

SESSION

01



Core Secrets

Sink Your Teeth into a True
Taste of Eden

Video Discussion


We weren't set up to be messed up, but we messed up
what God set up.

It's an awareness we come to gradually—the knowledge of evil in the world. It's a moment that, once you see it, colors the way you see everything else after it. It can be planes flying into buildings on 9/11, or someone with the full use of his legs blatantly parking in a handicapped parking spot during the crowded holiday season. It could be parents getting a divorce, or someone stealing something precious to you.

"The Domino Effect


It's a tale of trees rooted in
history
His story, that is, of good and
evil
God and man
Planned parenthood
No yin and no yang

But a tale told true:
We weren't set up to be
messed up
But we messed up what
God set up."



When were your eyes first opened to the struggle of good versus evil in the world?

God isn't setting us up to fail—like an existential game of Kerplunk or a spiritual game of Jenga. God is not just waiting for us to pull the wrong straw and have our lives come crashing down around us. But this is how many of us see Him. We feel we need to walk on eggshells, fearing that He is hovering over us, waiting for us to ruin our lives.




How have you struggled with distorted pictures of God?


THE
DOMINO
EFFECT



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God gave Adam both freedom and authority in the garden of Eden. The Garden was good but not perfect. Adam and Eve were expected to contribute; they were told to work the Garden. God has given you great freedom and great responsibility and authority as well. He's not hovering over us, looking for us to do right and wrong. He gives us freedom in our relationship with Him.



How did you feel hearing Dave repeat, "You are free" over and over? Did you think of any particular event or circumstance in your history as he emphasized this?

**Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17
(The Voice)**

The Eternal God planted a garden in the east and called it Eden—for it was a place of utter delight—and placed the man there. In this garden He made the ground pregnant with life—bursting forth with nourishing food and luxuriant beauty. He created trees that ravished the eyes and yielded unimaginable delicacies.

Among them stood the tree of life. And in the center of this garden of delights stood the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . . The Eternal God placed the man in the garden of Eden with a prime directive: conserve and conceive. Work the ground for your sustenance and conserve, care for, and carry on that which you have been given. Eat freely from any and all trees in the garden. I only require that you abstain from eating the fruit of one tree—the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Beware: the day you eat the fruit of this tree, you will die.



Have you ever thought of the Garden as inviting the contribution of Adam and Eve?

God's job is to make value judgments about what is good and true—and what is not. Our job is to trust Him to have our best interests at heart. But Adam and Eve made a fatal decision: to rely on their own value judgment, not God's. They messed up what God set up. Adam and Eve were just trying to LIVE, but what they did turned out to be EVIL.



When were you just trying to live only to “get to the other side of the glass” and then realized that it was evil?





God gave Adam and Eve the tree of life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil to give them, and us, an opportunity to join in His goodness. In fact, it's not about the trees at all—it's about the heartbeat of God. Instead of viewing God as someone who is just setting us up for failure, we need to recognize that He is setting us up for freedom and delight. But the journey still continues today—it didn't end with Adam and Eve.



How is Adam's and Eve's story your story?



Right now, is your life or circumstance more caught up in the domino effect of evil or good?



DAY 1: Created for Blessing

by Dave Rhodes

When was the last time you were with someone who just didn't get it? You know the person we're talking about—someone who is oblivious to something that seems obvious to you, someone who is confused by what is clear to everyone else, someone who just can't see the eight-hundred-pound gorilla standing in the room.

Or maybe there's a better question: When was the last time that person was you?

In 2007 the *Washington Post* conducted a social experiment. A reporter got the world-class violinist, Joshua Bell, to spend a morning during rush hour playing at a Washington, D.C., metro station. The reporter had two questions as he watched to see if anyone noticed this beautiful art on display: (1) Would the beauty of Bell's music transcend a mundane setting and an inconvenient time?, and (2) How would people react to beautiful art when that art is found in a not-so-beautiful environment?

Bell, who was dressed in street clothes and had an open violin case beside him, played six classical pieces over forty-three minutes. The reporter counted 1,097 people who walked by. Twenty-seven gave Bell money, totaling thirty-two dollars and some change. Only seven stopped what they were doing to hang around and listen to part of the performance. The vast majority of people were so wrapped up in their own cares, worries, and business that they missed what was right in front of them. Others were listening to music on their iPods and never even heard Bell's beautiful music. Still others heard, but were ignorant of the quality of what they were hearing.

Whatever their reasons, it's amazing to think about just how many people missed the beauty that was in their presence that day. Joshua Bell plays at night to sold-out concert halls filled with people who pay hundreds of dollars to hear him and stand to applaud when he is done. But that morning in the D.C. metro station, this same man, performing the same songs he performs each night, managed to have only seven people pause even for a minute. He received not a single hand clap and just thirty-two bucks as he stood and played his violin for anyone who would listen.

The reporter writing the article came to a fascinating conclusion. Based on this experiment, he determined that people fail to recognize beauty. In other words, most people have to be told that something is beautiful before they see it. We have a hard time recognizing beauty on our own. To put it another way, we are all oblivious to what should be obvious to us.¹

Genesis 1:31-2:3 (The Voice):

Narrator: Then God surveyed everything He had created thus far, savoring its beauty and appreciating its goodness.

Evening gave way to morning on day six.

So now you see how the Creator swept into being the spangled heavens and earth in six days. The canvas of the cosmos was completed by day seven, when the True God paused the labor of creating and rested. Thus the Creator blessed day seven as an open space designed for rest and relaxation, a sacred zone of Sabbath-keeping, because God rested from His work that day.



In these verses, we catch God just after He completed His creative work. The words we read here come following the sixth day of creation, as God forms man and woman from the dust of the ground with His own hands and His own breath. Here, God stands and blesses His creation, breaking from His creative rhythm just long enough to declare His handiwork not just good, but very good. He asks man and woman to share in this goodness. But to do so, they will have to continually recognize the beauty of God's created order.

God did not set us up to be messed up.


He set us up for blessing.

He set us up to share in His goodness.

He set us up to live in His favor.

He set us up to be His partners in His beautiful world.

Sadly, however, the beauty of the picture we find in Genesis 1 is soon traded in Genesis 3 for a disturbing picture of brokenness. By following their own way, Adam and Eve messed up what God set up, missing the beauty in their midst and therefore trading that beauty for the beast we now know as brokenness and evil. In their story, we find our own story as well.



What beauty did you see or discover this week?

12:28

**Here's Your Challenge—
Now You're on the Clock**

By 12:28 tomorrow, honor something beautiful. Be on the lookout for beauty in your midst. Whether it's a sunset, a work of art, the talent of another human being, or the manifested presence of God that comes to us in hundreds of ways each day, honor this beauty by taking time to pause and stand in amazement. Clap if the moment seems right. Gasp if that seems better. Then let someone else know about the beauty you see.