

# Swept off your Feet

## Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

### CHAPTER 4

## Humanity Repurposed

### Lesson from Lucifer

After failing to become *“like the Most High”*, Satan tempted Eve to enhance herself beyond human excellence.<sup>1</sup> Posing as a serpent, he reinforced her selfish ambition. Satan appealed to Eve’s bent for independence by saying:

*“You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will **be like God**, knowing good and evil.”* (Genesis 3:4-5 NKJ)

Satan used a divisive scheme to deceive an over-ambitious woman. By exploiting legitimate appetites for food, beauty, and wisdom, Satan aroused two deviant mindsets—lust and pride. Convinced that she would evolve into a more godlike person, Eve fell irreverently in the wrong direction.

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6-7 ESV)*

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<sup>1</sup> Isa 14:14 NAS

Satan served three diabolical appetizers, which Eve readily swallowed. He asserted:

1. "You will not surely die"
2. "Your eyes will be opened"
3. "You will be like God, knowing good and evil"

Garnished with ulterior motives, this lie-laced proposal nudged the first woman and man away from God and away from His provision. Trusting Satan's claims at face value, they ingested a fatal fruit spiked with propaganda poisoning. Such willful disobedience triggered a relational catastrophe. Eating this forbidden meal became a deal-breaker steeped in global liability. By embracing Satan's toxic quest, Adam and Eve disconnected from God and His source of supply. The consequences were severe and extensive.

First, Adam and Eve surely died. Separating from God inflicted a lethal wound on the human race. This fatal act undermined their ability to *"be like God"*.

Second, their eyes were opened. Satan exposed Adam and Eve to a dose of evil that God alone was equipped to see. Knowing evil polluted their heart and poisoned their conscience. This revelation left an indelible impression that extends from generation to generation. Horrified and frightened, Adam and Eve retreated into a cocoon of self-protective independence. The loss of innocence shattered their confidence and demoralized their outlook.

Third, Eve's arrogant ambition for godhood impaired her design as an informed worshiper. Though made in God's image, Eve came to believe that an alternate resource would make her more like God than she already was. Eve reached out for a provision that God was not offering, to satisfy a need she did not have, to become more *"like God"* than she already was. Rather than becoming more like God, Eve became less human than God designed her to be. Encountering satanic evil left more than a bad taste in her mouth; it compromised her ability

to recognize the truth about good and evil. More importantly, it perverted her view of God.

### **Wanting to be like God**

From the start, Satan advanced a hidden agenda fraught with destruction. His goal was to repurpose the human race. The father of lies persuaded the mother of humanity to pursue a path resembling his own. By emulating Lucifer's quest to "*be like the Most High*," Eve further distanced herself from God's image. This arrogant ambition not only provoked God to expel Satan from heaven, it constrained Him to eject Adam and Eve from Eden. Instead of becoming more like God, Adam and Eve became more like the Devil. Knocked off balance, they leaned toward evil.

Rebelling against God exposed Adam and Eve to panoramic perversion. Evil suddenly came into focus in graphic detail. Immersed in deception, they opened their eyes to a baptism of depravity. Apart from the Holy Spirit, corrupt images and perverse ideas assaulted their soul and warped their thinking. As concepts of good fused with notions of evil, Adam and Eve lost their ability to assimilate facts and evaluate reality. Blending conflicting views of good and evil confused their attitude about God and self.

The word confuse comes from Latin *confundere*, which means, to pour together. This verb literally means to "mix or mingle things so as to render the elements indistinguishable."<sup>2</sup> The human race lost its ability to distinguish good and evil. It struggles to understand the human condition because it can no longer assess sights and interpret sounds with divine precision.

Though created in God's image, Adam and Eve never had an omniscient mind—they were not all-knowing. From the beginning, they relied on God to answer questions and nurture curiosities. The future holds

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=confusion> (accessed 1/2/2012)

great promise for acquiring the knowledge of the truth directly from its source—the spirit of truth.

In Eden, God’s curriculum for learning did not prevail because Satan convinced Adam and Eve to take a shortcut in their education. An insidious crash course circumvented the tutelage and timing of God’s lesson plan. Rather than allowing God to teach, Adam and Eve experienced a hasty lesson in sinister sagacity. Through independent study, they cheated their way into knowledge using an illicit informant.

By rejecting God’s authority, Adam and Eve deprived the human race of a divinely controlled context for learning. Premature knowledge of good and evil proved catastrophic. God alone has the wisdom required to dispense this knowledge selectively for our benefit.

Satan injected diabolical wisdom into the human race—a demonic substitute for God’s wisdom. James put it this way, *“This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.”*<sup>3</sup> By twisting holy standards and warping sacred values, Satan’s wisdom confused Adam and Eve as they sought to make decisions. Rather than opening their eyes to the truth, toxic beliefs interfered with their ability to recognize God for all He is worth.

Adam and Eve attempted to function *“like God”* in a way they were not prepared to operate. As pseudo-deities, they did not understand the implications of what they saw and heard. Attempting to be knowledgeable, Adam and Eve floundered beneath waves of insecurity. They were not God enough to assign proper meaning to their knowledge. Indeed, they were no longer human enough to determine an appropriate application for it.

As self-made gods, they failed to compensate for their fatal flaws. Following Satan’s advice, the human race lost its intellectual and emotional advantage. They did not possess wisdom from above to make ac-

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<sup>3</sup> James 3:15 NAS

curate distinctions on their own. Without a moral compass, they made incompetent value judgments.

## **Identity Crisis**

Wanting to be like God, Adam and Eve attempted to redefine themselves. With fig leaves masking body parts, they remained emotionally bare, intellectually exposed, and spiritually stripped. Forgetting why God made them in His image, the first man and woman lost sight of their divine design. Not bowing down before His majesty, they failed to live up to their potential as humans. Because Adam and Eve no longer knew how to act in God's presence, they improvised behind a fig leaf cover up.

Adam and Eve were victims of a high stakes identity theft. Satan came to steal their identity, kill their faith, and destroy their life. Inoculating them with doubt created an identity crisis, which confused their God-given human distinctions. Infected with wily suspicions and competing interests, the human race replaced God with surrogate deities—and they replaced themselves with inflated illusions.

Eating from Satan's menu activated a severe case of spiritual indigestion. Unable to digest fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the human race suffers from a congenital case of sin-induced heartburn.

## **Where's the Worship?**

Rather than being promoted to an elevated class as the serpent implied, the human race found itself demoted to death. Overwhelmed by shame and underwhelmed by God, Adam and Eve adopted a new purpose for living. Blind-sighted by evil, they underestimated God's attributes, misjudged His achievements, and neglected His promises. This abridged assessment crippled their ability to worship God in spirit and truth. Because they no longer recognized Him as God, Adam and Eve were unable to connect as they once had. As a result, their response as true worshipers failed to materialize.

Adam and Eve became misinformed worshipers, esteeming what they did not know and idolizing what they could not understand. To the woman at the well, Jesus said it plainly, *“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know....”*<sup>4</sup>

The more like God Adam and Eve thought they were, the less likely they were to recognize Him as God. Lust blurred their view and pride slanted their appraisal. Motivated by arrogant ambition and distracted by inordinate desires, they failed to respond with reverence.

After Adam and Eve disconnected from God in the Garden of Eden, worshipers assumed a low profile. The next 2,000 years of biblical history does not include a single reference to anyone worshipping God. Worshipers sought by their Heavenly Father made neither the inspired headlines nor a parenthetical side note with any gesture of worship. The Bible does not mention a word for worship until Job or Abraham.

The tragic loss of Job’s children, servants, and livestock triggered a precedent-setting response: Job *“fell to the ground and worshiped”* God.<sup>5</sup> If Job predates Abraham, this response broke 2,000 years of biblical silence in worship. Ironically, it took an act of Satan to trigger one of the first if not the first descriptions of worship in the Bible.

If Abraham predates Job, breaking the worship barrier becomes less dramatic. Nonetheless, Abraham *“fell on his face”* to worship 2,000 years after Adam and Eve left Eden. As with Job, children figure prominently in this response since the Lord appeared to Abraham to make a covenant involving children.<sup>6</sup> One year before Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the Lord appeared again to announce her due date and to reveal His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. At 99-years of age, Abraham

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<sup>4</sup> John 4:23 NAS, ESV

<sup>5</sup> Job 1:20 NAS

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 17:1-3 NAS

*“bowed himself to the earth”.*<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew word translated as bowed comes from the most common Hebrew word for worship—*shachah*.

## **A Bias in Pride**

Seeking a status upgrade generates a conflict of interest for worshipers. By thinking too highly of self, we become less partial when appraising God’s worth. When angels or humans try to act more like God than He made them to be, they introduce a bias in pride. James cites an example of how we act like God by judging one another. He warns:

*Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. **There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But **who are you to judge your neighbor?***** (James 4:11-12 ESV)

Respect for our Heavenly Father diminishes when we extend our self-esteem toward godhood. By adopting an egocentric persona, we become less likely to recognize God for who He is. The contrast between God and us fades because an arrogant predisposition dupes our perspective.

Claiming even a hint of divine eminence generates an unreasonable expectation for special privileges. Supposing we are entitled to the same treatment as God guarantees disappointment. This bogus identity cripples our response as worshipers based on the knowledge of the truth.

## **What is in it for me?**

When men and women adopt a god-complex, their worship turns inward. They say and do religion to get something in return. Performing rituals and participating in ceremonies becomes self-serving. Work and service assume an inflated value performed for compensation. As

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 18:1-3 NAS

deeds replace reverence, expectations for benefit increase. Emphasizing performance and reward sabotages a worshiper's motive. Worshipping God to accomplish something, prove something, or get something, however meaningful, undermines the reverent response that our Heavenly Father seeks.

In surrendering open fellowship with God, Adam and Eve lost sight of reality. No longer anchored by a divine connection, they drifted without spiritual discernment. Left to their own blinkered senses, Adam and Eve exchanged the truth about God for a lie. Blinkered means narrow-minded; it is limited in scope and restricted in understanding.<sup>8</sup> Paul details how exchanging the truth for a lie influences the focus of a worshiper. He said:

*For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:25 NAS)*

Worshippers depend on accurate knowledge when discerning the truth—about self and about God. Even though demonic wisdom distorts our knowledge of good and evil, creation speaks louder than words. It points to a glorious God worthy of worship. While substitute deities present a lop-sided view of reality, they cannot change the facts. Everything God made offers tangible proof of His eternal power and divine nature. It compels us to venerate our Heavenly Father with reverent expressions.

### **Perspective Lost**

Attempting to behave like God wreaks havoc on reality. It distorts our vision and warps our understanding. When Adam and Eve left the Garden, their understanding of spiritual reality began fading. Men and women focused on faults and failures instead of God's ability to redeem and restore. By emphasizing one another's flaws and mistakes, they fed the voracious appetite of critical spirits seeking to assign blame. As a

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/> (accessed 1-22-2011)

result, humans lost their appreciation for the immense value that God placed on them.

Unable to remember the truth about God, we all strain to comprehend the truth about ourselves. By adopting an exalted self-image, we lose perspective of God's greatness. Sanctimonious upgrades lead to prideful demotions. At the other extreme, by adopting an inferior self-image, we fail to live up to our eternal purpose. Guilt-ridden demotions also miss the mark. Either way, flawed self-assessments give rise to dubious standards by which we misjudge God.

The more we think that we are like God, or that He is like us, the less inclined we are to worship Him as God. Instead of rendering facedown reverence, we venerate substitute deities or dignify disingenuous impostors. When we reduce God's image, we become remiss in expressing reverence where reverence is due. When we fail to acknowledge the infinite contrast that exists between God and us, we neglect true worship.

Blinded by pride we fail to see God for all that He's worth. Rather than falling facedown in worship, we fall headlong in sin—missing the mark of our high calling as worshipers.

