

2008 LEADERSHIP SERIES

*Universal Foundations
for Human Rights:
A Dialogue in Genesis*



CHRISTIAN EMBASSY

6. ENMITY

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Universal Foundations for Human Rights: A Dialogue in Genesis

“Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind...” Thus begins the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With a similar acknowledgement of universal enmity, the U.N. Charter commences with the determination “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...” Both documents recognize the realities of the present condition of humanity. Only one provides the rationale for “barbarous acts” as the disregard and contempt for human rights. Neither identifies the underlying cause.

Suppose the Millennium Development Goals were achieved and at the same time our global population truly experienced freedom and democracy. This would be a crowning achievement, the attainment of the UN’s charter goal “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.” Surely peace and security would be the inevitable and desirable consequence. Heaven would come to earth. Or would it?

God, in his love, made men and women in His image. They were perfect. They had the perfect spouse, the perfect food. They lived in the perfect place with the perfect environment. “And it was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Francis Schaeffer said, “It is perfectly true that in making man as he did God made the possibility of evil.... And in making that possibility, God validated choice and validated man as man—a being significant in history.” God did not make anything evil, not even the forbidden tree. He made choice. So *why*, in the name of our loving, holy, and powerful God, do we treat one another with such hostilities?

As you read the Genesis account, you may be distracted by the account of a serpent who could speak. If this detail seems to bear the marks of a myth, keep reading, for the story itself has all of the characteristics of reality as we know it. We need only think of the last time we were tempted to see the undeniable truth of this narrative. Genesis offers the best explanation for the origin and consequences of evil. When we consider the battles within and the wars without, we come to realize that Genesis reveals the underlying cause of all of the conflicts which we abhor. It alone explains our present condition.

Notice, then, first of all, that temptation is permitted and that a tempter is involved. This does not obligate one to succumb, but by isolating the woman, capturing her ear, her eye, her desire and finally her will, the Serpent followed a strategy with which we are only too familiar.

Secondly, notice how yielding was not inevitable. God had made it easy to resist by providing everything they could possibly need to live a truly fulfilling life. He had warned them where the temptation would come, and he had explained the consequences of disobedience. There was no sin in being tempted.

Finally, make note of the consequences of surrendering to the temptation. Having been put in charge of creation, Adam and Eve now listened to one of the creatures rather than the Creator. The woman was deceived. The man disobeyed. Both chose poorly, as we sometimes do. Their minds were opened to an experiential knowledge of good and evil. This resulted in alienation on a personal level. Where they were naked and unashamed (Genesis 2:25) they were now ashamed of their nakedness (3:7). There was also spiritual alienation: they hid in fear from God. And there was relational alienation as they blamed one another for their own failure. There was one other consequence. It didn’t happen immediately, but death became the great enemy of humanity. Enmity has come to exist at every level of person and society.

The pattern through history is unchanged. What we know to be true on the personal level is experienced nationally, internationally and universally. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Nevertheless, there is a seed of hope to be found in the promise of One to come to defeat the Tempter.

Dr. Charles Malik, President of the 13th session of the General Assembly and leading author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was surely right when he concluded, “The needs of the world are much deeper than political freedom and security, much deeper than social injustice and economic development, much deeper than democracy and progress. The deeper needs of the world belong to the sphere of the mind, the heart, and the spirit, a sphere to be penetrated with the light and grace of Jesus Christ.”

*Accurate diagnosis of a problem leads to effective solutions. To better understand **what** we see of the human condition today, consider the **why**—the fall of humanity as found in Genesis.*

1. **The Provision and Prohibition by God.** Read Genesis 2:8-9, and 15-17. In what ways did God provide for the man? What prohibitions did He make? What do these verses reveal about God? About man? About the original relationship between God and man?
2. **The Temptation.** Read Genesis 3:1-5. What are the stages of the temptation? In what ways have you experienced a similar sequence of thought?
3. **The Choice.** Read Genesis 3:6. What makes temptation so appealing? What parallels do you find in 1 John 2:15-17? Is temptation the same as sin?

4. **The Consequences.** What happened after the forbidden fruit was eaten?

Genesis 3:7-8

Genesis 3:9-13

Genesis 3:14-15

Genesis 3:16

Genesis 3:17-19

Genesis 3:23-24

In what ways did they die? (See Romans 5:12)

5. **The Promise and Hope**

Genesis 3:15

Genesis 3:21

Colossians 2:13-14

2 Corinthians 5:17, 21

6. **Write a short statement describing the human condition.**

*“This one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin.
But this other man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's bountiful gift.”
(Romans 5:15 NLT)*

In 2002, Brian Hayes determined that murders have killed about as many people as world wars have. We started this dialogue with the premise that accurate diagnosis of a problem leads to effective solutions. Genesis 3 reveals that the enmity we observe in humanity today can be traced to a spiritual failure of our first ancestors and their disobedience against God. If this diagnosis is accurate, then it stands to reason that the most effective solution to war and murder will include necessarily include the provision of forgiveness for our sins and an empowerment to overcome temptation. Is there any evidence that such a solution exists?

Story of the Waudani People

In 1956, five men went to Ecuador with a clear sense of their purpose: to tell the fierce Waodani tribe about the love of God. The only problem was that no one had ever made contact with this remote tribe and returned alive. The Waodani people, the isolated Amazon tribe which was featured in the film, “End of the Spear,” grew up with the truth that nearly led to their extinction, “Spear and live or be speared and die.” Anthropologists determined it to be the most violent society ever documented: 6 of every 10 deaths of Waodani adults was a homicide.

Two days after their first contact, these 5 men were murdered, speared and hacked to death by these fierce warriors. These courageous men had guns but had decided in advance not to use them against the Waodani. Why? Because “they’re not ready for heaven and we are.”

Only two years later, the tribal homicide rate dropped more than 90 percent. Today, the children have something that was unthinkable 50 years ago—grandfathers.

The film ends with the historical events that changed their violent ways, leading to social and spiritual transformation of this isolated tribe. What stopped the cycle of revenge and death? In the words of the Mincaye, one of the killers and the principle character in the film, “We acted badly, badly until they brought us God’s carvings. Now we walk His trail.”

Steve Saint, son of the pilot-missionary who was killed, put it this way: “They killed my dad. They adopted me. They threw his body in the river. They baptized me there. The world called them Aucas and knew them as savages. I call them Waodani, “the people,” and know them as family. The difference? God’s grace and the power of His Word.”