

PART III

It took a little bit to get through “The Beginning”. (Ha!) Some of us may be thinking that’s a classic understatement. Well, imagine this, “There’s so much more that we haven’t explored. Really!”

Now we’re going to consider changes that happened to us by what happened in the beginning. We’ve just scratched the surface of this so far, and it is critical that we understand more about our state of being. Why?

What do we need to know if we’re going to go somewhere? “That’s easy, we have to know where we’re going!” What’s the second thing we need to know? “How we’re going to get there?”

Now we’re at the point many of us forget, because we assume we naturally know the answer to this question, “Where are we starting from?”

In this book we are ultimately focused on our relationship with God and how God intends for it to work. That is the essence of our faith. It is what we know to be the Truth that we trust and live out in Jesus. Already it is clear that if that’s going to happen then something major must change, because we are born separated from God.

At the most basic level we could say that where we want to go is a perfect relationship with God. How we’re going to get there is by faith in God. There’s much more to explore about these two areas, but the fact is we haven’t yet explored essential elements about where we are starting from.

Why is this important? Because entering, and effectively Living in a perfect relationship with God requires change. So, if we don’t know about what can be changed, or that changes need to be made and why, then we will not understand what God is changing, how He is changing us, and why He is doing so.

It’s hard to cooperate with a person when we don’t know what they are doing, how they intend to accomplish what they’re doing, or why we should be doing it in the first place. Here’s the point, “God doesn’t want to just do this transformation to us, He must do it with us!” This may be one of God’s favorite things to do. If He has any favorite things. Praise God, because He Loves us so much!!

Perspective - What Really Changed?

Now let's focus on what impact the events so far have had on the relationship between God and all people who will ever be born on this earth. How do we go a bit deeper than the effects of Sin in the world mentioned so far? How do we consider the various aspects of a person in a way that we can understand?

The Bible tells us the Truth about God, ourselves, others and the world around us. It addresses these issues in a historical, present and future context. The relevance of the Bible in the present is fact because the Truth contained within its pages is as relevant and applicable for us today to learn about God, and our relationship with Him as it was when it was written. Cultures have changed, circumstances are different, but God's Truth is eternal.

In order for the scriptures to be meaningful to us its Truth must personally connect with us; must be connected with our concept of "self". To assist with this there needs to be a clear set of concepts that can be used to effectively communicate about the subject of people like us, at more than the general level. Down through the ages people have struggled to understand themselves, each other, the world around them and certainly they have struggled to understand God.

At the root of that struggle are the concepts related to our understanding of what it means to be a person; a human being; a living soul. This becomes more complex when we consider what it meant to be a person like Adam and Eve before the power of Sin entered the world. Then what changed when Sin did enter the world, and what changed when God gave His Law for mankind to follow?

It's critical to understand what changed when God sent His Son to earth, and He lived, died, arose from the grave, and ascending into Heaven promising to return. What changes when people accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior? Finally, what will change when our physical body dies, or the Lord returns and we are with God forever?

Rather than try to address all of these issues in this chapter, they will each be addressed in their own time. Right now, it seems best to share a basic framework of thought that can be used to collaboratively consider complex issues like, "Who am I".

Please understand that my intent is not to tell anyone how to think; only to provide a means for us to better understand what seems important for me to share concerning this subject. Then it is up to each of us to prayerfully determine whether my thoughts are worth considering further and learn from God's Spirit as He guides our personal learning processes.

First, we will look at a general concept of what we will use as the basic components of a person. Then that general concept will be broken into several fundamental elements that will be used to describe the changes that occurred between the unity of Life as created by God, and our separation from God into Death as a result of Sin entering creation through the actions of Adam and Eve.

As we saw in chapter one mankind was made after the image of God. Many people have said that this means that Adam and Eve were given their spiritual and moral capacities. That sounds okay to me if those are just two components created from the results of God breathing the breath of Life into Adam, and we are not limited to these two components.

Every time we try to discuss issues like this, we are forced into making some general statements because the subject is so complex, we seldom have time to drill down into the nitty-gritty of the details. So, to start let's just consider the following as the basic components of a person:

- Spirit, Mind, Emotions, and Will - these may be seen as a whole as the living being that dwells within a physical body or considered separately as parts of the living being that dwells within a physical body; the inner person.
- A physical human body that is interconnected and unified with the elements of the living being that dwells within.

This interconnectivity exists in many ways with just one of those ways being that our bodies are sensory-suits for us to use to relate to the rest of creation. They provide us with masses of information that is stored within our physical brains, interconnected by different links of information, much of which is about our emotions.

Our emotions at a minimum are interpreters of meaning, filled with response patterns and images, which often constitute intuitive, as well as created motivation and drivers of our thoughts and actions. These are our feelings, and it may not be clear to us which comes first: external input, feelings, or what we call rational thoughts.

Our minds seem to be aware of all aspects of our bodies, and the information stored within, providing the consciousness of our existence, and creation of the meaning of our existence from sources beyond the limitations of what is stored within our brains. This makes our brains organs used by our minds, which may serve as a limiting factor given our state of existence after the dominance of Sin within the world.

What kind of limiting factor? Since my statement is that our mind uses our brain, my perspective is the mind is superior to the brain. My opinion is our mind is eternal, and our brain is temporary as is each of our bodies. Yes, this is an issue that is still in contention by those who are experts in related fields of study.

That does not concern me. The reason that the effects of Sin would be a limiting factor for both the mind and brain is multi-factored.

As we've seen Sin separated Adam and Eve from God, Who was their Life. When they were in Unity with God their minds would have had open access to any information, understanding, application, and characterization of knowledge that they could ever need for all eternity. God is omniscient so their access was as well, however, most likely in accordance with need.

The knowledge of farming was not needed, because God made food easily and immediately accessible. All that they needed was provided. So, what did they do? Exactly what God wanted to do with them, and exactly what they wanted to do with God. Again, there was no tension between God's Will and Adam and Eve's deepest heart-felt desires.

When they committed sins, the power of Sin was unleashed, and Eve and Adam lost their access to God's omniscience. There's no way to know how much information about their Life in Unity with God was retained in their brain, but my tendency is to think it was more limited than vast in quantity. Like their relationship with God their stored information and recall was damaged. Perhaps greatly limited from their previous capacity.

Their brains probably became primary in their storage of information, and ability to use that information. While their minds were still eternal in their existence they were subjected to the limitations of their brains.

In Unity with God their minds were connected, and Unity was the foundation of their identity and manifestation of God-Life as they Lived each moment. After Sin had its way, their brain directed identity proved their separation from God, one another, and all of creation.

What a wonderful gift Unity with God, one another, and all of creation would have been! Just think about all the times we've tried to tell someone something and either it came out wrong, or they misunderstood what we meant. Wow, it's going to be wonderful when that issue exists no longer!

It often appears as though communication is one of the trickiest things we do with one another. This may well be the case due to the effects of Sin, which may include causing limitations of our minds, so that we are primarily limited to the use of words for communication with one another. This seems to be the case personally, because beyond the communication of meaning through the use of our bodies' positions or movement, words seem to be the primary way of sharing thoughts and their meaning.

On the other hand, my mind seems to have acquired information without the benefit of words or the presence of another human within any kind of reasonable proximity, or by using forms of technology. This is an awareness of accurate information about someone, or something when physically we are separated by distance to the degree that we are isolated from each another, or the thing about which this factual information concerns.

Also, my mind has communicated with God outside of the limitations of words, and without the benefit of physical demonstration of intent through a body. Something is communicated by shared presence, with my mind interpreting the emotional and thought-contained meaning of what is shared without the use of words. My brain stores all of this for future use by my consciousness.

The meaning of consciousness remains a conundrum for humanity. So, it's fair to say this represents some of the limitations of my own understanding of these things being addressed. We should not

forget, however, that information can be communicated, and changes can take place within us that are beyond the scope of the words we use to communicate.

Just try to communicate what it means to be one with God. It is an experience that has meaning and affects us well beyond the understanding we might gain by any words we use in an attempt to completely describe it.

The words that we use are only symbols of meaning. To the degree that symbols share meaning or have more than one possible meaning stored in our brains, using them to communicate becomes even trickier.

Every time we speak those symbols, our words, or write them it is easy to assume the person listening, or reading will generally understand our intentions. It's amazing how often that is not the case.

To assist with this issue it's often best to state what we want the words we use to mean, so the following are some definitions. Thanks to Merriam Webster we may find some, or parts of them familiar. The quotes are directly from that source, with additional clarification added that is not in quotes.

- Definitions
 - Spirit – “an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms”; the essence of a living being. This is not a “principle”, but rather an existing person that has mind, emotions, and will. A complete person who does not have a body, or who is contained within a body.
 - Mind – “the element or complex set of elements in an individual that feels, perceives, thinks, wills, and especially reasons.” This is not simply the brain. In fact, it has been already suggested that the mind can exist apart from the brain. We might consider it to be our ability to be self-aware within the scope of knowledge, understanding, and communication beyond the physical limitations of our bodies. Also, it operates using all the capabilities of the brain so long as it is contained within a human body. Within the body the mind functions as the main source of self-awareness as it maintains what is called consciousness. If caused to leave the body it maintains these faculties of consciousness and self-awareness, processing capability, memory, and it seems all of the functional aspects provided by the brain. People who have experienced out-of-body experiences of various types, which have been documented medically including absences of heart and brain function over what is considered an extended period of time report the presence of at least all their mental abilities. Many insist that this is not possible and conjecture the experience being caused by something else. Why? First, they've not had a similar experience at all, or one they are willing to accept as being real. Their belief in the dominance of the brain providing any sense of existence is most often tied to their belief that anything that could possibly exist as life ends at one's physical death. So, this critical issue ends up being determined by a person's choice to believe something. Because we make these choices we also live according to these types of decisions since they become the essence of what we accept as truth upon which all other such concepts depend. They are the underpinnings of our self-existence, self-consciousness, concepts of life and living, thoughts and actions. All based on what we individually choose to believe. The scientist wants us to believe them because of their expertise in science. The theologian wants us to believe them because of their expertise

in theology, for some because of their personal experience in a relationship with God, and their compassion for other people. God wants us to believe Him because He Loves us Perfectly and passionately longs for us to enjoy Him, thus to Live within His Perfection forever. What will each of us choose?

- Emotions – “the affective aspect of consciousness” ...” a psychic and physical reaction (as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling and physiologically involving changes that prepare the body for immediate vigorous action.” Additional thoughts have already been shared above.
- Will – the intent or desire, disposition or inclination of a person that serves as their foundation for any form of activity; “mental powers manifested as wishing, choosing, desiring, or intending; a disposition to act according to principles or ends”.
- Body – our physical body or anatomy. “the physical structure of a person or an animal, including the bones, flesh, and organs.”
- Perspective of God – How we view God, our relationship with Him, His authority, nature, character, and the meaning of God in our lives.
- Perspective on self – How a person thinks about him or herself; the base concepts that provide the foundation of self-understanding; the concepts or ideas that one holds as the essential truth about her or himself.
- Perspective on others and the world – How a person thinks about others and the world in general; especially the people, living things and things around them or within their sphere of influence. This is greatly influenced by their perspective on God and self.
- Perspective on life – What we believe life is and how we think about it. The definition can have several points of focus that include, but are not limited to the following:
 - “the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body
 - a principle or force that is considered to underlie the distinctive quality of animate beings
 - an organismic state characterized by capacity for metabolism, growth, reaction to stimuli, and reproduction
 - the sequence of physical and mental experiences that make up the existence of an individual
 - one or more aspects of the process of living
 - spiritual existence transcending physical death
 - the period from birth to death or a specific phase of earthly existence such as ‘adult life’
 - a way or manner of living”
 - We’ll explore this more extensively later....
- Decisions – to make a choice or come to a conclusion about how to think about something, what to believe to be true, which clears up a sense of uncertainty, or selects a course of action all of which is the manifestation of the exercising of one’s Will within the course of one’s life.
- Time – “the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues”
- Performance – the quantity and quality of one’s actions as they are viewed by one’s self or others.
- Acceptance – whether or not a person and/or their actions are approved or received by another in at least a positive manner or with praise, esteem, or recognition. Thus, a willingness to associate with someone, or something in some manner, and allow emotional attachments that represent some sense the existence of value to us.

- Relationship – being related to or entering into a state of affairs with another in a definable manner that connects one to the other by agreement, mutual pursuits, contract, heritage, blood, or common practice, thoughts, and/or commonly shared experiences.

What These Words Meant Before Their Sins

- Now let's consider a description of each definition above that would be appropriate for Adam and Eve when they lived in the Garden of Eden based upon the information we have reviewed, which includes my assumptions about their existence.
 - Spirit – The essence of their being was filled with the Life of God. They knew by an innate knowledge the perfection of God, the fullness of Life, the completeness of being in Him Who was and is Life, and the joy beyond words of being one with God.
 - Mind – Freedom: free to act upon the impulses that were derived from their Life within, thus derived from God. There was a total absence of conflict; in fact they had no knowledge of conflict, separation, struggle, or pain. A continual openness to know as God chose to reveal, while understanding that knowing God was completeness in and of itself. There is nothing they could ever need to know that they didn't know, understand fully, or Love any less than God desired. Knowing was not an issue, nor did they carry a sense of needing to know anything, because knowing was their state of being as persons who were one with God. Learning was not a process as we know it, and as people have struggled with since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden. Knowledge and capabilities simply existed as a result of being in relationship with God. Anything required simply existed within them as a part of being created by God. The focus of their mind was not on all of the things we must think about as a part of daily living. Their focus was only on being in relationship with God through their oneness with Him and enjoying their unity with all of creation, which the Loved Perfectly and cared for with immense Joy. They didn't have to work at being in relationship with God or all of creation. They were filled with Living-thinking-doing-being-unified relationships with God and all of creation. To consider what this means we pretty much must step out of most everything we think we know about existing on this earth and living from day-to-day. It's a brain-twister, but wonderful beyond measure!
 - Emotions – Love, Joy, Peace, Wholeness, Gentleness, Kindness were a part of who they were not something they experienced occasionally. These words were not attributes of their character. They represent actual elements of their being that humankind has learned to understand as concepts about which we communicate using these specific words. This was their natural state of being; the amazing completeness of being one with God and His creation. They had no emotional needs because everything they could need emotionally existed within them, because God was in them, one with them and they with Him. We have a great need to be loved, but Adam and Eve's existence was Love, and Loving Perfectly since God was their Life. There is nothing within the experience of humankind on this earth to equip us to fully conceive, consider, define, or measure Who Adam and Eve were as living expressions of Love since they were one with Love; one with God.
 - Will – Their natural inclination was to always do with God whatever God desired. The concept of being separate from Him or doing something different than His will did not exist within them or their psyche at any level. Because God was their Life, to Live was to do God's will because His will was their will; they were one with God. It was only by the

intervention of Satan acting through the serpent that they became aware of anything other than this reality. The root of the temptation was not in them but came from Satan. In a sense we might consider the idea that the “will” of a human did not exist as we think about and experience it today because Adam and Eve only had a compelling to be in relationship with God and all of creation. This was not something they had to work at, follow rules to accomplish, or choose to do. They existed as being-in-relationship with God and all of creation. Eve and Adam did not have to make decisions as we think of our choices today. They existed as “Knowing all things” so they simply did what they most desired. Thus, they were Living manifestations of the will of God in the midst of His creation. Still they had the ability to make choices should they decide to act based upon individual desires that were different than God’s will, which would be an independent exercising of their individual will. To do so would have been wrong because that would constitute them trying to act as the primary source of authority over themselves and the creation with which they interacted. This, in essence, would be an act of trying to replace God. We may react negatively to this idea because we think the expression of our individual will as a separate person is a natural part of being a human being. We do not know what it means to be a complete person by being a Living expression of God’s will in total unity with Him. Our individualism is at the foundation of our concept of our existence. So, the idea of existing as Adam and Eve existed before committing sins may scare us because our sense of self and self-value is based upon distinguishing ourselves from others and most of all from God. The idea of never needing to make a decision even though we can is completely foreign to us, and represents someone who has almost no existence at all. One day we will never need to make another decision ever again and it will be a freedom beyond our ability to imagine while on this earth.

- Body – Their physical body was exactly Perfect for enjoying and living within the creation of God. They could fully enjoy the beauty and fullness of Life all around them in any form through all of their senses. There was no pain, no illness, no effects of aging; they were completely sustained by the Perfect Life of God Who is eternal. As long as Eve and Adam were one with God their bodies existed within a state of Perfection in every way possible.
- Perspective on God – There was no concept of being separate from God. The times that they spent personally walking with God in the Garden during the evenings was so amazingly precious for them. He was their everything, and all that they experienced found its completeness in Him. The natural response to all that they experienced was to tell God how wonderful He is and how much they Loved Him. Existing was joy, because God is true Joy. There oneness with God was sacred, fascinating, and fulfilling in every way that they could experience, without diminishing their unity with any other part of creation. Comparative values didn’t exist because Perfection was all that existed. Without needs there is no reason for comparison of one experience to another. There is only the thrilling enjoyment of Being-Relationships while being one with Perfection.
- Perspective on self – They knew completeness, Perfect Unity with God, one another, and all of creation. Never did they have a thought about needing something that they did not have or desiring to be different than they were as created by God. Probably the concept of being complete, or perfect did not exist. How can we conceive of incompleteness or imperfection if neither exist to ever know the difference? For that matter why would any of us want to know the difference? There was no shame, no shyness, no self-consciousness of being separate from the whole of one another. There was no possibility of thinking of one’s self as less than they Truly were within their

oneness with God. The Holiness, Sacredness, Respect and experience of God was a natural part of knowing God and being one with Him; Being-Relationship. Their perfect state of being was fully experienced without seeming unique, or the need to compare anything with their existence because they existed with God. He was in them, and they were in Him. There was no negative thought of any kind that was self-initiated before they were in the midst of the process of being tempted. Self-Love was a state-of-being for them, just as Loving God and all of creation was their state-of-being. Self-love didn't need to exist as a concept because no form of diminished self-love existed. There was, and they were one with Love; one with God.

- Perspective on others and the world – There was a sense of unity with one another and all living things that sprang from their experience of knowing God and being known by Him; by being one with God. They had no sense of superiority over any part of creation because there was no need to understand one's self in comparison to the rest of creation, or each other. While they understood the difference between their self, others, other living things, and the rest of creation that diversity was explored from an innate sense of unity; of being one with God, one another and all of creation. Separation could not exist in a world that was in unity with its Creator. There was no need to "control" because there was no need for dominance in any form. God's authority was not understood or experienced as dominance. God was the Creator and Owner of everything. That was so much their reality that there was no reason to even know the word dominance, let alone think of anything related to the idea as we think of it today. They and all of creation were Perfection as created by God, Who held all within His Perfection as a whole.
- Decisions – Adam and Eve did not have to decide anything because they knew. To be one with God is to be one within His will, and to be one within His will Perfectly, is to know and exist as a Living demonstration of His presence. By knowing God in unity with Him, they knew His will is a natural part of knowing Him. Because they knew the greatness of His presences, His Love, Power and Wisdom there was no need to make decisions since Eve and Adam's compelling was God's desires. they simply acted in obedience as they were compelled to act in a manner that was aligned with who they were without needing to consider if those actions were God's will. In this way their actions were a demonstration of the Life of God within them. The first decision ever made by Eve and Adam was the wrong one; to eat the forbidden fruit.
- Time – This was a material part of their existence, but it had no historic meaning because time had no limits. The elements of creation that denoted the passage of time were a wonderful part of creation that brought a beautiful diversity with the changes from daytime through dark. There was no rush to be somewhere on time, because as they moved in the completeness of God's will they were always where they should be when they should be. There is no need to tell time within forever....
- Performance – This was a nonissue. For all practical purposes it did not exist because there was nothing less than God's perfection.
- Acceptance – There was no question about being accepted. The concept of anything less than complete acceptance did not exist because there was no knowledge of not being accepted. Their knowledge of being one with God and His creation was their reality of what we might think of as perfect acceptance today. The idea of acceptance was unnecessary since all that existed was Perfect Love.
- Relationships – There was no taking involved in their relationship with God, each other, or any of the living creatures. While they used the natural harvest from plants as food it

was not about taking it was receiving from the Life that surrounded them. Giving and receiving were the dominant factors in their relationships with God and all of creation. Relationship was not a thing that existed between beings or any part of creation for that matter. Relationship was a state-of-being; something existing within and without their person because God, Adam and Eve, and all of creation existed as Relationship, not in a relationship.

- Life – living out the Life of God, (God-Life), within was the foundation of their existence, the defining element of their “being”. Therefore, life was not the conjunction of existing and experiencing circumstances of that existence. No, Life was and is a Who; God was their Life. Simply existing was not just Living Life, it was being unified with Life. Through that oneness with God, Adam and Eve were the extended existence of Life within creation, and in unity with all creation.
- Death – They had no personal experiential knowledge of Death in any form. They only knew that if they disobeyed God they would die immediately. So they understood this concept in the fullness of the terms that God set before them when He told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We cannot understand how they experienced this knowledge concerning Death, but we can be sure that they clearly knew not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A natural part of being-in-Relationship with God was to understand not to do anything God had asked them not to do.
- Sin – The possibility of Sin only existed if they were to disobey God and eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They had no knowledge of the power of Sin or what it meant to commit sins. As far as any experiential knowledge of Sin or sins, these didn’t even exist within their sphere of existence. In my opinion there was no way for Adam or Eve to know anything about the word, concept, or reality of Sin.

What Changed After Their Sins?

- Now let’s consider a description of each item above as Adam and Eve would have known and experienced each after they sinned in the Garden of Eden.
 - Spirit – They knew a distinct and clear sense of emptiness. Where once there was everything, now there was in essence just self, and they probably didn’t understand their existence being devoid of God; empty of Life. It was as if the very essence of their being had ceased to exist. It left them with a deep and compelling desire for Life. It was as if they were starving to death from something that they could not obtain from any source within their grasp. While they existed as eternal-spiritual-beings they were empty of Life, because they had been separated from Life, they had been separated from God. Thus, they knew for the first time what it meant to be separated from God; what it meant to be filled with Death. A separation from everyone and everything they had previously experienced through being-Relationship. They lost Unity and became separation.
 - Mind – While their minds were on fire with a new awareness of knowing the world from a whole new perspective, they were at the same time shocked at what it meant not to be one with God. What used to be their reality was now only a memory that seemed outside of their reach. They could recall elements of information about God, and perhaps what it meant for God to be their Life, but it only brought a deep awareness of being disconnected with the very source of Life that they now longed for so much. For

the first time they also experienced what it meant not to know something, and to understand that they were less than they should be as a part of creation. Dominating their mind was a deep awareness of separation from God, each other, and all of creation. For the first time they were not sure about what they should do next. Now, the circumstances of their existence dominated the focus of their mind, and suddenly they knew what it meant to be a stranger to everything even if they didn't know the words related to what they were experiencing. The horrendous nature of their experience defies the use of words to describe. "My Lord, and my God how terrible! Thank you, Jesus, for being our Freedom from this eternal tragedy... Thank You...."

- Emotions – In place of the peace of God was a cacophony of emotions that they had never known, and these new feelings were not to their liking. They had known Good before because they had known God, now they knew what it felt like to know and experience evil. Their only idea of good was the decision they had made to rebel against God, so good started out for them by being directly linked with evil. Their emotions were running away and rushing toward them all at the same time with so many new feelings that they wanted to run and hide. Fear and shame set the foundation of their sense of existence like heavy drums beating out a broken rhythm. Running over the top of this were feelings like discordant sounds of becoming strangers from each other and separate from everything. While the beauty of the image of creation may still have existed in their minds, there was no way to feel that beauty anymore. They once were a part of beauty from being one with all of creation, now they were separated from beauty and experiencing a new sense of ugliness within. When God came to them there was no joy, only guilt and shame. They could not feel Him anymore like they used to; there was no sense of completeness only emptiness and fear. They knew the deep and dark feeling of Death; complete separation. Their satisfaction was gone, their fulfillment was gone, their Life was gone and they knew for the first time what it felt like to be Dead within; owned by Sin as an existing representation of Sin and Death within a world of separation.
- Will – All kinds and levels of choice was now in their grasp. Decisions were theirs to make, but this brought a huge burden along with a new sense of power. Now they had to figure out what to say, what to do, how to act, how to feel, and what everything meant to them. Their sense of incompleteness increased along with their growth of individualism. For the first time they had to decide how to answer God, and no matter what they tried He knew the facts about their actions and even their thoughts, which only represented Death. No matter what they said the judgment of God was inescapable. They had an overpowering urge to try and control; to will things to be as they desired. A driving force behind their will was the desire to dominate each other, all of creation, and even God in any way that might be possible. It's like their "chooser" was stuck on self, making the focus of their thoughts and actions to be their needs and desires. This was their new solution to everything in that moment, and only by learning the necessity of each other and other forms of life through suffering would their focus on self be tempered.
- Body – For the first time they were aware of their bodies in a new way and they knew that they were naked, and they were ashamed. Their attention was being bombarded with sensations that used to be enjoyable, but now so many were distracting and annoying. Also, for the first time they were aware of a frailness about their body. Now they began to experience pain. Their senses had taken on a new dimension that changed how they experienced the environment around them. For the first time they

began to know hunger and thirst. It was as if someone had made some type of fundamental change to the very foundation of their physical being. Quickly they were forced to decide what all these sensations were, good or evil, what they liked or didn't like. Their bodies now caused them to exist in a world of multi-layered complexity that somehow wanted to influence their thoughts about everything.

- Perspective on God – they felt like a stranger to God, because suddenly God seemed like a stranger to them. God obviously was separated from them. They no longer knew what He was thinking or what He was feeling. They knew that what they did was wrong and they could hear, feel, and somehow experience God's disappointment, and that was something that they had never known before. For the first time being near God brought fear rather than joy. They so much wanted to be filled with God's joy and Life again but even though God was right next to them they felt absolutely separate from Him. They now knew what it meant to be alone, because now they were the living demonstration of being alone. It was weird because even though God in all His glory, God Who was Love was right there in front of them He was out of their grasp. Even in His presence they had a driving desire to rebel against God, to try and misdirect this guilt. Rather than wanting to walk with God they wanted to hide in the bushes while seeking to control God's thoughts and perspective concerning the circumstances of their new existence.
- Perspective on self – In spite of their sense of being incomplete and diminished as a person, at the same time they felt a new sense of self-importance. This must have been what began to fill the emptiness, and the source of their new sense of power to fight their sense of separation. They knew what they wanted, and they wanted it now. They felt ashamed and weak but at the same time they wanted to get more knowledge and control; they wanted to make the decisions. Rising above the sense of shame was a belief that they had the right to decide for themselves who they were and what they would do. There was the fear that came with the awareness that they were on their own, and at the same time a sense of power that they could be on their own. Their concept of self had become dominated by the fact of their separation, and the competitiveness of individualism arose to replace the peace of unity they'd lost. They were even willing to grip their new identity enough to seek to compete with the Wisdom, and absolute Knowledge that was God when they spoke with Him following their sins.
- Perspective on others and the world – For the first time they knew enmity; true hostility and hatred. The man blamed God and the woman. The woman blamed the serpent. The serpent had no one to blame, although perhaps he could have said, "The devil made me do it." (Yes, I'm kidding about that.....but it seemed funny to me....) There would be enmity between the serpent and people from that time on, so long as both existed on the earth. A primary concern, as stated above, was their desire for control over one another and their circumstances, which included all things around them that might impact them in some manner. Control, or power, would be gained at the expense of someone or something else, and that was acceptable to them. Their physically differences would cause Adam to desire to control Eve, and she would accept this in part because doing so met some of her important needs. They had to pay a price for their actions, and they would seek to avoid suffering any more than they had to by trying to manipulate or control what others thought. Jealousy was now a component of their perspective of all surrounding them, including each other. Though they had new power, they also realized they couldn't control everything because they could never have enough power as compared with God. Who and what was around them could now

be viewed, at least in part, as being useful for them to get what they decided they needed or wanted.

- Decisions – They were assailed by the responsibility of making decisions that seemed to surround them. All kinds of decisions were required that they'd never had to even consider before. The burden of making these decisions was theirs, and with that burden came the consequences for making wrong decisions. So, this new power to decide also came with the downside of them being personally responsible and having to face undesired consequences. Adam and Eve no longer were united concerning any decisions. They felt and experienced separation, differences, and conflict. Their decisions could cause them to feel rejected, something they'd never experienced before. Every decision became an opportunity to exercise some level of control, but also caused feelings of anxiety, and a sense of feeling all tied up and uncomfortable inside. It was weird how this burden of responsibility could also give them a sense of freedom.
- Time – Time and the timing of things now had a level of importance they'd never needed to be concerned about. Their individual separation caused them to want to know the timing of events. The day and time took on new importance when trying to coordinate their efforts. How long something took to accomplish, or how long before certain events happened or after they occurred was now important to them. This included how long they would or did live on this earth, and the quality of their existence. Just having to deal with this dimension of time created stress that had never existed before.
- Performance – Performance previously was a non-issue, but suddenly that had changed. They had been shown to have sinned against God, to have failed. Their effort to replace God's authority in and over their lives with their false claim to run their own lives had failed. They wanted to be their own boss, and instead this new experience of being captivated by the overwhelming sense of Sin and Death had dominated them. An experienced accountability turned the tables on their new-found perspectives. Performance now became a central point of focus in their existence on this earth. Over time this would only grow in importance, becoming a point of division between God and humankind, and certainly between people in general. The question of one's value as a person became tied directly to their ability to perform. It also became an important part of any relationships between people. Comparative value of each other and with all of creation seemed to have a hold on them. The value of a person was entirely changed within the Sin-based systems within the world. Is a workman really worthy of pay? Is a man with a withered hand who can't perform adequately worth being concerned about? So often this issue is raised in the Old and New Testament in different forms. It is the same thing that we all face today in many different ways.
- Acceptance – Just think about going from a sense of total acceptance. In fact, acceptance so absolute that the concept of being accepted, or not being accepted couldn't exist. How are words created to talk about a concept that never existed before, like rejection? Before, acceptance never had to be acquired. Now they experienced the absence of acceptance from the Person with whom unity had been at the core of their relationships. It seems like that sudden change would, by itself, be like getting-hit-by-a-ton-of-bricks. Now acceptance is conditional, and the conditions of one's acceptance can be determined by things well outside of their control. Can we control who our parents are, and what work they do to survive in the world? Can we control how much money they have to live? These and similar issues directly impact the kind of education we have available to us. What kind of clothes we wear. What social groups we are able

to interact with as an accepted part of the group. The list goes on and on. There's no need to break this all down because we are more than familiar with how this world operates. There are major parts of the world where a person's status at birth determines their social level in ways that are pervasive for the rest of their existence. This is a big concept within our perspective of ourselves and others. It's questionable if anyone can be absolutely free of this area of influence without God-given Freedom. For Adam and Eve there had not only existed total acceptance by God and one another, they'd been accepted by all of creation. Now it felt as though they were unacceptable.

- Relationships – This aspect of personal interaction with others and all creation went from being absolute, because of their unity with God, to something that can be quite tenuous, unpredictable even when consider strong, and can become very dangerous. We no more than move through Genesis chapter 3 and we are faced with Cain murdering his brother Able, both sons of Adam and Eve, at the beginning of Genesis chapter 4. That didn't take long. Think about this drastic, dramatic, and destructive change from the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve sinned, and this heart crushing story of murder. Within the Old and New Testaments, we learn about all kinds of motivations that can drive people to seek relationships with others. Few are noble, or pure. God builds relationships with the Hebrew people in many different ways. Then they turn around and seek to leverage their relationship with God for what they wanted or acted as though they had no relationship with God at all. The full gamut of possibilities come to light in the Scriptures. Only God's faithfulness within relationships stands out in contrast with the values of the world. Jesus especially, demonstrates and speaks to this issue of relationships and their place of importance for us who believe in Him. There is so much that can be said about each of these words. So many Scriptures we could explore, but we move on for now.....
- Life – We've already looked at two concepts of life. For me at this time there are only two. One represents the experiences we have, the circumstances within which we exist, and the way we interact with all that is around us including the results. It's what seems to basically be the world's perspective on what it means to be living on this earth. The second, is that God is Life and there is no Life outside of His Life. His Life is either our Life, or it's not. If it is not, then we do not have life, we are Dead; our existence on this earth is within eternal Death. As you may have noted a capital "L" is used when referencing God's Life. Adam and Eve, after their sins in the Garden of Eden were existing within eternal Death and had no Life within them. Thus, they were Dead. If their existence on this earth ended with them in that state of existence then they would go on existing within Death. Without God's Life people are living out Death because it is the essence of their existence.
- Death – As has been stated Death is the absence of Life. So, Death is the absence of God within someone. If a person does not have God's Life, then they are in fact, Dead. We've just stated that if we end our existence on this earth, if our body quits working, when we are existing within Death then we will exist separated from God forever within Death. While several of these thoughts are a form of repetition, these concepts are so critical, and yet so different from the common way of thinking that they bear repeating.
- Sin – From my perspective Sin is the power of rebellion against God that arose into existence due to Satan's rebellion against God, along with a third of the angels. At its core this means attempting to take the place of God. Satan did this in Heaven along with the angels who followed him, and he talked Adam and Eve into attempting this here on earth. The power of Sin rests in the ability of Satan to have dominion over the angels

who obey him, people, and the rest of creation within the limits that exist. Because of that dominion Satan can exercise influence and control within the world, which constitutes the power of Sin. Just as Satan was the origin of the power of Sin, Adam and Eve were the ones that caused the power of Sin to be unleashed upon all of God's earthly creation. Sin is a force that emanates from Satan due to his choice to attempt to replace God in the Heavenly places. It is pervasive within all of creation that has not been redeemed by God's Life given to us through Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Each person who is separated from God exists as a source of power within the dominion of Satan. Every time people commit sins, they are allowing their power as an existing-eternal-being to become Satan's tool within their circumstances. In other words, by people continuing to exist in Death on this earth they are empowering Satan, thus enhancing the power of Sin and dominance of Death within others and the rest of creation. Sin becomes the foundation of every person's existence from the time their existence begins. Initially, at birth, it is the defining element of every person's state being.

While there are many scriptures that could be referenced for many of these thoughts it's not my intent to build a case for each word. That might be accomplished through the accumulative use of Scriptures within this world as these ideas are shared elsewhere. My intent is not to tell anyone how to think. My intent is to share what it's been my joy to receive from the Lord as it is understood by me at this time.

So, this comparison is based on my perspective and understanding from the Scriptures, education, experiences, and God's teaching by His Spirit. My hope is these thoughts will cause us to consider the dramatic difference that Sin made in all of creation. That difference has been passed down to us as the Sin nature.

This Sin nature dominates the process of shaping our perspectives on ourselves, others, and the rest of the world in which we exist. Most of this influence is accepted as normal, and results in encouraging us to be focused on everything other than God. Learning the practicality of surviving and thriving within world systems is considered to be necessary in various forms and multiple levels of interaction.

Two things that are important to remember: 1) God did not design or intend that we would be dominated by the power of Sin; He designed us to know Him, love Him, and to be united with Him by being filled with His presence; 2) No human born from the cocreative process from the union of a man and woman can escape this reality; we are all born under the power of Sin. Essentially, we are all born into Sin and Death as the foundation of our existence.

Again, Adam and Eve could sin but did not have to sin, however, they clearly did sin. Because of their sin we can sin and will sin. This is because the core nature of all of creation was subjected to the power of Sin through the disobedient act of Adam and Eve.

The changes that Adam and Eve experienced are not changes that we will experience. This is not because we do not receive the same Sin nature they ended up with after disobeying God. The reason we will not experience a similar change is because we are born that way, Sin is normative for our existence, and we have never known anything other than the dominance of the power of Sin.

We do not change from being sinless to being sinful, because we are born within the power of Sin. The change that we can experience is from being sinful to being sinless through the gift of God in Jesus Christ. That is God's will for each of us; to bring us back to the state that He intended for all people. He loves us and He wants us to know His perfect presence; He wants us to love Him because we choose to love Him.

Another fundamental change was the role or place of circumstances within Adam and Eve's existence, and thus in our existence. Circumstances are elements of our existence, like conditions, facts or events that impact other aspects of our existence on this earth. This describes a very dynamic environment.

Think of a large wooden box that has hundreds of ping pong balls blown into it from many different locations while the box moves in a random manner in one direction and then another. Up, Down, right, left, angled, and a spin every now and then for extra excitement. Now we're in that box, standing up with a paddle in each hand trying to direct the ping pong balls in a specific pattern for a specific purpose.

We'll experience some success depending on our skills and abilities, and we will probably get better over time, but we'll never control all the dynamics of our environment. Have any of us ever felt this way? How about feeling like a one-armed paperhanger? Maybe like a person trying to herd long-tailed cats in a room full of moving rocking chairs? Up a creek without a paddle? We've got all kinds of expressions to describe our existence don't we.

My assumption is that Adam and Eve's existence was not like the ping pong experience until after they sinned. Prior to their act of sinning against God their circumstances were not the focus of their lives. They did not have to figure out where to get food, water, or anything else that they needed. There was no danger for them so there was no fear. Living in the middle of the circumstances of their existence was just a part of Living out the presence of God Who was unified with them, while being within them.

Thus their circumstances were dominated by the power of God. It was God's presence and His will that were dominant. So, Adam and Eve's existence was filled with experiencing God.

After they rebelled against God by committing sins God was no longer at the center of their existence; He was no longer their Life. All they had left in God's place was their self-existence within the circumstances of their experiences, and that existence had fundamentally changed for the worst.

Now their experience of living was dominated by their circumstances and their need to try and control those circumstances in a manner that they believed to be best. Thus the fundamental focus of living changed from God to self-struggling with the circumstances of their existence. They were tempted to take the place of God and when they gave into that temptation, accepting that world view, and sinned then Satan's lie became their reality. That reality is now our reality.

It is our nature to focus on the circumstances and try and control them in any way that we can. We learn various ways of doing this as we grow up, and that struggle shapes our thinking, behavioral patterns, world view, and our decisions along the way molds us into the person we are today.

The more that we struggle with this challenge of living and seek to "win" what we want, the more we become focused on our circumstances, and ultimately ourselves. Our achievements become the things of praise and human glory, just as our failures become the root of our shame. In all of this God is naturally placed on the side lines of our mind and heart, or is never even considered.

Success often serves as the reason to believe in our own abilities and feeds our tendency to relate to life physically, mentally, and emotionally. Our stories, books, movies, and music reflect this belief and result in us essentially worshipping that which God created rather than worshipping the Creator of all things; the one and only Almighty Living God.

Like people who are starved for life we seek to cram our existence full of the “stuff” that we call life; experiences, achievements, possessions, recognition, power, acceptance, and praise. Even if much of this is about others, good deeds, or self-discipline our actions are ultimately about ourselves, because we see our actions being derived from within; self is the basis of our life.

In essence our concept of life is opposed to God because He said that He was Life, not the circumstances of our existence, and certainly not our self. What most people do who decide to experience God is seek to include God into their circumstances. They seek to live in a manner that fulfills what they understand God’s expectations of them to be in hope of changing their relationship with Him in a positive manner.

In every religious pursuit of humankind this endeavor ultimately focuses on the individual even though the individuals are involved in seeking to focus on God. Why is this true? Because they are trying to live according to some standard that will get what they want from God. Something like protection, improved circumstances or possessions, escape from evil, eternal life, unity with a greater being, etc., etc.

What God has created is a way that brings us into relationship with Him that is not based on us, how we live, or any of the circumstances of our existence. God gave us His Son, Jesus Christ, to provide us His eternal Life based on what God did for us in Christ. This is not a religious pursuit of humankind it is a pursuit of God as He reaches out to humankind and says “Come unto Me...”

Our role is to choose what we are going to believe to be true, and what we are going to do about that truth once it is accepted as reality. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16