



ONCE UPON A TIME

fairy tales and falls

Week 1 Group Guide | Message by Chad Bruegman

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Start

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

Growing up, what was your favorite fairy tale or Disney story? Secondly, if you had to be one of the characters, which one would you pick and why?

Share

Welcome to our brand new series called "Once Upon a Time."

Fairy Tales...when we hear those words, there can be very differing reactions. For some, there is excitement, hopefulness and wonder. We think about the stories of struggle, overcoming great odds, finding our true potential and seeing justice prevail. It's when the good guys win and the bad guys lose. Fairy tales speak to a much deeper part of the heart, where we understand that there is this epic struggle going on in life and it's something we can all relate to. For some of us, our motto is "being optimistic isn't always being happy. It's about taking what the world throws at you and saying 'I'm not going to let this get me down.'"

For others, when we hear 'Fairy Tales,' we have a very different reaction. Our initial thought is that fairy tales are dumb. Instead of hope, we feel despair or even anger. The stories of redemption just make us feel worse about our lives and remind us just how far we are from any type of fairy tale ending. Deep down, we know there is no happy ending. To compensate, we become masters of sarcasm and are card carrying pessimists. For those of who view them this way, our motto is "if everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something."

Throughout this series, we are going to look at relationships and how all of them are intertwined and connected to a greater story. We are going to talk about adversity, how we get back up when we fall, unconditional love, and finding real redemption. The good news is that this greater story is not a made-up fairy tale, but a true story with a real fairy tale ending.

Let's start off this week by talking about adversaries. In every great fairy tale, there is an adversary to overcome. It is no different in our own lives. There are adversaries that we all face. According to scripture, we have a real adversary that wants only to destroy our lives any way possible, an enemy that wants to

destroy our families, friendships, dating relationships, and especially our marriages. Jesus refers to him as a liar and a murderer and he is explicitly called ‘the devil.’

Sadly, so many people don’t understand that there are real spiritual forces of evil at work all around us. To stand against the enemy, we must first realize that there is one.

Have a few people each read the following verses: Genesis 3:1-13, John 10:10, John 8:44, 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:11-12

What are the characteristics of our adversary according to the Bible?

What is the goal of our adversary as it pertains to our own life?

God shows us the right way to live so that we might thrive and flourish; yet the enemy is unrelentingly scheming to lead us away from truth. Have you ever experienced battling the lies of the enemy?

How can we stand against the devil’s plans for our lives?

Grow

The good news is that God is relentlessly pursuing us with mercy, redemption and grace. God is very aware of the battle we face. We are not alone in the fight and there is no weapon formed by the enemy that can stand against the power of God. We just need to choose to follow God when we are tempted by the devil’s schemes.

Next, let’s read Genesis 3:1-11

In Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* we can see the progression of the fall:

Ye shall not surely die—He proceeded, not only to assure her of perfect impunity, but to promise great benefits from partaking of it.

Your eyes shall be opened—His words meant more than met the ear. In one sense her eyes were opened; for she acquired a direful experience of “good and evil”—of the happiness of a holy, and the misery of a sinful, condition. But he studiously concealed this result from Eve, who, fired with a generous desire for knowledge, thought only of rising to the rank and privileges of her angelic visitants.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food—Her imagination and feelings were completely won; and the fall of Eve was soon followed by that of Adam. The history of every temptation, and of every sin, is the same; the outward object of attraction, the inward commotion of mind, the increase and triumph of passionate desire; ending in the degradation, slavery, and ruin of the soul (Jam 1:15; 1 Jn 2:16).

How did the serpent begin his deceptive argument with Eve?

In what ways did Eve rationalize the decision to do what God commanded both Adam and Eve not to do?

What was the immediate consequence for both Adam and Eve the moment they ate the fruit?

We are all in a battle with a crafty adversary. What are some ways we rationalize sin in today’s culture?

Move

Adam and Eve find themselves hiding from God. For the first time in their lives, they experience shame. They were never intended to feel shameful about who they are, but now they are overwhelmed with it and sew fig leaves together to hide their nakedness. But in God's great mercy and love, He walks through the garden to begin his rescue plan for his children.

Let's end by reading Genesis 3:12-21

God in his great mercy provides animal coverings. The Hebrew word is 'Hemet' which means the full hide of an animal. Something had to die in order to cover the shame of Adam and Eve's sin. In God's great love, he provides a way to cover the sin. Though he provides a temporary remedy, there are still consequences that Adam and Eve must now live with for the rest of their lives, which will be passed on to their children and their children's children. Consequences we still experience today.

How do we see Adam and Eve both shifting blame in their conversations with God?

In what ways do you think you can 'blame-shift' with God?

In thinking about your relationships right now, is there an area of your life that you need to stop rationalizing or shifting blame and start living God's way?

Pray

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the situations that people might be facing today. If you are in a co-ed group, we suggest breaking up into guys and ladies groups to pray more openly.

To Go

Ephesians 6:11-12

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.