

The room was dimly lit. On one of the walls there were a number of posters, a picture of a pop musician and another of a sportsman that had often served as windows into a longed-for reality. Along another wall there was a desk with a few school books on it, but the central feature of this desk was the small yet powerful stereo system. Indeed this was the room of a teenager which showed all the signs of ambition, turbulence and yes, dreaming.

An immense battle was raging in my heart, a battle of destiny, a moment of truth. "I never thought I would do something like that," I muttered as I stared at the floor. My self-concept was being severely tested. So intense was the battle that I sought comfort from the posters which had helped me so many times before to divert my mind from the harvest I was now reaping.

The air was filled with a sense of desperation. My mind was grasping for tokens that would stabilise my disturbed state: academic, athletic, articulate were some of the tokens I grasped for, but they now seemed powerless to help me. A sickening cloud descended upon me and started to squeeze out my sense of ambition. It kicked open the prized places of the heart and stole their treasures, and then it made for the most sacred chamber of all – hope.

I was experiencing a family situation that I never imagined. This was the final straw that made me realise that I was not the person I wanted to be. I did not like myself, and I wanted to change, but it seemed hopeless.

Depression. Depression is the single greatest curse afflicting our society today. The World Health Organisation states:

Depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide. More than 300 million people are now living with depression, an increase of more than 18% between 2005 and 2015.¹

¹ http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/en/

² <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/234219.php>

Try to grasp the enormity of this problem in the following statistics from 2011:

- 1 million suicides every year. One death every 40 seconds or 3000 per day.
- For each individual who takes his/her own life, at least 20 attempt to do so. That is 60,000 per day.
- Worldwide, the suicide rate has gone up by 60% over the last five decades – mainly in industrialized nations.
- 60% of all suicides occur in Asia. China, India and Japan account for about 40% of all suicides, according to WHO.²

What on earth is going on? What is so depressing about life that millions of people are choosing to die rather than face another day?

In his book *The Mind Game*, Phillip Day gives this very revealing statement:

In times gone by, caring family members gathered around and gave the depressed relative the assurance and attention to talk things through. ... Today, with the fracturing of the family unit, the denigration of religion, and the separation of many families from each other with the hectic pace of 21st century life, psychoanalysis has simply taken over the task of counselling that used to be carried out by caring relatives or the neighbourhood minister. I strongly believe that this has had a deleterious effect on our society.³

Phillip Day lists three factors: (1) The fracturing of the family unit; (2) The denigration of religion; (3) The separation of many families from each other due to the hectic pace of 21st century life. The pivotal factor is the fracturing of the family

³ Phillip Day, *Introduction* - <http://www.campaignfortruth.com/Eclub/100702/depressionandsuicide.htm>

⁴ David Van Biema, "Learning to Live with a Past that Failed," *People*, May 29, 1989, p 79.

unit. David Van Biema commenting on this subject said the following:

A generation unlike any other has come of age, one in which millions have been marked by a profound and early sorrow. They are the children of divorce. They are just the front rank of a seemingly endless phalanx.⁴

Jim Conway in his book *Adult Children of Legal and Emotional Divorce* describes in vivid detail the pain and loss suffered by thousands who have suffered the effects of a fractured family either legally or emotionally. One of the key attributes he describes is insecurity and the constant questions of "Who am I?" and "Am I worth being loved?"⁵

These questions drive to the very source of the human dilemma – a sense of significance. Does anyone really care about me? Am I worth anything? How did these questions come to embed themselves in the human psyche? Such was, and is, my blessed and beautiful encounter with the Cross. It raises many questions. How can something so beautiful emerge from something so horrible? How does this event that played out 2000 years ago feel like it happened today? What are the key elements that brought this about and why should you care about this question of the Cross and your own personal encounter with it?

To answer that question, we need to go back to the beginning.

Suddenly Eve found herself staring at the forbidden tree. "Why has God forbidden us to eat from this tree?" she wondered. The fruit looked so inviting, beckoning her forward. Suddenly she heard a voice coming from the tree. Satan, seeing his opportunity, tempts her through the medium of a serpent; "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"⁶ Satan is both enticing Eve to debate and placing doubt in her mind about the literalness of God's Word. In the realm of debate and logic, Eve is no match

⁵ Jim Conway, *Adult Children of Legal or Emotional Divorce*, (Monarch Publications, 1990) p 53.

⁶ Genesis 3:1

for Satan. Add to this the unfamiliar weapons of deceit and darkness, and the contest will be devastatingly short should Eve signal her willingness to engage by opening her mouth.

“We may eat of the fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”(Genesis 3:4)

Eve accepts the challenge by repeating the words that God had spoken, but she is now deeply in trouble. Her own curiosity, combined with the opening challenge of Satan, left her unprepared for his following jaw dropping statement, “You will not surely die.” (Gen 3:5)

Satan, seeing that he has immobilised his prey now with devastating precision drives home his winning blow. “...For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

These few verses can be like passing through a small country town; blink and you’ll miss them. The concept that Satan introduced to Eve contained the seed of the curse that now plagues all of the children of Adam – the struggle for significance. A concept that sounds so liberating provides the very substance of the chains that enslave the human soul in misery and darkness. The lie “*You shall not surely die,*” produces the fruit that causes the nagging questions, “Does anyone care about me?” and “Am I worth being loved?”

In accepting that we could have life apart from a close relationship with God, Adam and Eve lost the sense of love, joy and peace that comes from knowing you are tenderly cared for and appreciated. The combination of their guilt for taking what was not theirs along with the feeling of independence which opened the door to worthlessness.

We were created to be children of our heavenly Father. Our tears were only ever meant to express joy. We today are all children starving for a world we have never truly know. Take the journey and download the book or audiobook to learn the way back home.

Millions upon millions of people struggle with depression every day. The motivation to keep going gets harder and harder and many are looking for a way out.

The toxic effects of worthlessness come from an evaluation of ourselves that we are not good at something, not well liked and not much use. Most self-help books try to address this by encouraging people to love and pamper themselves and tell themselves that they are special.

This method completely bypasses the essential human need for blessing. A parental figure or mentor who speaks words of blessing into your life. There is nothing that can replace this powerful experience of being told you are loved by someone you respect and admire.

Our Father in heaven wants to tell us this every day but Satan has blinded many in the world to look for value in other places and become deaf to that wonderful blessing of the Father - that you are his beloved child.

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