

Identity Wars: Searching for Home

Part 1: Identity Lost

Adrian Ebens

Did everyone sleep well last night? I didn't get a very positive response there! Betty's going, "Yes, I slept well!" Isn't this a beautiful place? I woke up this morning and looked out the window and there was a horse munching grass, and it makes the same noise I do when I eat I think, making a lot of noise. So it's really, really good to be here. And I know that a lot of us have been really excited and looking forward to coming to the camp, and we really believe that the Lord is going to bless us. We are hungry for food, aren't we? Spiritual food. I think that, as we look at the hills around us, particularly in this part of Australia, it's indicative of soul hunger. The dryness that we see around us indicates there's a dryness. There's a famine in the land for the Word of God, isn't there? This is what I'm certainly experiencing. So we've come here together because we want to be blessed, we want the reign of the Lord's Spirit to fall upon us, we want to be nurtured and to grow. So that's what I'm hoping will happen for us as we fellowship together.

When you think about the plan that God has to save us, it's not actually a very complicated plan; it's actually quite simple. Do you believe that? It's not very difficult. But there are reasons that make it difficult for us as human beings. And in the first two presentations today, this morning, that I want to look at, I want to explain why it often seems to difficult to simply accept what God is offering us. Because what God is offering us is not difficult; it's not hard. And yet, what does the Bible say? It says "Straight is the gate, narrow is the way, and few there be that find it." Why? Why is it so hard for so many people? This is what we'll look at. And as we go through, I want to share with you some of the things that I believe my Saviour has shown me through my Bible study. It's brought me immense joy, immense freedom - freedom from much of the tyranny that is experienced in life: the tyranny that I'm talking about of pride, the tyranny of jealousy, the tyranny of depression, the tyranny of guilt, the tyranny of all these things that always seem to come upon so many of us. As we spend time looking at these things, I pray that we'll be blessed. If we can kneel once more before we begin, and then we'll commence.

Father in Heaven, it's so good to come together as Your children, as your family. And Lord, we know that You're sitting on Your throne, and from Your throne comes out this crystal clear water that flows out, Your Spirit flows out, and flows over us. We want to open our hearts to Your Spirit. We pray that you would fill us with that Spirit. And Lord, may we have an ear to hear what You want to say unto us, Your people, that we may eat and drink the food and the water that You have for us. Bless us now as we present. We thank You in Jesus' name, Amen.

You see the sermon title "Identity Lost", and obviously that's a very familiar picture from Genesis chapter 3, where the serpent is instructing Eve concerning his philosophy on life, and how life operates. And we're going to spend a bit of time looking at that today. But I want to come down, further down in the conflict between good and evil, in the place where it most dramatically took place, and that is in the book of Matthew chapter 4. If you'd like to turn your Bibles to Matthew chapter 4 - I will bring it up on the screen, but it's good to read it out of a book - Matthew chapter 4: 8, 9. I want us to think carefully: Satan is putting a proposition to Christ, and I want you to note carefully what he's saying to Him. This is what Satan is saying to Jesus in the wilderness:

"The devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, " All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Matt 4:8, 9.

Now first we know - when Satan says "all these things I will give you", in terms of the kingdom of the world, what is he saying about his relationship to those kingdoms? He owns these kingdoms. He's saying, "Look, Jesus, I know that you've come here, you want to reclaim these poor people on this planet - I've got an easy way for you to do it: just bow down and worship me."

Now, I don't know if you can imagine coming to someone and someone saying that to you. If someone said to you, "Look, I'll give you all this stuff - all you got to do is bow down and worship me" - I mean, what would you think about that person? That they're a little bit insane! But doesn't that reflect that he really is insane? Isn't Satan really insane? "Bow down and worship me" - what on earth was he thinking? "Just bow down and worship me". How desperate is Satan to gain eminence or preeminence over Christ, and he'll get it any way he can! But, thank the Lord, he never will.

"Fall down and worship me". But, also, when we look at the kingdoms that Satan is referring to, and we're talking about the time when Christ was on earth, what was the ruling kingdom of that time? Rome! Do you know how Rome started as a nation? Do you know the history of Rome? This is the story that is told anyways, the story of two brothers: Romulus and Remus. Now the myth says that they were suckled by a wolf - we know that isn't true - but these two brothers, Romulus and Remus were in a particular locality and they wanted to start a little kingdom of their own. Now what they did is that they didn't have enough womenfolk in this particular area, so they invited all of the neighbours over to their particular part of town and they had a party and got everybody drunk. And while the men were all drunk, they killed most of them and took their wives, because they needed some women so they could start a new town. Is that a good way to start things? And then after, Romulus and Remus couldn't decide who should lead. So what Romulus did is, while Remus wasn't paying too much attention, he took a big rock and cracked his skull and killed him. These are the kind of kingdoms that the world is based on, these kind of principles. Is that a

good way to start a kingdom? Brothers! These are supposed to be brothers, and that is the way it started.

So, when we look at the kingdoms of the world today, what was Satan actually offering Jesus? Was he offering him something very valuable? Disease, famine, jealousy, hatred, anger, killing, war, strife - and this is what Satan was offering to Jesus, wasn't it? But that's not what Satan showed Jesus when he said he showed him all the glory of the kingdoms - he showed him the palaces, the pillars, the thrones, the crowns, the gold - he showed him all those kinds of things, and he hid all the other things in the background. It's like, I guess you could say, a second-hand car salesman. Have you ever tried to buy a car at night? Some people are smiling. Why don't you buy a car at night from a second-hand car salesman? You're all smiling - why not? You can't see the defects! And whatever Satan did, I don't know what powerpoint presentation he was showing Jesus, but he was hiding the defects. He was doing the second-hand car salesman deal and wanted to show, "Look, it's a good deal, Jesus. All you have to do is bow down and worship me, and I'll give it to you!" But Jesus knew - He knew all that was in the heart of man, and that's largely because - at another point we'll talk more about this - that He became one with us, didn't He? And it says in the Bible that Jesus knew what was in the heart of man. And so Jesus knew what Satan was doing, and he knew from the temptations that man experiences that man is in a not very good situation.

I'd like to look briefly at some of the results of our philosophy of life. Satan here is claiming to rule the world. Let's have a look at some of the statistics of this philosophy for life, because I proposed to you that it is Satan's philosophy of life that dominates the world today. It is his method, it is his way of doing things, that dominate the world. And he said that "All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me." He claims ownership to this world. And notice some statistics: probably you may be familiar with this statement, but it really bears repeating:

DEPRESSION

In her opening address, the World Health Organisation's Director General Dr. Gro Harlem stated: *"... initial estimates suggest that about 450 million people alive today suffer from mental or neurological disorders... Major depression is now the leading cause of disability globally."*

Why should people be depressed? Should we be depressed? Do we have any reason to be depressed? I mean, there may be physiological reasons, or chemical imbalances that physically cause some people to feel depressed, but in terms of emotionally, in terms of what God has done for us, should we feel depressed? And yet it says 450 million people - and that was a statistic taken before the financial crisis setting, before many people were having their homes taken off them, before the G20 promised to do all the things that they promised to do - well, we'll see what happens with that! That's a lot of people, isn't it? Maybe 600 or 700 million that are depressed. Is that indicative of a good way to live?

No.

I want you to notice some other statistics. And again, this is from ten years ago, so it's probably a lot higher now:

DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE STATS:

1 million suicides every year.

10 to 20 million attempts every year, or up to 38 attempts every minute.

Every minute, 38 people in this world attempt to end their life. You just think about that for a minute. And in that minute, 38 people will have tried to kill themselves. What is so terrible about life that people would rather choose death instead of life? That is a very sobering statistic, isn't it? And I don't know how many of you have been touched by those around you who have committed suicide, but I have. One of my close friends committed suicide, and it hurts. It stings, the sting of death. Why would they do such a thing? Why would they end their life? It's tragic, and it's sweeping through Australia. I think I've got there:

Suicide in the US for males between the ages of 35-49 is the number three cause of death.

Australia's youth suicide rate is the highest in the world.

Did you know that? Why in Australia is the youth suicide rate so high? The demands, the expectations that we put on our young people, the need to strive, the work ethic that is placed upon us. Why do our young people, more than any others - maybe it's changed in the last ten years, I don't know. But in speaking to some of the young people that I've worked with in churches, [there was] one young lady who was going to a state school. And in one year, while she was there, four of her friends committed suicide. 16 years of age, young ladies. They ended their lives. This is in a state school system. But it's a silent killer. How often do we hear about these things? We hear about it here and there, but it is like a cancer that is destroying our nation, wiping out our young people.

This is evidence of a philosophy of life that you cannot live on. The Bible does say, doesn't it, that "the wages of sin is death". We know that that means permanent death, but also the philosophy of Satan's kingdom is also death. And we're not even speaking about the people who are not willing to commit suicide, but they do it in other ways: drugs, alcohol, gambling - ways of blocking out the pain of a philosophy of life that does not satisfy, that makes us feel empty. And these are very, very sobering statistics. And they reveal, as I said, the effect of an overwhelming reality, that this world is following a way of life that does not lead to life, but leads to death.

I want to go back to the beginning and try and trace through why this situation has come about, why we are in such a state that so many people would rather choose death than life. It's a sobering thought. If you would turn your Bibles to

Genesis chapter 3, because this is where it all began. Genesis 3: 4, 5. This is the story of a serpent and a woman. The serpent, we know, is Satan, because it says in the book of Revelation “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan”. So this is Satan speaking to Eve, and this is the first time that Satan speaks in Scripture, and this is his philosophy on life. Notice where it says:

“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’”

Now what had God said previously? We’d better read that. What had God said? “You shall not eat of the tree, otherwise you will die.” But the serpent says,

“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).

“You shall not surely die.” What is Satan inferring by that statement? What is he inferring? Well, basically, if we look next, some conclusions:

SOME CONCLUSIONS FROM GENESIS 3:4-5

Every object, or every person or created being in the world has a certain power in itself.

That’s what Satan is basically saying. If you cannot surely die, as Satan is proposing, that means you don’t need to take notice of what God says; you don’t need to worry about what He’s saying, because you have life. The only reason you would need to take note of what God is saying, is if you were dependent on Him for life. Is that true? If you didn’t need Him for life, then it doesn’t matter what God says. So this is the first thing that Satan is inferring. Every object or every person or every being has power or life in themselves.

The second thing that he’s suggesting is that:

There are objects of power that we can acquire to more fully empower ourselves.

The more that we have, the more that we possess, the more that we control, the more powerful we are, the more life that we have. This is basically what Satan is saying in these particular verses.

But when we look at the Scripture, we see that the Bible says something very, very different to what Lucifer is proposing, or what Satan is proposing in these verses. Come to Psalms 36:8-9. Notice what it says:

“They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light...” Psalm 36:8-9.

What an important text this is! It says, “they are abundantly satisfied with the

fullness of Your house”; it is God that feeds us day by day, moment by moment, “and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures” - this is the river of life, that comes out of the throne of God, “For with You is the fountain of life; from God, who sits upon the throne, flows forth, He is the fountain, the spring, from which life flows. It does not come from any other source. This is what the Bible tells us. From God, and God alone, life comes. This is what the Bible is telling us. And in your light, we see light. A very, very important text.

I want you to notice another text - another couple of texts:

Revelation 22:1[*John is looking in vision*]: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

So this river flows forth, and it’s from this river that we receive life.

Ezekiel 47: 7, 9 [*It would be very interesting to read through this chapter - we don’t have time to read through all of it now, but just notice these verses. This is speaking of the temple that was in the vision that Ezekiel saw, and from this temple flowed forth a river. Notice what it says:*] “When I returned, there, along the banks of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. (9) And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the river go, will live.”

Wherever the river goes, there is life. Does that make sense? Wherever the river goes. [It’s] very, very interesting, if we look at these things.

Notice Acts 17:24-25, 28 “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. (25) Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath [*every breath you take comes from God*], and all things [*What does that include? Everything - everything that we possess, everything that we have comes from God*]. (28) for in Him [*notice how it uses the word “in Him”*] we live and move and have our being.”

How do we understand that we live “in Him”? Other than we live in the river? We’re all swimming in the river of life. Are we not? And as pastor Des said last night, God is in the midst of that river. And we are in that river - we’ll look at this later on - through Christ we’re in this river, and it says “for in Him we live and move and have our being.” Coming from the Father, through the Son, and out this river flows, and we’re swimming in this river. The breath that you breathe is the life of God which is given to us, it flows out of the Father to us, through the Son.

This is what the truth of the Word of God would tell us. Does that make sense? Are we clear on that? There is one life, flowing forth from the Father, through His Son, and it flows out to us, and we have life through the Son. This is what the

Bible is teaching us.

But when Satan said, "You will not surely die", he was saying, "No, I disagree with this. Life does not come from one source; life comes from within me, life comes from within you; life is everywhere; life is a force that all of us partake of; we don't need to be in any particular relationship with anybody to have life - we just have it." This is what Satan is trying to tell us. And this is the philosophy that rules the world today - that there is life in each one of us, apart from God.

I want you to think for a moment when it says, "He gives to us life and breath and all things." Did you have some good thoughts this morning? I heard an amen - Did you think about how lovely it was to wake up? Did you hear the birds sing this morning? Did they inspire you? Did you have thoughts of praise to God this morning? You did? Well, where did that come from? Did it originate from in here [inside you], or did it originate from up there [God]? It comes from God, doesn't it? All things, everything, every thought that we have that is good, comes from God. It's in the river, the river that flows to us. There are good thoughts in the river. And as we open our hearts to God, those good thoughts come into our lives and become a part of us. Does that make sense? Every time you think good thoughts, they come from God. And He's offering them to us, "My child, I want to give you blessing, I want to bless you with thoughts of peace, thoughts of joy, thoughts of happiness." And every time you think those thoughts, God is near to you. Can you see that? Every time you feel love for your spouse, it is God that has given you that thought. Every time you feel love for your children, it is God that has given you that thought.

Now I want you to think for a moment. From a worldly perspective, what is the greatest love that the world speaks of? In human terms. Man and wife? Well, my observation is, a mother's love for her children. That is being portrayed in most circles that I see - a mother's love for her children is perceived as the greatest and most protective form of love that there is. But do you know, according to the Scripture, there is no such thing as a mother's love? I'm not getting any response! No reaction! (laughter) Thank you, Deborah! That's the reaction we wanted! There is no such thing as a mother's love. When we talk about a mother's love in worldly terms, we're talking about something that originates in the human heart. But what originates in the human heart? What does the Bible say about the human heart? The human heart is desperately wicked! There is no good thing in it! A mother's love cannot originate from a mother's heart. It can only originate from the Father's heart. And the mother can receive that. Now, God has given to a woman special gifts to be able to receive that love in a certain way and express it in a way that we see it as a mother's love, but it does not originate in the heart of the woman. Same with a father's love - it does not originate in the heart of a man; man is selfish! Man is corruptible! Man desires only for himself. So whenever you see love manifested, the Spirit of God is present. Amen! Wherever we see love manifested, it is the Spirit of God, and it's come from the throne of God, it is flowing out from the throne of God through the

river, and somebody has responded.

Now, do we see love demonstrated in people who do not believe in God? [Yes]. But who is it that's giving them that love? They don't even know that it's Him! What a tragedy! To be touched with the feelings and the thoughts of God, every day being held in His arms, being given good thoughts, being given good feelings, and they don't even know that it's Him! What does it say further on in the book of Acts? It says "if happily they may feel after Him". Or, in Romans: "The word is nigh thee in thy mouth and in thy heart". It's near us - we don't have to send up there, we don't have to go down there, it's here, right here with us!

But the problem is that because of Satan's lie, that "you shall not surely die", when somebody is nice, when somebody does something good, where do most people believe that comes from? Themselves! When somebody says, "I'm not a bad person", what are they saying? "Huh - I'm a good person!" And they're saying that it's coming from themselves. "I would never do that!"

But what about for those of us who profess to believe in God, and we see someone doing wicked things - are we tempted to say "Oh, I would never do something like that! This is evil what this person is doing! I wouldn't do something like that!" Are we in danger? What are we saying? Are we saying that we're better than them? Are we saying that we are righteous, and they are unrighteous? When we say those things, we need to be careful. Are we saying that it's coming from us? Are we familiar with the statement that says, "But for the grace of God, there go I"? Have we heard that statement about the derelict in the gutter? Do we really believe this though?

There is no difference between any of us. All of us in the human family are in the same boat. All of us are stamped with the same lie. All of us are motivated by the same principles in this world. It's only God and His Spirit that makes the difference between whether someone does something good, or whether someone does something bad. And the more we recognize this factor, as we said, as Deborah read this morning, even Mahatma Gandhi understood this: prayer is an acknowledgment of man's weakness. Even he saw that principle, even though it was confused with other principles, but he recognized that principle. When we pray, it should be an acknowledgment of our weakness. Did we pray this morning - "Lord, please don't let me say anything silly to anybody today. Please do not let me become offended by 'other people's stupidity'. Please don't let me be impatient because other people do not seem to understand that I have a program that I need to run today, I have things that I need to do today, and if they get in my way, please help me not to get upset." Some things that we can think about, isn't it? I want you to really, really think about that.

Isn't it beautiful? You know, people say "Where is God?" Well, every time you have a good thought, God is there, through His Spirit, He sends His Spirit to us,

and He is there. Many Christians say to me, "You know, I feel that God is far away. I feel empty. I feel like God is far away from me." Do you know that that very thought itself is proof that God is right there? Isn't it? If you feel far away from God, and if you have a desire to be close to God, does that thought come from within the human heart? No. That thought comes from the throne of God. That thought means that God is reaching out to you. If you feel far away from God, and if you have a sense that you need to come back to Him, you should rejoice! You should be happy! God is calling you. The only reason you'd be "Oh, I feel far away from God", is that you feel that you are not performing correctly. That you need to make some effort to come back to God. And there needs to be effort, but we need to understand where that effort is. The effort that we need to make is in believing God's Word. That's all there is to it! And allow Him - Romans 2:4 says, "It is the goodness of God that leads you to repentance." It's not the badness of man. Now we could spend all our time talking about the wickedness of man and how bad he is, but that doesn't lead you to repentance. Romans 1 lists out a complete litany of sins of mankind, but it says that that doesn't lead them to repentance. Showing them their faults, showing them that they're sinful, doesn't lead someone to repentance. The Spirit can do it in a certain way to lead us to repentance, but it's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. When we see His goodness, that has come from Him.

Now, the beautiful thing is that this understanding (and we're going to spend a lot of time over the next few presentations looking at this) that life flows forth from God, and that we receive life from Him, is a beautiful, beautiful theme, because that life is not only physical life. When we think of life, we typically think of physical life, don't we? That the heart beats, that there's a recognition in the eyes, and that we have breath and eat, we're alive. But there is much more to life. What about spiritual life? What about emotional life?

I want us to look at a couple of other verses. In terms of life. Let's think again about why people commit suicide. What is often the thing that people say before they end their life? "It's not worth it", or "I'm not worth anything, I'm just garbage." I've heard young people say this, "I'm just garbage, I'm not worth anything, nobody cares. Nobody cares about me. Nobody knows what I'm going through." Has anybody ever felt that? Yeah. I have. Nobody cares, nobody knows about what I'm going through. I'm not worth anything. And then some people start to think, "Well, you know, if I ended my life, nobody would notice anyway. Nobody would care." But the fact is, that's not true at all, from what we've just said.

Notice this next verse. This is Jesus explaining to us the principle of His Father's kingdom. It's a beautiful verse, I want this verse to stay with you. It says:

"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God." (Luke 12:6) Is that true? How many sparrows are there in the world? At least hundreds! Millions! Billions? Every sparrow, God remembers. Why? Because they are in the river of life, aren't they? And it's His Spirit that

keeps them alive, isn't it? When one sparrow falls to the ground, how can our Father not know that it falls to the ground? Because it's His Spirit that gives it life. When a Sparrow falls to the ground, He knows. He remembers the sparrow, He is constantly thinking about the sparrows. But notice:

"But [Now Jesus is inserting the word "but" here, He's making a contrast to the sparrows] the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value and many sparrows." (Luke 12:6, 7).

Now some of us have varying degrees. For my brother Mark, that's a big zero! But God still knows that! Except for a few in the face, sorry Mark, it's not zero. I don't know how many hairs I have in my head! Do you know how many hairs you have on your head? Again, is this true? Is this just a figure of speech? Does God actually know the number of hairs that you have on your head? Yes. Do you believe that? Are you sure? Isn't that an intimate detail? What's God saying here? God knows you intimately! Does that mean that God is thinking about you? So, when someone says, "Nobody cares", is that true? It can't be true! God cares! God knows, God feels. Every day He's sending out thoughts of love and joy and peace - every day. A massive wave of love flows out of the throne of Heaven. And what do we do with it? What do we do with that wave of love that flows over us? Do we allow fear, pride, jealousy, to squash it out? You know the Scripture talks about Christ being crucified afresh? Every day? When thoughts of love come to us and we turn from those thoughts and we choose thoughts of anger, are we not crucifying Christ afresh? That's what it means! When we choose sin over Christ, we are crucifying Him afresh, are we not? When thoughts come to us to be loving, to be patient, to be kind, but we allow anger to boil over and say, "I can't help it, I'm angry", we are crucifying Christ. Can you see that? When we have anger without a cause. The Bible says there are reasons to be angry, Jesus got angry, didn't He? He had a cause to be angry. When they wouldn't allow the children to come to Him to bless them, Jesus got angry. He had a cause, He had a reason to be angry. Think about that: when we allow fear to dominate us, when we allow passion to rule us, we are crucifying Christ afresh. Because we are rejecting His Spirit, and we are allowing the spirit of the Evil One to control us. It's a solemn thought. And if we think about it...

All right. This is how God thinks about us right now. If you're feeling discouraged, right now God is thinking about you. He has plans for you. He's preparing a home for you - specifically for you, according to what you like, and what you want, in a righteous and a godly manner. He has plans for you, He wants you to prosper, He wants you to do well. Now when you hear that truth, how does it make you feel? Does it make you feel good? The One who made the heavens and the earth is thinking about you right now. He has plans for you, He thinks about you. How much does God think about you? Notice:

"Many, O Lord my GOd, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare

and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.” (Psalm 40:5)

When we talk about something that is more than can be numbered, we call that “priceless”. God’s thoughts towards you are what determines your value as a person - not your education, not your nationality, not your intelligence, not your assets, not your looks - that does not determine your worth. But God’s thoughts towards you determines your worth. Is that true? But it’s so hard to believe that - because of Satan’s lie that “you shall not surely die” and how much it affects us. You’ll be amazed how much that lie affects us.

The Word of God says God thinks of you more than can be numbered. He never stops thinking about you. He’s always thinking about you. The test for us is to believe that or not to believe that. Because if God is thinking about you all the time, and He is the source of life, then should we worry? So why do we worry? Jesus says, why do you worry about what you will eat and what you will wear? Why do you worry about this? Why do you worry about that? These things the gentiles seek after. They are the things they worry about. And “gentile” is a nice Biblical word for the word “pagan”. When we worry about life and food and clothes, we are pagans. Oh, no response - no one here must worry about those things - that’s good! That’s good! Nobody worries about it. Amen! *Pagans* worry about food and clothes and money. But not *God’s people*; they don’t worry about these things, because they know their Heavenly Father provides all these things. And if they lack for something, the Bible says, “If you ask Me anything , or if you ask anything in My name”, what did He say He’ll do? He’ll do it! Do you believe it? It’s not hard, really, isn’t it? If we believe, “to him who believes, all things are possible”.

All right. (Audience: aaawww...) Ah, isn’t it nice? [Photo of Adrian, his wife and baby right after the birth]. That was a very, very special day. I want to illustrate for you God’s thoughts towards us. That, of course, is a picture of myself, my wife, and my first-born son, Michael. And it was a long day. Or a long night! This is the Sydney Adventist Hospital, and the labour was about eleven hours, which was fairly long. And I can tell you that when Michael was born, I had a profound new respect for womanhood. What my wife went through to give me a son was quite intense. And her ability to deal with that kind of pain must’ve been from God. Isn’t that right, Darling? Because I can tell you, from my point of view, men have it in nature a desire to fix things. We want to fix things. If something’s wrong, when a wife comes to her husband, “Honey, I have a problem with this”, instead of putting his arm around her, he tells her how to fix it. He doesn’t get it! Put your arm around her first, then you fix it! But no - we just fix it. And there was my wife, in immense pain - I couldn’t fix it. I couldn’t do anything about it. That was hard; that was really, really hard. And I remember praying to the Lord. At that time I said, “Lord, I know there is a reason why You have allowed my wife to suffer like this. But at the moment, I don’t see it! I don’t understand it!”

And I say this to people, and some of you that have heard me present before will

remember this story that - I have a picture, this is not the picture, this is where I'm smiling, but there's another picture when Michael was just born, and Lorelle's holding Michael, and she's beaming, and I'm sitting next to her, and I'm a little bit.. [knocked out facial expression]. And that's where I say to people, look, you have to understand, it was very hard for me. And all the ladies shake their heads and go, "Deary me, this guy needs a life!" But I want to tell you something: in the emotional realm, in the relational realm, when you're watching someone you love more than anyone else on the face of the earth suffering like that, it causes pain. It causes trauma. It takes energy - it saps you of energy. Is that right, guys? Yeah. And there's nothing you can do! And you're praying, "Lord, let it end! I can't bear to see my wife in this kind of pain." Interesting, isn't it?

And I was "had it" and she was beaming. She'd given me a son. Beautiful, isn't it? And as I held my son, I prayed a prayer. And this is the way the prayer went: I said, "Lord, I know that my son is stamped with my nature" (Oh boy!), I have a rebellious nature - I don't know about you people, but I have a rebellious nature. When somebody says to me, "Do this, Adrian", my first initial response is, "And who are *you* to tell *me* what to do? What do you mean, 'do this'? I want reasons, I want explanations. Don't tell me what to do!" It comes from my good Dutch heritage, and my Celtic heritage on the other side. I've got a double whammy of insubordination.

I said, "Lord, my son is stamped with my nature. He could grow up and desire to have nothing to do with me, my God, my faith, the Word of God. Lord, I don't want this to happen. I ask you, whatever happens, I don't want anything to come between me and my son. And I just want him to know me, to know *me*. That we can be friends. That I can be his father and his friend. I don't just want to be his father, in a worldly sense; I want to be his friend." That's what I prayed.

Four years later, I was walking and I was thinking about these things, and I was reading stuff in the Bible about my Father in heaven. And I was praying, asking the Lord for wisdom and understanding concerning Him. And all of a sudden I began remembering when Michael was born. And I remembered the prayer that I prayed. It came back to me very vividly. It was like I felt the Lord say to me, "Do you remember the prayer that you prayed?" I said, "Yeah, I do, I remember very clearly, I don't want anything to come between me and my son, and I just want him to know me." And like a flash, my Father in heaven said to me, "Adrian" - no I heard in my head, I heard the name, "Adrian, *that's* how I feel about you." Wow! Is that true? That *is* true, because if we believe that every good thought comes from the Father, that the desire that I had to be close to my son, for him not to be apart from me, did not come from within *my* heart; it came from the Father's heart, isn't it? So the thoughts that I was feeling were thoughts that came from my Father in heaven. They were coming through me, and I was expressing that feeling of not being separated. And God said to me, "Adrian, this is how I feel about you."

Now I must say that for the next ten minutes, I began to fight. Isn't it silly? "But Lord, I'm wicked! But Lord, all the things that I've done!" When He came close to me and He held me close and He said, "Adrian, I don't want anything to come between you and me, I just want you to know *me*", I began to struggle. Isn't it silly? Why did I begin to struggle? Why did I begin - "But Lord, I've done all these bad things". I did what Peter did; I fell at His feet, and I grabbed hold of His feet, but I said, "Lord, depart from me. I'm not a good person. How could You love me?" See, even there, in that situation, I was still believing the lie of Satan. I was still being defiant. God said that He loved me, but I was saying, "But no, how can you love me?" My selfish heart was even denying Him and His love to me. Can you see that? Do you see what I'm saying? "No, You can't love me. I'm bad. I've decided that I'm bad. I've passed judgment on myself that I'm bad. And what You're saying doesn't make sense, it's not right, Lord." That's what I was saying emotionally. I wasn't using words, but that's what I was saying emotionally.

After ten minutes, the Lord, I guess, in some sense He tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Have you finished yet? Are you going to trust My word? Or are you going to have your own opinion on this subject, as to whether I love you or whether I don't love you? Are you going to trust Me or trust yourself?" I said, "Lord, I'm sorry", I asked forgiveness, "I choose to trust Your word. I choose to believe that You love me. I choose to believe that I will live with You forever. And that nothing will come between us. I choose to believe that, not because I feel it, not because there's anything in me that says that I deserve it, nothing in my history indicates that I deserve it, but simply alone because You said it." Why is that so hard? Why is that so hard to do? I don't understand. But it's hard because of the serpent's lie, to trust in ourselves and to make our own opinions and to pass our own judgment. But thank God that I accepted that. I can tell you that from that point forward, my experience with God - and I'm speaking as one who was already telling other people about God and His love and the truth - but from that point forward, my walk with God deepened; my joy in God deepened. And it has become more and more precious. I love to go walking and - now we're living on just the other side of Ballarat, there's plenty of sheep. And I go walking in the fields. I love to go walking in the fields! I love to hear the breeze in the trees. I love to look out over the horizon and see the hills. And as I walk, I walk with my Father. And He walks with me, as the hymn says, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. And the joy that we share as we tarry there, I can tell you, none other has ever known. That's the joy that I experience knowing that God is my Father, trusting alone in what He has said rather than what I feel. Because what I feel often is contrary to what this [the Bible] says. And I've learnt that by trusting in what this book says, over what my feelings dictate, is the road to happiness. To simply trust in what my Father says, trust His word, without saying, "But, but, but, Lord! But, Lord!" It's a joy, and it's a joy that all of us can have.

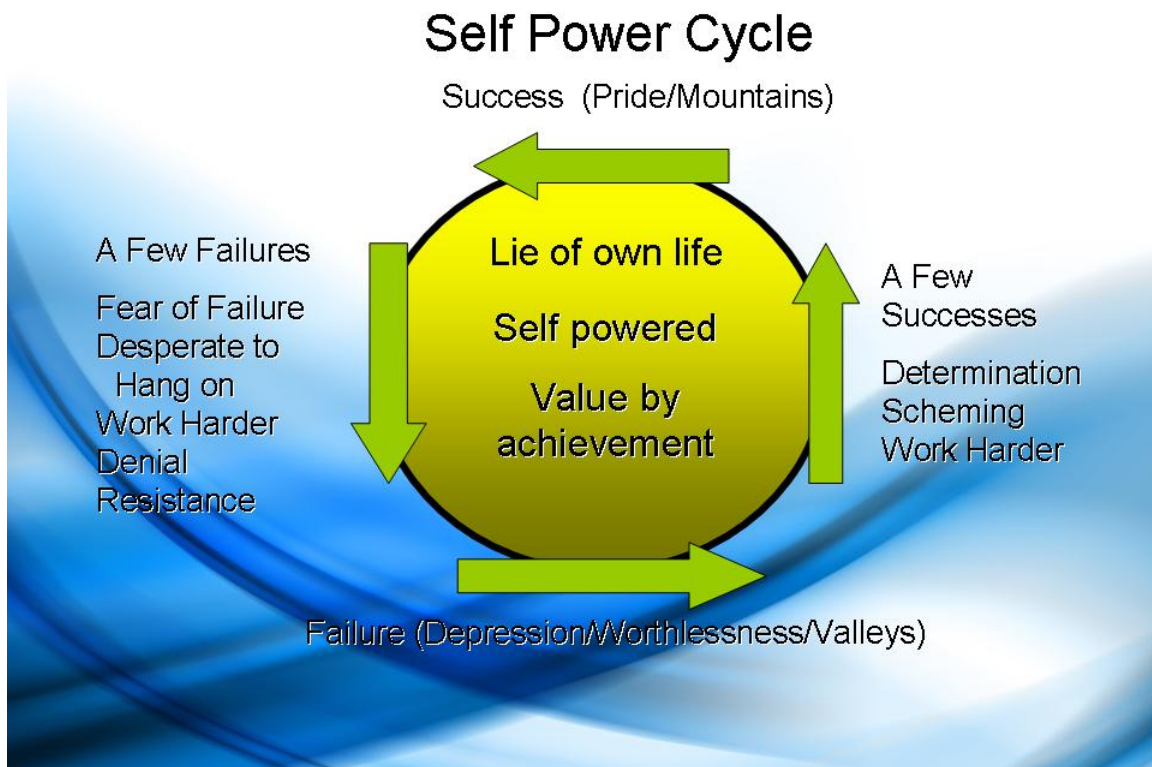
I'd better move on. Satan said - this is the problem with Satan - in Isaiah 14:13, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also

sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north.” Notice how he said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God”, He says, “I will be like God”, he goes on to say, “I will be like God”. He wanted to be like the Father, the source of life. He wanted to be like Him, having His own independent life source, dependent on nobody. And in essence in doing this, he, forfeited the joy of being a son of God. Because if you are independent, if you have your own life source, there’s no need, there’s no value in being a son; there’s only value in yourself, in what you can do and what you can produce. And so, in rejecting God as his Father, Lucifer rejected the joy of being a son of God. And he opened a torrent of feelings that he never dreamed would come. He was forced into a situation where, every time he did something - and you just think about this - and I still do this today: when I do something that I feel really good about, often I’ll ring my father. Do you ever do that? See what my father’s going to say; waiting for the word. What’s my father going to say? What’s he going to say? Sometimes my father says, “That’s really good, son”, and I feel really good.

What is the point in achieving and doing great things, if there’s no one that you look up to to put their hand on your shoulder and say, “Son, daughter, I’m really proud of you.” That’s the main reason why you would do anything! Because that’s the only place where true happiness comes from; that when your Father in heaven puts His hand upon you and says, “This is good.” That’s where the joy comes from. But when you do things for your own achievement, your own blessing, and there’s no one to put their hand upon you and tell you it’s good - well what good is it? What good is it? You can say, “Well, I’ve done a good job”, but isn’t that a hollow - I find myself - it’s a hollow feeling. How long can you sit there and convince yourself, “I’ve done a good job, I’ve done a really great job”. There is no satisfaction in achievement unless there’s someone to tell you that it’s good.

And you notice in the Bible when you read in the Bible, in the creation, who is it that specifically created the heavens and the earth? Was it the Son? Yes, the Son created the heavens and the earth. The Father gave to the Son to create the heavens and the earth. But it says in Genesis 1, and God looked around and saw that it was good. Isn’t this the Father putting His stamp of approval on what the Son has done? “Son, this is good. This is really good, Son.” And isn’t it a joy then, for the Father and Son? Yes! This is what’s going on - joy is what’s going on there.

But Satan, he did not have this anymore. He had no one to put his hand around him. So he comes into the cycle of worth, what I call the cycle, the self power cycle:



the lie that you have value in yourself - the thing is that when you're motivated by self, when you do well, you are proud in your achievements. "I've done well". But what happens when you fail? When you mess up, when you do bad, do you feel good? Depressed! Yeah. "Oh, I messed up, and everyone saw it. Everyone saw me mess up. I'm no good." And you will find that in most cases, life is a cycle, oscillating between pride and depression. The pride is like mountains, the mountains of pride. Up on the mountain. And the valleys of depression- we feel discouraged. We try, we try and please people. But this is the cycle that most people go through.

When I do well, there's a kind of satisfaction in what's being done, and when we mess up, we can get depressed. We go around in a cycle, around and around and around. I think that if most of us examine carefully, a lot of us have been affected by this principle - most of us are in this situation, even as Christians. We can work hard. When we bring people to Christ there can be the danger of pride. When we don't do well - when we sing up in front and we drop a note, oh... Have you ever heard that when someone sings, and they say, "Oh, you've done a wonderful job!", and they say, "Oh, I missed a note, and I did this, the piano went wrong..." Have you ever heard people talking like that? What's the focus? The focus is on everything that I did wrong- this went wrong, and that went wrong, and this person coughed, this person sneezed, and they put me off, and I went wrong, and... Terrible! This is the cycle.

And this is the cycle that we get enslaved in. We can talk about this. When we have a latent view that we have life in ourselves, we will get stuck in this cycle, oscillating between pride and depression. This is what will take place.

All right. I'll have a bit of a comparison now. We're just going to summarise briefly, before we close, between the two kingdoms. Satan's kingdom, his philosophy of life, and God's kingdom, and the truth about life - because this is not a philosophy, this is the truth, as the Bible teaches us. (add chart of comparison between the two kingdoms)

A Comparison of the Two Kingdoms

Attribute	God's Kingdom	Satan's Kingdom
Government	Family	State - Territorial
Currency	Character	Assets
Citizenship	Sons and Daughters	Performance & Achievement
Value	Relationship to God	Personal Achievement

God's government is a family-based kingdom. His government is a family kingdom - a Father, and a Son. I mean, it's very obvious, isn't it? It's a family-based kingdom.

Satan's kingdom is about area: you live in this area, you're in my area, you belong to me, you will do what I tell you to do. Because he can't claim a family kingdom, because he has no rights to be a father. He didn't make us, he didn't create us. So the only way he can get us to follow him is to put a circle, like this, and he's put it around the universe, and he says, "You're in my universe, you will follow me. And if you don't follow me, I have an army. I will force you to follow me." That's all he can do, is use force. Satan's kingdom must use force, because he has no right to rule over anybody. So he has to use force; that's why we have

armies and kingdoms - to force people to do this, to pay taxes, to feed the army, to keep everyone in control. It has to be that way in Satan's kingdom.

The currency of heaven is character. Do you trade heavily in that currency, sharing the love, joy, peace, the flowing of the river that flows through? Is that a currency you trade in, sharing love with each other and enriching one another, embellishing one another with the currency of heaven which is love, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering?

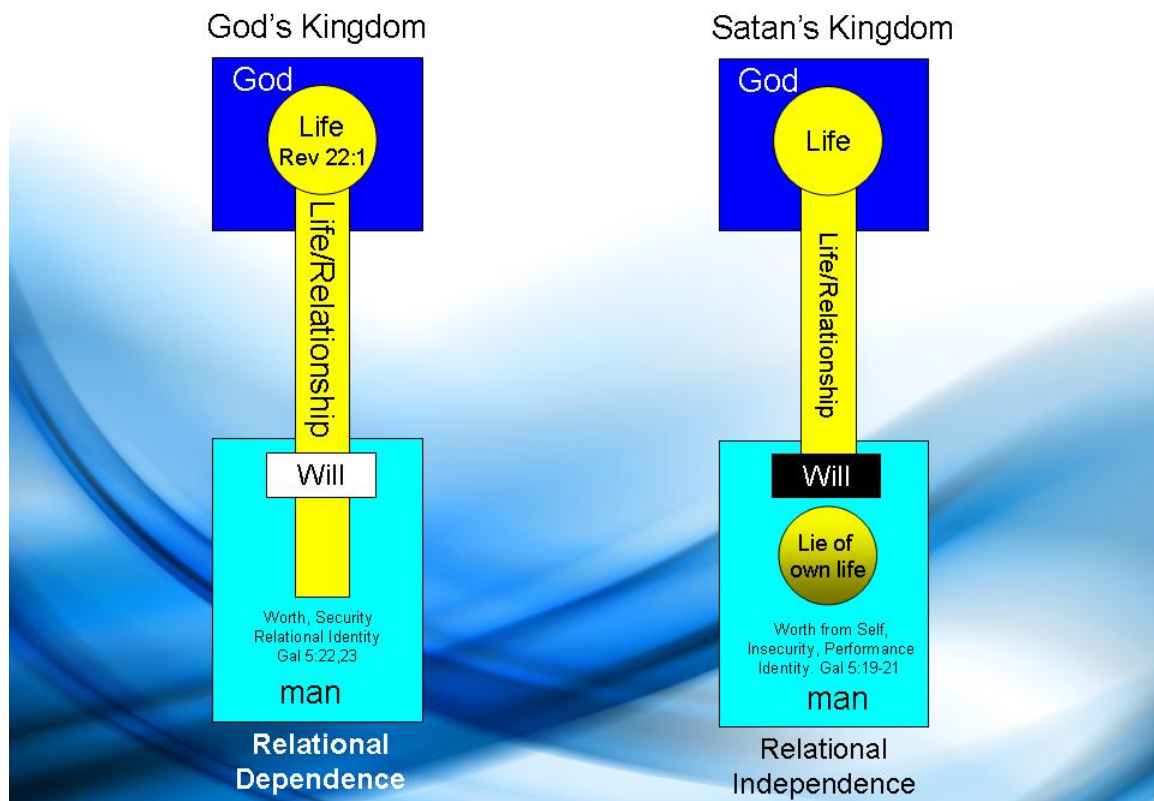
Or, the currency of assets, whether it be intellectual assets, or physical assets: houses, lands, status - that's the currency of this world, isn't it? If you have stuff, you're important. That's the currency. Everything is done with money. We know that the Bible says that the love of money is what? The root of all evil. Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to do something for the Lord, and you just said, "I don't have enough money", so what are we saying? Do we say, "Father, I want to serve You, where do you want me to go?" Or do we say, "O holy bank account. Can I serve the Lord?" Who do we pray to? God or Mammon? Who decides where we serve the Lord - God or money? "Oh, I can't go, I don't have enough money. Money has prevented me from serving Him." Wow... Really, is that so? O holy bank account - I didn't know it was that important! Our bank accounts are soon going to be swept away, aren't they? Very soon! Some people are already losing large amounts of money. (1.02.41) Superannuation being siphoned off, being swept away, all going into the big bankers' pockets. It was always going to be that way, wasn't it? So, anyway...

Citizenship - what entitles us to be citizens in heaven? Sons and daughters! That we believe that we are His sons and daughters. We accept. When He says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the authority to become the children, the sons, of God." That's how you become a citizen in God's kingdom.

In Satan's kingdom, it's by your performance and your achievement. The things that you do, the things that you achieve. The people who rule this world are people who have status, who have money, people who have self-importance, they've made it in some way. They're the ones that gain recognition, they're the ones that appear on the 6:00 news. And also performance in terms of killing and destroying and maiming - that also gets some news too, doesn't it? It becomes noticeable. You can be famous, or you can be infamous. Either way, you'll get on the news. That's the way the world operates.

Your value in God's kingdom is your relationship to God. That's what makes you valuable. In Satan's kingdom, it's your personal achievement. What have I achieved? Let's just think about this for a moment. When you get to ponder your life, when you feel that life is maybe going to disappear, what is the question that you ask? Is it "Have I walked with God?" or is it "Have I done anything?". What question are we asking? What have I achieved in life? What have I done? If that's the question that we're asking, then what's going on? Is that the question

we really should be asking, “What have I done?” And there’s an area, of course, where that question may be valid, but if we’re feeling like “well, I haven’t achieved anything in life, there, I feel like I’m no good”, well, there’s a serious problem: you may be in the wrong kingdom. But have I walked with God? Have I known God? Have I felt the joy of His presence? Isn’t that enough for us? Is there anything that can be better than to know God and to be in fellowship with God, and to receive love and joy from Him? What else better can there be? To have His arm around us saying, “I love you, you are My child”? Can there be anything better than that? Nobody’s saying anything. For *me*, there can be nothing better than that. That’s all that I need. I don’t need any more than that.



All right, we’d better wrap up. of God’s kingdom, Satan’s kingdom life-will-man) So we see in God’s kingdom that God is the source of life, Revelation 22:1, and flowing forth from God’s throne, life, relationship or blessing, flows down to the will. The will decides whether that blessing comes into us, and fills us, or the will decides whether it’s rejected. It’s the power of the will that decides whether we receive or whether we don’t receive. And as we receive that life, we receive worth, security, and we have a relational identity. We are known as a son or a daughter of God.

You know how people often introduce themselves, “Oh, this is Dr. such-and-such, he has a PhD in this, he’s done this, he’s flown here and he’s spoken

there, he's done all these things..." He's known by what he *does*. But I can say to you that my name is Adrian Ebens, and I am the son of Abel Ebens. That's who I am. All the things I do are irrelevant compared to who I am. And I am a son of the Father in heaven. That's who I am. And nobody here can take that away from me, which is great. And I have a relational dependence. And Galatians 5:23, because the fruit of the Spirit is what? Love, joy, peace, patience, all of these things. That flows into the life. But with Satan's lie "you shall not surely die", rather than looking here for a blessing, you will look in here for a blessing - you will look in within yourself. You will no longer look up here - the will has been affected by the lie "you shall not surely die", and all these blessings get blocked. This is where Christ is crucified in the will. He is crucified. The rejection of the life of God through His Spirit flowing to us. And the worth comes from within ourselves, but then that means we must - if our life is here, - this is another old topic, but just briefly - when our life is secure here, do we need to be afraid for our life? If your life is secure here, do you need to be afraid for your life? Yes! Because you now have to protect it. You need to defend yourself; you need to look after yourself. But in this kingdom, Jesus slept in a boat in the middle of a storm. Why? His life flowed forth from the Father. It was given to Him. He trusted God in heaven to provide it. But here [the other kingdom], no: walls, padlocks, protection, guns, rifles, bullets, to protect myself! Barbed wire! Insecurity! And Galatians 5:19: anger, envy, wrath - all the fruits of the evil and the wicked one. Because we block the blessing. This is essentially what happens in these two kingdoms. And we become imprisoned by this false identity, what we call the mountains and the valleys. And we're going to speak some more about the mountains and the valleys.

All right. God had a big task to do. Now that the human race - when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree, they embraced this lie. And I'd just better finish off here - they embraced the lie of the serpent. They believed in a life inherited within themselves. You and I have been stamped with this lie. Do you realise that? And we're stamped with this lie that "you shall not surely die". Whether we know it or not, we act - everything around us acts in a way, built upon a system of a belief that life comes from within you, not from above. This is why it's so hard to believe God, because we're stamped with this lie "you shall not surely die, you have life in yourself." We don't think about it, we just act it out. We like to have independence. Why do people here find it hard to maintain a regular prayer life? (Don't put your hands up!). I know over the years I've found it hard. But lack of prayer life, lack of spending time with God in prayer, meaningful prayer, means that you're tainted with the lie. "Oh, it's ok, you know, I find it hard to pray, I find it hard to fit prayer in to the rest - I've got to work. I have to work, but prayer and Bible study, well, if I can fit it in, I'll fit it in. But work is important. Prayer and Bible study, well, if I can fit it in, I'll fit it in." Huh? That's crazy! That's not the way it should be! That's going back to the 'O Holy Bank Account'. "I need to provide". Well, of course we do, but are we trusting in ourselves?

God now had to reach the human race. And just briefly, He needed to:

A BIG TASK

Help them recognise their desperate situation. Because we've been cut off from God. Once they ate that fruit, the life source had been cut. We're not going to go down all of how God dealt with that right now.

Influence human race in right direction without force. God couldn't use force. If God, when He came to Adam and Eve, and He said, "What have you done?" Did Adam respond, "Oh, I ate the fruit, I'm sorry, I made a mistake, please forgive me" - is that what he said? What did he say? "The woman whom You - You gave to me - this is a conspiracy, God, You and her got together and You pulled me down." That's the way the human heart works, isn't it? Blame everybody else. Inherent powers - "No, it's not my fault, I didn't have anything to do with it". So how can God come to us, how can God come to Adrian and say, "Adrian, you have a problem". What problem? I don't have a problem! You're attacking my performance! And if you're attacking my performance, you're attacking my worth. And if you're attacking my worth, I'm not worth anything. And that's why Cain said, when God came to him and said, "What are you doing?" And he said, "Oh, my punishment is greater than I can bear. It's all too hard, You're making me feel bad. You're telling me bad things about myself. I feel awful now. I want to die." That's the human heart. The human heart, in many cases, would rather die than to trust God and believe His word. That's terrible! No wonder the heart is wicked. Many people would rather die than accept the fact that we can't live without God and we need Him. That's how terrible this situation is. God needed to:

Show them that they had a wrong perception of His character and kingdom and to show them that He really loves them. They didn't understand that God... we can't go on, there's so many things that we'd look at here. But now that they have their own life source, and God has a bigger life source, God's like a threat. He's like a big ogre - He has a big life source, and I have a little life source, and every time God comes to me, oh, I've got to do the right thing. It completely changed their perception of who God is. They needed:

A way to remove their guilt and insecurity and to restore their true identity and value as children of God.

A way to reclaim their sense of purpose and destiny.

A life support system to give them time to choose and decide. We're going to go into that shortly.

There must be a penalty for their rebellion.

All these things God had to do in His ability to bring us back to this channel of blessing, this channel of life, river of life.

Father in Heaven, we just thank You, we just thank You so much that Your words told us that You love us. Your love is incredible. Your word tells us, but there are things in our hearts and minds that tell us because we don't always do the right thing, because we fail, that we're not worthy of Your love, that we don't deserve

heaven, that we don't deserve good relationships. Lord, these are all lies. We know that we don't deserve these things, but Your word says that You're going to give them to us anyway, if would just but trust You, believe You. Help us to believe that we are Your children, that we belong to You. And that You will just give us all those good thoughts, those good feelings, if we just accept the word of God. We just thank You and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.