ve all done that! We’ve all been there! There is good news for all of us today: We can make a fresh start! Today we can turn the page in our own lives by coming back to God and choosing the good that he has for us.

So, how do we actually know what that “good” is? For starters, we learn who *He* is.

**Turn the Page Bible Experience**

*(Hold Bible)* And that is why he has given us this…his written word. Remember, we don’t read this book to just gain knowledge about God and his ways. We engage the Bible to come to *know* God and to allow him, through the work of his Holy Spirit, to use the pages of this book to transform our lives.

During this 11-week series, we’ll only be able to scratch the surface of this book on Sunday mornings. That’s why we’ve created the *(graphic)* **“Turn the Page Bible Experience.”** During this series, Monday through Friday, you have the opportunity to engage Scripture to not only gain a broad understanding of the story of the Bible, but to let that story transform your life.

Each day of the experience, you’ll read approximately one chapter in the Bible. There will be narrative material to help you understand how that chapter fits into the larger story, and at least twice a week there will be a bonus podcast where a COMMUNITY staff member helps you dive even deeper into the passage.

You can engage in the Bible Experience in two different ways… First, there is an email version. Or for those of you who would like to listen, there is a full podcast version.

You can sign up for the Turn the Page Bible Experience right now through our Community app or later on through our website. *(Community App)* In fact, if you have a Smartphone, take it out right now. If you don’t have the COMMUNITY app yet, download it free from the app store. Then, right there on the first page of the app, you’ll find links to sign up for either the email or podcast version of the Bible Experience. I’d encourage you to sign up right now so you don’t miss out on Day 1 of the experience tomorrow!

*(Could have 30-60 seconds of music as you encourage people to sign up in the moment.)*

**Conclusion**

If we jump ahead in the story, Jesus once said to his disciples:

***“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” –John 14:23***

Jesus doesn’t desire our obedience because he likes rules, but because he longs for relationship. He knows what is “good” and “not good” for us, and he wants us to trust him. He wants to be the place we call “home.” Our obedience is response of love to a God who is love.

Just imagine with me for a moment, what might happen if every one of us – no matter where we’ve been, no matter where we are – decided today to start pursuing God and *his* good for our lives. He has given us the Bible to help us come to know him and to discover the best way to live…a way that is truly wise. What might our community look like 11 weeks from now if we commit to turning these pages together?

I believe that as we turn from rebellion to relationship, together we will stand back with God and look at all he has done and declare, “It is very good.”

**Communion Idea**

What an awesome relationship this is. We are given the power of the Holy Spirit as we surrender the need to figure it out all on our own. We get to declare the Good News that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. This Good News for us came in the form of something that feels “not good”.

As we receive communion, let’s reflect on Jesus knowing what is “good” and “not good” for us. He wants us to be in relationship with him so badly that he gave up his life to show it.