

## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

**Message Title:** "In the Beginning"

**Speaker:** Pastor Kevin Myers

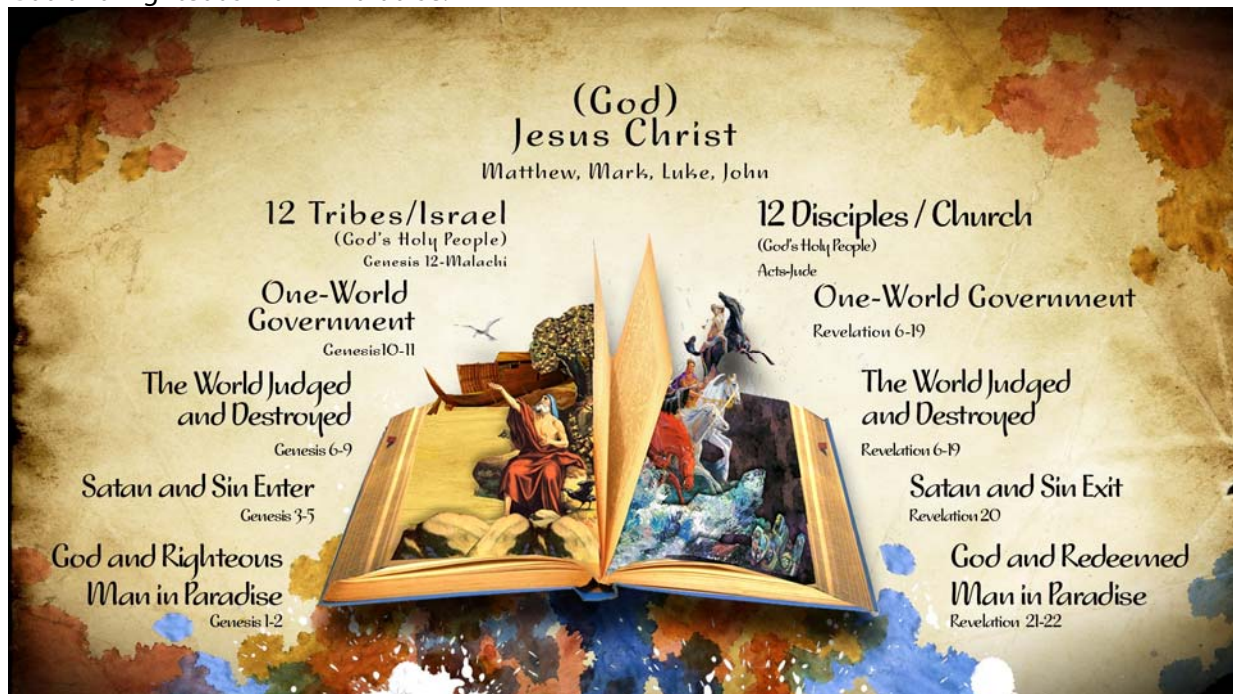
**Date:** February 10, 2008

### Icebreaker:

For those who attended the service on Sunday, which did you choose on the way out...the healthy plain apple or the caramel apple? How much did you enjoy your apple? Did you save it until after lunch, at least? If caramel apples don't tempt you, what treat would you have found irresistible?

### Message Overview:

First, a brief review of "the big picture" mirror image of the Genesis-to-Revelation story, starting with God and Righteous Man in Paradise:



This week's teaching focused on three major movements from the left, or Old Testament, side of the picture that share a common theme:

- Satan and Sin Enter (Genesis 3-5)
- The World Judged and Destroyed (Genesis 6-9)
- One-World Government (Genesis 10-11)

Together, these three major movements in God's story raise an important personal question:

- **What's the least recognized highest risk you've ever taken?**  
God's answer: When we tell ourselves, "**It's not really sin. It's not really serious.**"

**Discussion:**

(Leaders: Do not try to cover every question provided in this study guide, but rather review the complete list, selecting a mix of questions that work best for your group, mixing scripture research/discussion as well as personal application of the teaching principles.)

**Satan and Sin Enter (Genesis 3-5)**

- What were the two trees called that God placed in the middle of the Garden of Eden? According to God, what would the consequences be if Adam and Eve ate from the one tree they were forbidden to eat from? What do we know about the physical appearance of the “forbidden fruit”? (You can find the answers to these questions in Genesis 2:9, Genesis 2:16-17 and Genesis 3:6.)
- Eve faced a dilemma familiar to all of us: caught between “the apple we **should** eat” and “the apple we **want** to eat.” What makes us reach for the apple, or the sin, that we know isn’t good for us in the long run? Can you identify an area where you’ve deceived yourself about the consequences and chosen to indulge and enjoy sin for a season?
- Read Genesis 2:16-17 carefully again, then read Genesis 3:1-6. How did the serpent change or twist God’s words? What strategies did he use to lure Eve (and then Adam) into sin? How do you think Satan works in the world today? What are some of his most effective tactics for tempting us to disobey God?
- What happened immediately after Adam and Eve committed the first sin? Read Genesis 3:7-23. Just imagine: if Eve hadn’t eaten the fruit, she and Adam would never have known they were naked and would never have needed clothes. Laundry is the direct result of sin! Besides death and laundry, what other consequences described in this passage did sin produce for the serpent, for Adam and Eve, and for every person born since then?

**The World Judged and Destroyed (Genesis 6-9)**

- Read Genesis 6:5-13. How did man’s sinful disobedience affect God? Did God destroy the world out of anger?
- Read about the flood that destroyed the world in Genesis 7:17-23. How do you think Noah and his family felt inside the ark? Were they afraid? Did they grieve for their lost friends and neighbors? How have we managed to turn this story of death and destruction into a picturesque children’s story and nursery decorating motif?
- Did you know that mankind was supposed to be vegetarian before the flood? Read Genesis 9:1-3 to see when God first gave Noah and his descendants permission to eat meat. Check out more interesting facts from Genesis 1-11 in this week’s appendix on page 4.

## **One-World Government** (Genesis 10-11)

- Read the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. According to verse 4, why did the people want to build the city and the tower? Why were they unable to complete the tower?
- Like the people of Genesis 11, our culture is full of people focused on “making a name for ourselves.” What are some things that people do primarily to bring glory and attention to themselves? What about you? Are you working harder to promote yourself and your plans, or God and His plans?

## **Our Least Recognized Highest Risk: “It’s not really sin. It’s not really serious.”**

- Read Proverbs 19:3. What was “man’s folly” in the Garden of Eden? Before the flood? At the time of the Tower of Babel? In each of these cases, how did man’s own “folly,” or sin, lead to ruin?
- Just as Adam and Eve’s disobedience had consequences for their children and all who followed, our sin can cause pain and destruction not just for us, but for others around us. How have you been hurt by the sin of others? Do you think your own sin may have damaged your relationships with family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, etc.?
- Read what God said to Cain in Genesis 4:6-7. Have you ever felt like sin was crouching at your door? God told Cain, “You must master it.” How can you master sin? Does it get easier with practice?
- Classroom rules, company policy, speed limits, diets...we all feel the urge to resist limits and boundaries. What brings out the rebel in you? In what area do you tend to want to re-write God’s rules to make an exception for your personal circumstances?

### **Wrap-Up:**

We all face choices every day as distinct as eating from two different trees. As Bob Dylan memorably put it, “You’re gonna have to serve somebody.” Pray together, asking God to re-set our hearts and minds, reminding us that it really *is* sin and it really *is* serious.

### **Throughout the Week: (Optional)**

(Leaders: Share these optional exercises for further study and growth with your group.)

Prepare for next week’s teaching on Three Pivotal Promises by reading Genesis chapters 12 and 15 this week. Make notes and write down any questions you may have as you read.

### **Memory verse:**

*“A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.” (Proverbs 19:3, NIV)*

## Appendix 1: Some Interesting Facts about Genesis 1-11

**Did you know that** the Garden of Eden might have gotten its name from a Semitic word meaning 'luxury' or 'delight'? The term is also used later on in the Bible as a metaphorical representation of the Garden of God (see Isaiah 51:3, Ezekiel 28:12-15; 31:8-18).

**Did you know that** a man spoke the first poetical lines in the Bible? When God brought Eve to Adam he was in such awe that he formed his words as a poem – see Genesis 2:23.

**Did you know that** work was expected in paradise? In Genesis 2:15, God put Adam in the garden to work it and take care of it. The Hebrew word used here is mostly translated with to serve, to work or to till.

**Did you know that** it is often mentioned that Eve bit into an apple? Well, it wasn't actually an apple Eve bit into. The correct word is 'fruit'. The idea that it was an apple most likely comes from the closeness of the Latin words evil and apple (both 'malum'). Some Jewish scholars actually believe it was a fig, because they used fig leaves to cover themselves.

**Did you know that** the serpent is described in Genesis 3:1 as one of the wild animals God had made? The fact that it talks doesn't seem to surprise anybody, neither in the story, nor commentators. Genesis does not identify the serpent with Satan or any other demonic being – this is found only in later Jewish and Christian literature and in Revelation 12:9.

**Did you know that** the saying 'Am I my brother's keeper' originates in the Bible? Cain used it after killing his brother Abel when God asked him about his brother's whereabouts (Genesis 4:9).

**Did you know that** the longest living person mentioned in the Bible was Methuselah? It is written that he lived for 969 years (Genesis 5:25). Some scholars believe that the atmosphere before the flood was different and helped people live a much longer life.

**Did you know that** Noah took more than one pair of some animals into the ark? He took seven pairs of every clean animal (for an explanation of clean animals see Leviticus 11). He took only one pair of unclean animals (see Genesis 7:2).

**Did you know that** the story of Noah is not the only ancient flood story? One of the most famous ones is the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh. Many other ancient stories provide extrabiblical confirmation of the flood.

**Did you know that** the people were (or at least should have been if following God's rule) vegetarians before the flood? God didn't allow the people to eat meat until they got off the ark (see Genesis 9:1-3).

**Did you know that** the tower of Babel was not the only high tower that people tried to build in ancient Mesopotamia? At that time the people built ziggurats as places to worship their gods. For an idea how the tower of Babel might have looked like see [http://www.hope.edu/bandstra/RTOT/CH1/CH1\\_BAB.HTM](http://www.hope.edu/bandstra/RTOT/CH1/CH1_BAB.HTM)

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