

Quick public opinion pole... I'm looking for 100% participation on this. I want to know how you folks feel about history. I'm gonna give you three options and I want to know by a show of hands which best describes your attitude toward history. Your options are "love it", "don't really care about it", or "history is boring".

How many of you would say you love history? Back in school when you had a free elective you chose a history class. Still today your choice in literature is historical (fiction or non-fiction), you love to watch historical movies and documentaries.

How many don't really care about history? You are more or less ambivalent to the whole subject. You don't love it, but you don't hate it either.

Now, how many of you think history is boring? You remember your school days and how pointless it felt to have to memorize a bunch of names and dates from a long time ago. You struggle to think of one time in your life when knowledge of some historical fact actually helped you in a present situation.

Thanks for your honesty. If you were a part of the last group, I don't know if we can be friends any more, but thanks for your honesty ☺

I'm kind of a history nerd... The last two books I read for fun were a 600 page history of George Washington and a 700 page history of Mao Tse-Tung.... Take a look at my "continue watching" section on Netflix and you'll see one of the last things I was watching was the PBS, Ken Burns documentary on Prohibition... So, yeah, I definitely fit into the "nerd" category of history. (For those of you interested, my current read is a fascinating book about the early years of Winston Churchill and his time in the Boer Wars in South Africa).

All "random facts you didn't need to know about your pastor" aside, it is my hope that today, whether you love history or hate history, it is my hope that you find a little bit more appreciation for some history. It is my prayer that we'd all realize that Santayana's well-known quip about those who don't remember the past being condemned to repeat it isn't just historian snobbery, but a truth that has real implications for your souls.

I say that because Christianity is a religion founded on real and relevant history. The church season of Lent is basically a 40 day study of history. Over the next weeks leading up to Easter, we are going to be reading and talking about a lot of history every time we get together in this building. And it is my hope that you would go through this Lent understanding what this history means for you today because unlike knowing when Columbus sailed the ocean blue, this history isn't some useless facts you have to memorize to pass a test, this is history that has infinite implications and applications for the present and the future because this is the history of salvation.

Two of the three Bible readings we have before us today are pure history – they are a simple recounting of things that transpired thousands of years ago, but these are not just bland facts narrated by Ken Burns on a PBS documentary.

Our reading from Genesis 3 reads like a chapter from the biography of Adam. What's more, I know that it is history that many of you already know. In fact, a good number of you have been reading and rereading this story from the time you could read - Adam and Eve in the garden, tempted by the devil.

So, what does this story that many of you know so well have to do with you today?

The answer: Everything. This story has *everything* to do with you today.

First of all, I am convinced that this historical account from Genesis 3 does a more accurate job of explaining why you are the way you are, why I am the way I am, and why this world is the way it is than any other religion, philosophy, or world-view out there. Seriously, take me up on that challenge, think about it...

Why are you and I the way we are? Here's what I mean: why is it that that you and I, many of us here today Christians for our entire lives, who have this very high sense of morality, we know what is right and we know what is wrong, we've been studying the Ten Commandments since we were kids, why is it that even though we know what is right and what is wrong, we keep on doing all the wrong stuff and so little of the right stuff on anything close to a regular basis?

So, we know the 10 Commandments:

God says, "**Do not commit adultery,**" later refined by Jesus who said, "**Anyone who looks at another woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**" We know what God says and yet sex still sells and the pornography industry continues to grow and flourish, and it's not just non-Christians making that happen, and it's not just Christians out there making that happen either...

Why is that? Why is it that adolescent boys, Christian or not, think about sex every six seconds? Why is it that even though we know the good we ought to do – saving God's gift of sex for one person in marriage – we don't do it? Why is it that evil we know we are not supposed to be doing – looking lustfully – that is exactly what we keep on doing? Why are we the way we are?

We know God tells us to zealously guard our neighbor's reputation in the eighth commandment. We know that we are supposed to take each-others words and action in the kindest possible way. We know that we are supposed to speak up and put an end to gossip and slander when we hear others doing it, and we certainly shouldn't contribute. We know what God says and yet it is not just in small towns where everyone gossips about everyone else's business. Tabloids, newspapers, and TMZ make a killing on the reputations of others, and we gobble it up.

Why is that? Why is it that the tongue, which we know from experience wields incredible power to hurt and destroy is often the organ we regulate the least? We pay so much attention to what we allow into our mouths, why can't we pay such attention to what comes out? Why is it that the good we are supposed to be doing – defending and protecting the reputation of everyone and everyone – is what we don't

do? Why is it that the evil we know we are not supposed to be doing – assuming the worst about others, and relishing the worst in others – is exactly what we keep on doing? Why are we the way we are?

And that's just two of the commandments, right? There are ten of them, remember?

Why are we the way we are?

The history of Genesis 3 and the implications that Paul unpacks in our Romans reading for today tell us that we are the way we are because we are made of the same stuff Adam was made of. Adam sinned and when he sinned he made it so that all of his offspring would be just like him – sinners.

We are the way we are because we are (the offspring of Adam) because the same serpent who drew Adam into that sin is actively at work doing the same to you. He comes to you and me and whispers those same temptations: Did God really say? It's not that big of a deal... it will feel good... it will feel freeing... and we see that the sin is good for food and pleasing to the eye and desirable for feeling free and independent and smart and we eat – even though God's commands are perfectly clear because God did say.

And let's not forget that “the devil made me do it” is no more valid an excuse for you than it was for Adam and Eve.

You are the way you are (I am the way I am) because, just like Adam and Eve, the sinner inside each of us is desperate to accept any lie of the devil as long as it means you can start serving and worshiping yourself rather than serving and worshiping God.

What does this history in Genesis 3 have to do with you today? This history lesson show us why we and all humanity are capable of all the evil we commit even when we know it is wrong. This history shows us why it is that every one of us is, as Augustine pointed out, *incurvatus se*, curved perpetually inward on ourselves, each a king of our own make-believe universe – at least to our way of thinking.

This history shows us why we are the way we are and why the world is the way it is. Why is there so much suffering in this world? Why is there so much pain, so much anguish? Why is it that the headlines are almost always and exclusively bad news?

Well the history of Genesis 3 unpacks that question too – with much greater accuracy and satisfaction than any other religion, philosophy, or world view out there. The consequences of Adam and Eve's sin didn't just mean people would be mean to each other, it also meant the created order would be broken and corrupt too. Why do we suffer? Sin, Adam and Eve and sin.

The history of Genesis 3 explains the world we experience today, and that is one good reason to review and appreciate this history, but it's not the only reason.

Genesis 3 also gives us the first historical promise from God about what he was going to do about it.

In Genesis 3 we are introduced to a God who looked at his fallen creation – at people (like us) who had accepted the devil's lies instead of his love – and he chose to continue loving instead of destroying them. He looked at what Adam and Eve did, he knew that any children they had would be just like them, all too willing to worship themselves rather than God, and he chose to save those self-worshipping sinners – which means he chose to save you, and he chose to save me.

And so from the moment Genesis 3 happened, God set in motion a plan to save; A plan that played out in real history; A plan recorded in the Bible; A plan to send his own Son to crush the devil's head.

Which brings us to that second lesson for today that is a simple history lesson – Jesus tempted in the wilderness (another bit of history many of you already know and have known since you were bouncing on dad's knee for family devotions). It is the history of God's own Son who was tempted in every way just as we are, with the same devil whispering lies in his ear, only he didn't give in.

And we start the church season of Lent with this bit of history because we have a God who made him who had no sin, to be sin for us.

God sent his Son born of a woman, in real history, to do what we prove incapable of doing – standing up to the devil. He actively did for us what we can't do ourselves and then, having done what we can't, he died for us.

What is one reason I love history so very much (particularly Bible history)? Today's history lesson shows you a God who refused to let you go to hell as you deserved. This history lesson shows you your God who has been in control of all of history from Genesis 3 on so that he could crush the devil's head as he promised, so that he could fix what Adam, Eve, you and the devil had broken; so that he could take you and make you his child.

Can you see yet how this history is a beautiful thing? Just as surely as God defeated the devil for Adam and Eve, he has defeated the devil for you. This history his proof that God loves the unlovable – which is good because there is a lot about me that is unlovable. This history is shows us God's plan to save us – which is good because we desperately need saving. This history is gives us purpose every day – which is good because now my struggles in this sinful world have meaning. Isn't the history of our God a beautiful thing? Amen.