



ONCE UPON A TIME

fairy tales and falls

Week 2 Group Guide | Message by Chad Bruegman

Start

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

Let's have a few people share an embarrassing moment from their lives, something that sticks with you to this day.

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.

Shame is the initial reaction of creation to the Fall. Think about that for a moment. There wasn't a massive earthquake, Adam and Eve weren't instantly killed. They were just ashamed. Sure, it's easy to chuckle as we think about Adam and Eve scrambling around the garden looking for some fig leaves they could use in a very "strategic" way to cover themselves, but that's a sad thing! When God created man, it was the first

time that he used “very good” to describe what he had made (Genesis 1:31). Mankind was the pinnacle of creation, made in the very image of God! However, when sin enters the picture, it permanently tarnishes the way we see the crown jewel of creation—mankind.

Chad talked this past week about how not only was there physical shame, but that shame affected the relationship between God and man, as well as the relationship between Adam and Eve. For the first time in history, creation was dealing with the consequences of sin.

Let’s read: Genesis 3:8-10

We all know what that feels like – the feeling that your mistakes are about to be exposed. Some of us might even carry things to this day that we hope no one ever finds out about us. Perhaps that shame has actually kept you from being able to believe God loves you, and you’ve kept your distance from the Lord to avoid facing these mistakes again. However, when we consider how completely God knows us, the desire to hide our shame really doesn’t make a whole lot of sense.

Let’s read: Psalm 139 1-4 and Proverbs 5:21

Do you think that God already knew what Adam and Eve had done when he was looking for them in the garden?

Have you ever had trouble facing someone when you knew you had to admit that you had made a mistake? Please explain

If God knows everything about us—really knows us—how does this affect how we should approach him?

Grow

Mankind’s reaction to shame was to not just hide; but to then start pointing the finger at others.

Let’s read: Genesis 3:11-13

I wouldn’t necessarily call that “owning up to your mistakes,” would you? Adam and Eve both tried to justify their actions, and we continue to do that same thing today. Chad concluded this weekend’s message by reminding us that only through a relationship with Jesus can we hope to have healthy relationships on the earth.

Let’s read: Romans 3:23-24

What is it that make us want to justify our mistakes to others?

Does this justification mentioned in Romans mean the same thing as justifying your actions? If you don’t think so, can you explain why?

What does it mean to be “justified by his grace as a gift”? How was this gift given to us?

Move

Often it feels like the Old Testament, especially the first few chapters in the whole Bible, are very distant from the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we read about at the beginning of the New Testament. From the beginning, man has been trying to justify himself before God. At first, it was Adam and Eve pointing the finger at one another. Then for thousands of years, animal sacrifice justified man before God. Jesus dying on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice, and we are forever justified because of it.

Let's end by reading: Romans 5:6-9

If we are ultimately justified by Jesus' work on the cross, how should we approach the Lord after we make mistakes?

If we want our relationships to honor God, can shame be a defining characteristic of them? Why or why not?

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

Romans 3:23-24

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.