

Who Told You That You Were Naked?

Called to Belong Series

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Genesis 3:1-11, 21-24 (ESV)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

²² Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—”²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Good Morning – I will be reading from Eph. 1 this morning. My name is Monte and I am one of the elders here at GHC. I have the honor of finishing out our series Called to Belong. And I have the honor of ending our time here at DES. I am very thankful for this place and now it has a very special place in my heart for the time we have had here. Please join me in reading through our text this morning.

Ephesians 1:3-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons & daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved (Jesus). ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

If you are a Christian, all of this is ours and true for you and me. This is the gospel, the good news that we have been redeemed and adopted and all of that, according to the purposes of His will, according to the riches of His grace so that we might be to the praise of His glory (God's glory). In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.

If any of you are not a Christian, then I invite you to consider what you just heard. This is the truth and the gospel of your salvation, if you believe in Him, in Jesus. Please consider that this morning.

Let us pray – Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank you for this gospel message that tells us of the salvation that is ours if we have heard and believed. I pray for any who are here this morning who do not personally know You. I pray specifically that they see Your glory this morning and are in awe of You. Give them ears to hear. I also pray specifically for any who are Your own, sealed with Your Holy Spirit who may have lost their awe of You and that they would see Your glory this morning. Show us all Your glory and cause Grace Hill Church to love one another well by showing one another the way to see You. It is in Your Son's precious name we pray, Amen

Three times in the passage we just read, everything that Paul is going to tell us throughout the rest of the letter to the Ephesians is SO THAT we might be to the praise of God's glory. What does that mean? What does the Bible mean when it says "to the praise of God's glory"? All things God created are meant to point to His glory. More than that, we who were created in His image are to praise Him and reflect His glory.

Grace Hill Church just finished walking through a series on how we all are Called To Belong to the body of Christ and how each person is vital to the health of that body. We also understood that we are to belong to a church, a local expression of His body and live in Christian community with one another.

In the beginning of Ephesians 4 Paul urges us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. He described this life as being completely humble and gentle, being patient, bearing with one another in love and being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. All of this is to be to the praise of God's glory and not our glory. Therefore, the passage goes on to read, there is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call (What hope is that? The hope that we put in Christ to be the redeeming grace for our sins.) – there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all.

So after all of that, let me ask some questions. These questions are not just having to do with the body of this church or the body of Christ. Maybe more importantly concerning how you are with your immediate family, spouse, children, co-workers (all of them):

Christian, will you fail at being humble? Yes, we will.

Christian, will you fail at being gentle? Yes, we will.

Christian, will you fail at being patient? Yes, we will.

Christian, will you fail at bearing with one another in love? Yes, we will.

Christian, will you maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? I am afraid we will fail at that too.

See, none of us is perfect, even with the Holy Spirit living within us because none of us have been completely sanctified or had our sinful tendencies removed from us. Christians are supposed to be a better example of these traits, although we can drift away and take our eyes off the only One who can change our hearts. Let me share a story with you of how I have failed at these questions.

Before I was married to my beautiful wife, Lori, I did not know that I was used to living a duplicitous life. I did all along, I just didn't realize it as easily. What I mean by that is a private persona and a public persona. The two personas I had were completely different. I just didn't realize it because I wasn't with the same person 24/7 who could witness that, until I was married. But then, after looking back on the first twelve years of a rocky marriage, I realize that I resented her seeing and knowing and was bitter about her knowing this about me. When we got married I was the Youth Director of a church. I was the darling of the church with the Senior Citizens, I was loved by the parents of the youth. I got to the point that I was becoming prideful, not gentle, impatient, not bearing with her in love and drifting away from maintaining a unity with Lori, much less a unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I was having to burn the candle at both ends to try and be the public persona and not let her see who she really married. Therefore, Lori became the problem in my world and now I was stuck with all the things I had said I believed about never getting a divorce, being a Christian leader and a loving husband. I was becoming more and more resentful. I was in hiding, I was naked. Our marriage suffered because of that for 12 years. During that time, Monte and Lori McCullough lived a couple's duplicitous life as well. You wouldn't have known, you would have thought we were the perfect couple and I

didn't resent our boys because they were too young to know, and that is God's grace.

You see, when you are exposed, you go into hiding and then when you have to come out, you have fig leaves on and are covered with a different persona. A persona that is more acceptable and loved by those who see you. When will someone ask you, "Who told you that you were naked?"

That is a great question that God asks Adam. Who told him? Did the serpent? Did God? Adam was made in the image of God and God breathed life into Adam and God gave him a spirit and a soul. Adam innately knew he had done wrong and was ashamed and he hid himself. I am more than certain that while hiding among the trees Adam and Eve were not eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ... and after God doled out the punishment, what do you suppose it was like in that marriage? You know what it must have been like!

Grace Hill Church is a young church and many of us have been in other churches where we have seen divisions, discord and messy situations. I am certain that most of us wear public personas and it is a little easier in a new church with different people. Some call it the honeymoon period. Why do they call it that? What happens when the honeymoon is over? What is the implication? Well, that's when the personas come out and the hiding starts because we don't want to be seen in our naked state. When someone gets close enough to know we wear two masks, they start to be a problem in our world and division happens.

So, when God asked that question, He followed it with another question, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not

to eat?”. We all know what happened after that. God banished them from the Garden of Eden to not be in His presence anymore. Before He did that though, He made garments of skin and He clothed them. He was not going to forsake them. God has no intention to leave you and me in our naked state, He will not forsake us either.

So, what happened? Why were Adam and Eve deceived into believing that the forbidden fruit was better than having God? Why did they believe that being like God, knowing good and evil, would be better? They took their eyes off God’s glory. They lost their awe of Him when they did that. Everything was created to the praise of His glory and they ceased to see that. They saw it for their own glory.

So how do we keep God’s glory before us and each other? How do we remain in awe of God? The answer is in everything we have been reading in Ephesians 4. Let me walk us through a good portion of it to show how we grow and thrive. We will see how we are intended to be to the praise of God’s glory and not our own glory.

Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ (to the praise of His glory), ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint (every person) with which it is equipped, when each part (each person) is working properly, (Christ) makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (to the praise of His glory).

Ephesians 4:17-32 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the (naked and hiding) do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are

darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have (stopped looking at the glory of God) become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity (hiding). ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ! (You saw His glory)— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self (false persona), which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (to the praise of His glory).

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood (false persona), let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor (showing the true persona), for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger (come out of hiding), ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil (look to the glory of Christ, be in awe). ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, **so that** he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear (to the praise of His glory). ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (to the praise of His glory).

This is how we grow and thrive. Not just as a church, but as community groups, families, marriages and within the greater community around us. We represent and point **everything** to the praise of His glory. Once our eyes come off His glory and we lose our awe of Him, we will desire that which He has warned us not to desire. We were made for Him, we know it, and so when we make that mistake (we will make), we want to go into hiding because we are exposed, naked. **Who will woo you out and clothe you?** Maybe you are weighed down with a past that you are ashamed someone will find out. Could be something like an abortion or you pressured someone to have one. Maybe you are weighed down with a habit of watching things that you should not be watching. Maybe you struggle with your marriage. Maybe your life growing up was a very broken time. **Who will woo you out and clothe you?** Christ will, ... and in all wisdom and insight He intends to do that through His church, His body ... through you.

Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, (you) are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ (to the praise of His glory), ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint (every person) with which it is equipped, when each part (each person, you) is working properly, (Christ) makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (to the praise of His glory).

Lori and I are in our 38th year of marriage. You may be wondering what happened with those 12 years of rocky marriage. The answer is the body of Christ happened. When we look back, we can attribute it to nothing else. After a weekend of visiting my sister and brother-in-law in Baton Rouge, LA, my sister Matilda sent me this letter. I had grown so

callous to being the way I truly was that I did not bring out the public persona in front of really familiar people. My sister was convicted to confront me, by the grace of God and to the praise of His glory. She wrote these words, "Let me be honest – I was crushed this weekend just in general observation." "She (Lori) honestly doesn't know if she means anything to you." It is a multi-page letter, but you hear the meat of it. She was encouraging and challenging. She was speaking the truth in love and after praying and considering her words. The Lord got my attention, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

Then one night, Lori and I went out to eat with friends, Tom and Claire Bullock. Tom was a dear brother in the Lord. He and I were going fishing the very next morning, early. The next morning, right after we had launched the boat and were sitting on the lake right before dawn when the water is glass, I heard Tom softly paddling in the cool of the day ... Tom says this to me, "Monte, if you are going to continue to treat Lori the way you did last night, Claire and I will no longer be spending time with you all." That was a fun day of fishing! Tom was speaking truth in love and he had considered his words and thought about them in advance and delivered them at an appropriate time.

Now, the Lord had my attention. "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" I spent a few days reflecting and observing myself. I came home from work one day and sat Lori down and looked at her in the eyes and said, "I am going to change." This beautiful wife then looks at me with those pretty green eyes and I could read what they said, "Whatever ... I will believe it when I see it ... I have heard this before ... are you through?" You know that look!

I can remember to this day the prayer I said to God when I saw that in her eyes. In the split second I realized her disposition, I said, “God, I spent 12 years teaching her to respond this way, if it takes 12 years to change that, I am in.”

So we lived happily ever after... not! You see, in all my wisdom, I had decided that I needed to pray for God to make me fall in love with Lori, because I did not love her anymore. I figured if I loved her that would solve the issues. I remembered how much easier it was when I did. Of course, looking back the easiest time was when we were engaged and she was at college and I was in another town working as a youth director. What was I thinking? Yet I prayed this for a year. During that year we got involved in a gospel preaching church in Reston, VA. Looking back, we were being directed to see the glory of God and His love for us far more than we deserved. One day I was having lunch with our pastor, I had been laid off of my job a few weeks before. I had worked for a clinic. I was spewing all kinds of anger about the clinic and what had happened to get where I was. I will never forget the words that John Stringer said to me that day, “Monte, you can’t be the clinic’s savior.” I remember what he said, but that is not what I heard the Lord say to me at that moment. I remember we were eating in the Reston Town Center and I had gumbo and he was almost through with his food cause I had been the one talking, and my bowl was still full and I was still holding my spoon, hovering over the gumbo the whole time. When he said that I dropped my spoon in the gumbo and just stared at him. I heard the Lord tell me “Monte, you can’t be your marriage’s savior.” I said to myself, “I need to pray to fall in love with Jesus.” I did not love Jesus. I had lost my awe of Him long ago. This church community in Reston, my pastor, my friend, Tom, my sister, Matilda, all parts of the

body of Christ were speaking truth in love and I was being pointed to the glory that is Christ.

I started praying that prayer, because God hadn't answered the other one and I knew why now. God answered the prayer to fall in love with Jesus. Now, through Christ, I was “²⁹ Let(ting) no corrupting talk come out of (my) mouth, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear (to the praise of His glory). ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from (me), along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (to the praise of His glory).

God also answered my original prayer and beyond anything I thought it could be. I do love Lori. I do love Jesus.

In God's wisdom and insight, this is our job as the body of Christ. We remind each other of God's glory. We point to Him with awe. Remember, He chose us that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Not away from His presence hiding. He chose us for adoption to Himself! All of that is according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace. We were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit to the praise of His glory.

The writer of Hebrews cautions us this way.

Hebrews 3:12-13 (ESV)

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God (hiding and naked). ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called

“today,” (to see the glory and awe of God) that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (taking your eyes off God’s glory).

You are Called To Belong. Take your God appointed position in the body and build up one another, in Christ, to the praise of His glory alone. I have already been reaping these gifts in this church, Grace Hill. Just two weeks ago at RED, I was tired and did not have a right spirit about me for that evening. Those of you who were at my table may remember that. Anyway, my dear brother in the Lord, Anthony Harvey, was sitting next to me, and at one point he just said to me, “Why don’t you just go somewhere else?” meaning that evening. He was rebuking my attitude and disposition. I needed that! The Lord used him to make me realize I was not building up those who could hear me, I was not giving grace and I was grieving the Spirit. I asked for his forgiveness and I am grateful for him to the praise of God’s glory. This is not the only incident in my life where Grace Hill people have been used for my being encouraged to focus on God’s glory, but I need to end here.

Let’s pray

Father, change our hearts because we have been together in Your Word this morning. We are so thankful for who You are and what You have done for us. I pray that Grace Hill Church will stay in awe of You and You will bless Herndon with our new home at the Middle School. Give us a heart for the lost and the marginalized. We love You.