



In *The Characters of Creation*, Daniel Darling re-introduces readers to the story they thought they knew. He explains the Bible's story of how we got here and how things got messed up, and gives fresh insights into the first people in God's unfolding plan of redemption—from Adam and Eve, the Serpent, Cain and Abel, and Noah.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Delinquent

Adam, First, Fallen, and Forgiven

The two decisive figures in human history are Adam and Christ.

Adam brought into the world the great enemies of human happiness—sin and death. These twin powers reign over all those in Adam and only those in Christ conquer sin and death and become righteous and live.¹

—TOM SCHREINER

Some nights, I sit up and thank the Lord Jesus for the next breath.” These words whispered to me from a dear friend who struggled with COVID for many months. Most of us don’t spend our moments thinking about the next time we inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, we don’t ponder for a second every expansion and contraction of our lungs. We just breathe, because breathing is natural, subconscious.

But a global pandemic made us think about breathing in a way we hadn’t thought about it before, from the way our exhaling often carries germs and viruses to others, to the way so many languished in hospitals connected to ventilators, laboring for each breath, to the millions around the world who tragically perished from COVID-19, unable to take another breath on their own.

Imagine with me, then, the very first breath from the very first human who walked the face of the earth. Genesis describes it this way: “Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). The first breath was a breath of God into the lungs of the very first human.

This tells us something about how God thinks about human beings. Consider the care with which Moses describes Adam’s creation. Every other creature God spoke into existence, but the human race, Moses writes, was carefully crafted from the dust of the ground.

God created Adam with such thoughtfulness. *Let us make man* implies a conference among the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit. Consider the use of vivid language describing God, the grand artist forming and shaping Adam with His hands and breathing into Adam the breath of life, a process King David would later elaborate on in vivid detail, the care with which every human soul is fashioned by the Creator. “You knit me together in my mother’s womb,” we read in Psalm 139. Francis Schaeffer says of Genesis, “It is as though God put exclamation points here to indicate that there is something special about the creation of man.”²

There *is* something special. Genesis pulsates with the beauty and mystery of the origins of human life, so much so that Moses is telling us that the apex of God’s creative acts is the creature on whom He stamped His image. Eden is incomplete without human life: *there was no man to work the ground*, Moses emphasizes, as if to say that the earth, in all of its majestic splendor, is lifeless without the human race to cultivate it as God’s image-bearers.

Humans, unlike any part of creation, bear the *imago Dei*, the

image of God. What does this mean? The best minds, throughout the ages, have pondered this topic, but ultimately we can say that to be made in the image of God means that in some way Adam—and every human being since—reflects God. This implies both responsibility—we are not our own and were created for God’s glory—as well as a certain dignity. This chapter doesn’t give me sufficient space to flesh out the massive implications of this core Christian teaching. But this is how I defined it in my book *The Dignity Revolution*:

So what exactly does it mean to be created “in the image of God”? It means both that we are not God and also that we are not animals or angels. To acknowledge the fact that we are made in his image means embracing both humility and enjoying dignity.

Our dignity flows from and is rooted in the truth that we are like God. You are more than simply the sum of your parts. You are not merely a highly evolved mammal. You are not just a collection of atoms. You are not just what others see or the combination of others’ verdicts on you. . . .

Our humility grows in the soil of the truth that we are not God. You are not the center of your own universe, the master of your own fate. You are not the arbiter of right and wrong. You cannot find sufficient reason for your existence or fulfillment in your existence from within.³

We are not the sum of our parts. We are not random. This is good news in a world increasingly asking the question about what it means to be human. The opening pages of our Bible give us a most profound and beautiful definition. Genesis is here to tell us that human beings are not here merely by accident or chance, but that Adam and every single person was created with intentionality and purpose by a loving Father.

Let's pause and think about this for a moment. In a world where human life seems so cheap, where people are stalked and abused and killed, where tyrannical governments commit atrocities, where terrorists indiscriminately murder innocents, where ideologies spanning the spectrum fight to elevate one ethnic group at the expense of another, the Word of God declares with boldness that human beings are precious and valuable.

Moses is telling us here that Adam was not created merely as yet another of the magnificent creatures God spoke into existence, but was formed and shaped from dust as a special creation of God, given breath and life and “crowned [with] glory and honor” (Ps. 8:5). James Montgomery Boice stated it well: “Here lies our true worth. We are made in God’s image and are therefore valuable to God and others. God loves men and women, as he does not and cannot love the animals, plants, or inanimate matter.”⁴ I don’t know what you are doing right now as you read that last quote from Boice, but I hope you are letting it sink in. You have value! Your neighbor has value! And yes, that eccentric friend on Facebook has value!

Fourth-century church father John Chrysostom reads Genesis and declares: “It is humanity, the greatest and most marvelous of living beings, and the creation most worthy of honor before God.”⁵ Humans, the greatest and most marvelous of living beings. You may have woken up today not feeling so great and marvelous. But you are.

I can’t emphasize enough how vital this truth is to understanding the Bible and to understanding our world. This theology should shape the way God’s people think both about their own worth and value and how we think about the worth and value of other image-bearers. There are no mere human beings. Those people at the office

with whom you disagree, that crazy uncle who spouts off at Thanksgiving, that politician whose policies you despise—each and every one is an image-bearer of God. In a sense, understanding the *imago Dei* should humble us. We are but mere particles of dust given life by the breath of the Almighty (Ps. 103:14 says, “he knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust”), and yet we are so much more. We are reflections of the divine.

♦ Was Adam Real? ♦

But let’s think about what it was like to be Adam. Before we can do that, we must deal with the elephant in the room. Do we really believe Adam was a real person or is he just a kind of figurehead, a symbol illustrating the concepts of creation and the fall and the preciousness of human life? There is quite a debate among Bible scholars. Many find the idea of a real Adam hard to square with modern science.⁶

However, I find it hard to read the rest of Scripture and come away with the idea that Adam was a mere figurehead or myth. For one thing, Moses and other Old Testament writers, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, write as if Adam was a real person, both describing his behavior and actions, but also listing him in genealogies as if he was a real human being and not a mythical figure. And when you get to the New Testament, you find Jesus and Paul both assume Adam is a real person.

Jesus, referring to Genesis in a question from the Pharisees, responded:

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that he who created them in the beginning made them male and female and he also said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his

wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." (Matt. 19:4–6)

Jesus preached from Genesis as if the narrative in Genesis was true. I think we are on dangerous ground if we, in the twenty-first century, presume to know more than Jesus knew! And then there is Paul, one of the foremost Hebrew scholars of his day, trained under the great Hebrew teacher Gamaliel, and inspired by the Spirit of God to write much of the New Testament. Paul didn't hesitate to point to Adam as the very first human whose sin plunged humanity into darkness. Paul referred to Adam multiple times in his New Testament letters (Acts 17; Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Tim. 2). To a pagan audience, Paul declared, "From *one man*, he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live" (Acts 17:16). Theologian Millard Erickson writes, "not only did the New Testament writers like Paul believe that an actual Adam and Eve existed, but it was an indispensable part of their doctrine of humanity."⁷

For most of church history, Christians have debated specifics on the age of the Earth or the details of the process of creation described in Genesis. But a literal Adam is essential for the central storyline of Scripture to hold together. Scholar Philip Ryken writes why this is important: "To deny the historical Adam is to stand against the teaching of Moses, Luke, Jesus and Paul . . . Given his recurring presence in the biblical narrative, the logical and long-term effect of denying the existence of Adam is to weaken the church's grip on central biblical truths that make a difference in daily life."⁸

Perhaps you find the idea of humans originating from one central figure named Adam a bit far-fetched. Some Christians have found ways to reconcile a belief in Adam as a myth with a faithful reading of Scripture. But I can't do that. What's more, I don't find it impossible that God could create the human race from one single person, a special creation at a specific time and place. After all, I believe even more scientifically implausible things, like a man getting swallowed by a great fish, a body of water being divided so a nation can cross, and, the most implausible of all, that a man from Nazareth was both God and man who was killed by Romans and then walked out of a rich man's tomb three days later. Yes, I believe all of those things.

I think this plain reading of Genesis is not only the right way to read our Bibles but has profound implications for how we see our world. It is a radical idea that every single person on this earth, regardless of their ethnicity, their social status, their family heritage, was both created in the image of God and also draws from the same family tree. Understanding Genesis helps us see our neighbors the way God sees them, helps us build bridges across racial and socioeconomic lines, helps us resist the evil prejudices that so tempt every generation of fallen humanity. We live in a world laden with perverse incentives to divide along racial, social, economic, and political lines. We are daily tempted with rich opportunities to see other people as less than human.

This is why I believe so strongly in the truth as we see it in Genesis, why I chose to write this book in the first place, and why I think it's important to understand who Adam is.

**Understanding
Genesis helps
us see our
neighbors
the way God
sees them.**

Adam, as the very first human to walk the earth, experienced a supernatural kind of birth and was created to live out a calling unlike any other human being in history. He was alone in the world, born with no history and no parents. Every other person born would have come from another person—by birth. Even his wife, Eve, was created from Adam’s rib. But Adam was formed from the dust of the ground by God’s hands.

Imagine that. Each of us first opens our eyes to the world when we are born; gradually, we grow and mature. There is nothing I delight in more than seeing my children grow up before my very eyes. But for Adam, his was a unique kind of existence. He had no earthly mother or father to guide him, no template of experiences passed down through history. Can you imagine what his first moments of reality must have been like, imagine that first breath? His first thoughts? His first time using his eyes to behold the beauty of Eden and his mouth to communicate with the Creator? What was it like to be “walking in the garden in the cool of the day” with God (Gen. 3:8 KJV)?

Adam was the first, but his would not be the last miraculous birth, born for a special God-given purpose. Isaac was born to a couple whose childbearing years were long in their rearview mirror, born to birth a people and a nation out of whom the Messiah would come. Samuel, a prophet, priest, and judge in Israel, was conceived in the womb of Hannah, whose faithful prayers for a child reached heaven. John the Baptist was born to an aging priest who doubted the word of the angel who promised his wife would give birth to a prophet, one whose life would pave the way for the coming of Jesus. And of course, Jesus, called the second Adam by the apostle Paul in Corinthians and Romans, whose birth was not only supernatural but also conceived by

the Holy Spirit in the womb of a common peasant girl. In a way, God's breathing of life and creating Adam from dust foreshadows the breath of new creation God would breathe into His new people through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the salvation that Jesus would bring by His life, death, and resurrection.

In a sense, every one of us is the product of a supernatural birth. Every birth, King David reminds us in Psalm 139, is the product of God's careful handiwork and every spiritual birth is the result of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

♦ **Born to Build** ♦

Not only was Adam created in a special way, he was created for a special purpose. The narrative in Genesis moves quickly from Adam's unique creation to Adam's unique calling:

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth." (Gen. 1:28)

Subdue. Rule. These commands were first given to Adam to cultivate Eden, but it is the obligation of every image-bearer. We know this because even after the fall, after God punished the world with a great flood (more on that later), God urged Noah (Gen. 9) to cultivate creation. Creating, building, working, and resting are the primary ways humans represent God in the world. Listen again to Genesis:

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. (Gen. 2:15)

To work it and watch over it. Eden was a blank canvas given to humans by God for their creativity and His glory. Work is not a punishment brought on by the curse of sin, but a gift, a way we worship the God whose image we bear.

Humans were given stewardship of God's world. Adam was given the task of naming the animals, a seemingly never-ending job in a world teeming with unlimited expressions of God's creativity. The job of naming wasn't God merely delegating on a busy day. It is God bestowing on His image-bearers the gift to care for creation. To name is to have authority. Notice throughout Scripture, God's naming: renaming Abram to Abraham, renaming Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul and ultimately Jesus, who is given a "name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

Understanding this mandate, this authority to rule, should shape the way we see our world. We are keepers of creation and not its creator. Adam's sin and our sin is a both a rejection of God's rule and an

abdication of our rulership over creation. The mere act of listening to the lying words of a serpent is Adam subjecting himself to an animal kingdom over which he was made to rule.

This side of Adam's fall, we fail to obey our mandate to rule and cultivate in two ways. Humans are tempted to exploit rather than cultivate God's creation, neglecting our role as the stewards of God's world. Or we embrace the tendency to worship the earth in ways that sets us up against our Creator. This is evident

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in much of the language today around environmentalism and climate change, which at times seems to assume that humans possess total

power over the universe, instead of God, who is “sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Heb. 1:3). Earth worship instead of worship of the Creator leads to policies that often hurt the people for whom the earth was created: human beings. Obeying Genesis means resisting both a throwaway attitude of increasing consumption that ignores the care of natural resources and a godless green religion that pits the earth against the creatures for which it was created.

Ultimately now, in a fallen world, our work to cultivate is made more difficult as the ground fights back. Embedded in the curse pronounced by God as a result of Adam’s sin, our work is fraught with difficulty, thorns and thistles fighting back in the gardens of life. And yet the work we do, even the work that seems unworthy, is a way we glorify the One who gave us work as a gift.

God’s instructions to Adam should also shape our view of technology. On one hand, we can easily worship progress as a kind of mini-god, with every new piece of technology as a kind of object of worship, with every new Apple event a kind of secular temple and inventors like Elon Musk our mini-gods. We’re tempted to put our faith in “science,” that kind of catch-all term for observable and man-made discovery that easily forgets the One who created the raw materials and left them for us to discover in the first place.

We can also be pulled away from technology in a way that almost worships the simple and the rural, as if an untouched Eden is the ultimate end for the people of God. The narrative of Scripture doesn’t point us backward to a remembered “good old days,” but forward to a future, restored New Jerusalem, and a second Adam who fulfills the mandate that the first Adam failed. Eden, undeveloped and raw, is not where we are headed. Heaven, a city, is our destiny. Genesis points forward to Revelation.

So we should ask questions about our technology, in a world where it can be corrupted and have evil ends, while also championing new advances that are signs of our fulfillment of the creation mandate. And yet we should recognize that God's new creation people are a forward-looking people. The writer of Hebrews describes faithful Christians as people who are "looking forward to the city . . . whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10).

♦ As in Adam ♦

So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (Gen. 3:6)

And he ate it. And in that moment—however long it takes to bite into a piece of fruit—the world was forever changed. Created in innocence, surrounded by an idyllic creation, enjoying intimacy with a beautiful wife, and experiencing perfect communion with God, Adam threw it all away.

I find it interesting that while God pronounces a curse on Adam *and* Eve, most of the Bible's judgment comes for Adam. It is Adam who is banished from the garden, and Adam that God goes calling after. Clearly sin impacted both Adam and Eve, but though Eve was first to eat the forbidden fruit, it is Adam upon whom responsibility rests for humanity's descent into darkness. In Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Paul uses the phrase "by one man" and "as in Adam" as the starting point of sin's entrance into the world.

We too often think of the fall in the garden of Eden as only a story of a woman being duped by a snake. But the Bible tells us that there is much more going on here. I find it interesting that Scripture

places responsibility for the initial sin—the sin that lit the match that set the world on fire—on the shoulders of Adam, whose actions, we are told, have ushered death into the world (1 Cor. 15:22). While the curse pronounced to Eve is significant—childbirth marked by struggle and pain and often death, and a world in which men would often take advantage of their superior status in society’s hierarchy—the bulk of the curse seems to fall on Adam’s shoulders. It was Adam, after all, who was created first. It was Adam who was given initial responsibility for the garden. It was Adam who abdicated his role as protector of Eve and steward of God’s good creation.

In the modern era it is quite controversial to consider this arranging of roles. It almost strikes us as sexist for the Bible to put the blame mostly on Adam’s shoulders, as if Eve had no agency. But rather than disempowering women, it is pointing toward a kind of servant leadership required of Adam and every husband to lead in a way that protects the bodies and souls of those God has put under our care.

Adam allowed his wife to be poisoned by the rhetorical bite of the snake. It was Adam who didn’t proactively fight off the snake, declaring God’s promises over and against the lies of the enemy, but instead nodded his head and agreed with the lies of Satan against the One who created him. It was Adam who should have used his God-given authority over the animal kingdom to resist the serpent.

Now, in an instant, Adam’s entire existence was changed, and not for the better. In an instant, he was separated from the God who knelt in the dust and formed him with such care. In an instant, his relationship with his wife went from harmony to discord, from mutual love and sharing to blame shifting and resentment. *The woman you gave to be with me. . . his bitterness spills out.*

And this one action didn't just ruin Adam's life; it distorted the lives of every single person who would ever live. The eating of that piece of fruit soured God's good creation, twisted the human experience, and like a tsunami, brought waves of sin and death into the world.

If you want to know why the world is messed up, why the oceans rise, why tornadoes strike, why volcanoes erupt, why hurricanes ravage the coasts, look no further than this crime scene in Genesis 3. If you want to understand why young people are gunned down on our city streets, why tyrants like Hitler and Pol Pot put millions of civilians in the grave, why governments could buy and sell human flesh as property, glance backward at a naked couple, a rotten apple, and a hissing serpent. If you seek the truth about our human condition, why even the best of us have dark demons we hide from the world, why addictions ravage us against our best efforts, why we try and fail to love, don't miss the stark truth from the opening pages of your Bible.

You can find other stories that try to explain the world as it is, but only this narrative offers a mirror to our true selves. The world is on fire because a poison called sin slithered into the garden and poisoned the world God made. To quote the late R. C. Sproul, "we are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners."⁹ Every person who enters this world enters with a moral defect, a condition that can't be cured by behavior modification, religion, or even medicine.

Of course, we read Genesis 3 and it seems so easy in hindsight, doesn't it? *Adam, you were given a beautiful garden, a beautiful wife, everything you need. Just don't eat the wrong thing.* Yet it wasn't just Adam and Eve and a serpent there that day. I was there too, standing guilty with disobedience on my hands. When Adam sinned, we sinned. My sins contribute to the brokenness and devastation of our world. Your

sins contribute to the brokenness and devastation of our world. We are what's wrong in the world.

And yet Genesis 3 isn't the end of the story the Bible tells. Even in God's pronouncement of the curse, he hints at hope, offers echoes of resurrection. A violent clash between Adam's offspring and the serpent would unfold in history in this sin-addled world, but a new Adam would arise to clean up our mess:

For if by the one man's trespass the many died, how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the one man Jesus Christ overflowed to the many . . . For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.
(Rom. 5:15–19)

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Cor. 15:21–22)

There would be another garden. And this time a second Adam would not stand idly by but would accept God's cup of divine wrath. The first Adam didn't have the last word. The innocent one would climb a tree of death to rescue those separated from the tree of life. He would reverse the curse of sin and offer a new kind of fruit, not forbidden, but one born of the grace God now offers to Adam, Eve and their ancestors. New Testament scholar Tom Schreiner writes:

Adam's influence in the world was exclusively negative in that he brought death and devastation into the cosmos. Jesus Christ, by bringing life and by triumphing over sin, counteracted and reversed

the downward pull of Adam's sin . . . sin reigns in the domain of death through Adam, but now grace also reigns, and the result is eternal life through the saving righteousness of Jesus Christ . . . Grace is so powerful that it cleans up the mess produced by Adam and produces the wholeness God intended in creating human beings in the first place.¹⁰

**The first
Adam didn't
have the last
word.**

It's hard to see this through the dirty porthole through which we view the world. Standing in Eden's aftermath, we can only lament what our first family did to usher in sin and death. We can only see sorrow and guilt from our own unrighteous actions before God. And yet there is good news that on the horizon, a Savior awaits.

Grace cleans up Adam's mess. Grace cleans up our mess.

♦ Naked and Afraid ♦

Imagine Adam. Imagine the surreal whiplash he experienced in those moments after the fall. He and Eve went from being naked and unafraid to totally exposed before the God of the universe, to a level of knowledge and experience that only ever brought pain. In a moment he saw it all come to an end. Imagine the weight of guilt in his heart at what he had wrought.

Imagine the regret he would feel as he watched his sons and daughters inflicted by the consequences of his own actions. How he would long, in the hundreds of years he would live beyond this day, for those good old days. How he would replay in his mind the conversations with the serpent. How he would beat himself up for his sins.

But there was no escape, no hiding, no retreat from where he was

now. None of us can imagine what it was like, what it must have been like, to be Adam. We can't know what it would be like to wake up in Eden and to be kicked out by God's fiery angels.

And yet we do know what it's like to carry around guilt. Like Adam, we look back longingly what we've lost: the bad decisions, the failed relationships, the sins we've indulged. We see the widening chasm between what we should be and who we really are. We lie awake at night and replay our lives and lament the fallout of our sins on our kids, our neighbors, our friends. We ache and long for that home, for those good old days, for a relationship with our Creator.

You wonder how Adam bore this weight. He lived over 900 years, centuries of his sin compounding in misery, to generation upon generation. He'd suffer the tragedy of seeing one son rise up in hatred and murder another son. Imagine at that funeral, Adam in anguish, wishing he could go back to that fateful day in Eden when he'd passively acquiesced to rebellion. God had said that death would come, but could he have imagined he'd be staring at the lifeless body of his own son?

And yet Adam could cling to the faint glimmer of hope that one would come who could bear the weight of Adam's guilt and your guilt. God would visit, in a Son born of a daughter of Eve. He who, unlike Adam, knew no sin, would become sin for Adam (2 Cor. 5:21), for me and for all who call Him Lord. The Lord would lay on this second Adam the sin of us all (Isa. 53:6).

Adam, standing in the ashes of a world to which he had set fire, huddles, hidden in incomplete makeshift clothes. And yet he hears good news, the Father's haunting, searching words, "Where are you?" These words, says Derek Kidner, have "all the marks of grace."¹¹ Adam was caught red-handed by God. The God who sees all things

saw Adam's teeth sink into that fruit. "No creature is hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account," the writer of Hebrews reminds us, as if we didn't already know, subconsciously, that we are not alone from God.

Naked and exposed was Adam. Imagine the most embarrassing, humiliating, shaming moment of your life and here was Adam's dilemma. Those hidden sins, those dark spots you buried in your heart that nobody knows. Well, God sees. God sees you. He knows the real Adam, the real you.

And yet, a comfort. "Where are you?" was not a bewildered God, looking for a lost child. "Where are you?" is a grieving Father pursuing a wayward son. "Where are you?" is the aging patriarch in Jesus' story of the prodigal, lifting up his garments and sprinting toward his beloved. "Where are you?" is the Good Shepherd, leaving the ninety-nine sheep and going after the lost lamb.

"Where are you?" is the entire Christian story, God seeking and saving those who have deliberately disobeyed him. It's a radical, otherworldly, almost ridiculous love. This is why God sent His only begotten to bleed on a cruel Roman cross.

Today, God is still whispering, "Where are you?" I've heard the distant whisper of God as I made my way up the hot and dusty aisle at youth camp, while another verse of "Just As I Am" played. Others have heard Jesus say, "Where are you?" at the end of bottle of whiskey, their last measure of self-will erased by impossibility. Still others have listened to the distant call of "Where are you?" while searching history in vain for ways to explain away the miraculous.

We've heard "Where are you?" as we've sat in the reality of our own sin. We've heard "Where are you?" as we've gazed up at the nail-

pierced hands of the One who never bit the fruit, who never yielded to the temptations of the serpent, who instead poured out His life for me.

“Where are you?” is the entire Christian story.

“We see ourselves in the Garden, hearing the Lord call ‘Where are you?’ We know what it is to hide through shame. We are skilled at shifting blame on to others. We feel the cost of being expelled from Eden. . . . We are part of the story. We are there in the Garden and the Word is addressed to us,”¹² writes David Atkinson.

Maybe you are, while reading this book, standing like Adam in the wake of your own mess. Maybe you are naked and exposed, crushed under the weight of your sins. I hope in these pages you can hear the distant call, the cry from Eden to Nazareth to Calvary, of the One who is calling you, beckoning you to look up, to come home. Genesis 3 doesn’t have to be the end of your story. God seeks you in your despair, having sent Jesus to take on the weight of sin while we were “still sinners” (Rom. 5:8).

This is the real story of Genesis. The story begins with Adam’s first breath, breathed into his nostrils by the Creator, winds its way through the story of Israel, as the same Spirit that breathed on the waters in creation is promised by the prophets (Ezek. 37; Joel 2) to come and breath new life into a new people. On a cruel Roman cross, the second Adam would breathe His last breath (Mark 15:37) so that we could be saved, and yet would shake off death, rising again to breathe new life into those who believe (John 20:22).

I want you to find joy in this reality as you leave this chapter. I want you to look around at a world so broken by sin and recognize that this world is not as it should be, but that Jesus Christ is renewing

and restoring and will one day make all things new, including our own souls if we reject the way of our first Adam and pledge allegiance to the second. I leave you with the words of Charles Wesley in a famous Christmas hymn:

Come, desire of nations, come,
Fix in us thy humble home!
Rise, the woman's conquering seed,
Bruise in us the serpent's head!

.

Adam's likeness, Lord, efface;
Stamp thy image in its place;
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in thy love!¹³

