

Lesson 7: Unit 1 summary

In this unit we explored the age-old question of evil in a universe created by a good and perfect God. If God is so good, people ask, why didn't he make it so sin couldn't happen? We have learned that the only way for God's universe to operate on the principles of God's character of love was for God to give his creatures complete liberty.

This teaches us a lesson about faithfulness. God knew what would happen when he gave his creatures liberty. He knew someone would misuse it. He knew it would bring death and destruction into his perfect universe. He further knew that his love would compel him to provide restoration to the beings who fell, restoration that would come at immense personal cost to God.

This commitment to do what's right regardless of personal consequences has many names: morality, integrity, faithfulness, righteousness, and many more. God did not create a universe full of beings and then impose on them a list of restrictions he personally ignored. God is the ultimate example of what he wants his creatures to be, and he's the only one pure enough to maintain this commitment without fail.

This is a good place to address another misconception people have about God. The Bible is full of calls to worship God. It also has warnings against serving "other" gods, which, of course, are no gods at all. One of the things we learned Satan wanted was the honor and adulation, or worship, of the angels. He began to think that God was selfish like him and that's why he insisted on receiving praise and worship.

So he tries to get us to think that God is being selfish in demanding that we worship him and ONLY him. But that misunderstands the principle of worship and what it does. Worship is more than just honoring and praising someone who does good things for us. When we worship we become like that person or thing we worship. God knew this. He also knew that only one being in the entire universe could receive the adulation and praise of all the universe and not be corrupted by selfishness as a result. That one being was himself.

So God calls on us to worship him because he is truly worthy of our love and admiration. God calls on us to worship him so that we will become more like him, and only he is pure and selfless enough for us to safely emulate. God calls on us to worship him because that will help maintain the trust relationship between him and his creatures, a trust on which the happiness of the universe depends.

An old science textbook wanted to teach students the basics of the process of science, the search for understanding how things work. It suggested a child left suddenly alone in the world trying to figure out what he could burn for warmth. Each day he tried new objects, and each day his understanding of what would and wouldn't burn grew more sophisticated.

Now imagine yourself in that situation with this added twist. Everyday the list of things that would burn was different from the list the day before. One day a tree limb burns, but another day only old steel pots and pans will burn. How could our abandoned child ever hope to figure out what to do to stay warm?

Life is possible because God's design laws DON'T change. And God's law for how his creatures should relate to him and to one another are just like that. God couldn't change his laws just because he felt like it. It wouldn't be fair to everyone else in the universe. So when man sinned there was no thought of changing the law to meet man where he was.

And we've already pointed out that the problem, unlike what Satan claimed, wasn't God. God didn't need to be fixed. To know what needed to be fixed we need to know what changed. God didn't change, and his law couldn't change. What had changed? The characters of Adam and Eve had changed. So that's what needed to be fixed. The new humans needed to be changed back into what God had made them to be, creatures who loved like God loves.

Fear and selfishness had entered Adam and Eve's characters, and that had driven out love. So for them to be changed back they would need to relearn to trust God. That wasn't something they could learn quickly. It would take time; it would take worship; it would take years of bitter experience so they, and we, would learn to hate sin the way God hates it.

For further study:

Read the first chapter of *Patriarchs and Prophets* by Ellen White. If you don't have access to a copy of the book you can read it on the web at "www.egwwritings.org." While we can't prove everything said in that chapter from the Bible alone, we have no reason to think the account given here is incompatible with what we can know from the Bible. But rather than look at all the narrative details, pay attention to the focus of the story as told.

Two things stand out. First, the author upholds the love and justice of the creator in dealing with the origin of sin. Second, an explanation is given why Satan's sin in heaven was different from Adam and Eve's sin on earth. We see how God *did* give Satan an opportunity to receive divine grace and be restored or saved. God was not acting arbitrarily in offering salvation to humanity but not to fallen angels. They had already had their opportunity to accept God's forgiveness and to have their sinful characters fixed. Humanity had not yet had such an opportunity.

Review the symbolic passages in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. How much of each passage do you think could be applied to the covering cherub who first sinned? What might these longer passages tell us that the traditional readings don't?

Now let's make this personal. You were born with fear and selfishness as part of who you are. It's not your fault. You didn't choose to be born. But here you are stuck on a world filled with sin, death, destruction and all the negative emotions that go along with them. It isn't fair, is it? Why couldn't you have been born on a perfect world where there is no sin?

But here you are, and you can't change what happened to put you here. But you are not without hope. God loves you. He let you be born here hoping you would learn to love him back. He knows you had no choice in being born a sinner. He doesn't hold that against you. Indeed, he loves you more because you need his love more than anyone who never experienced sin.

You might ask, "But doesn't God hate sin?" Yes, he does. But why does he hate sin? He hates sin because he knows what it does to every creature it traps. He knows sin will eventually kill you. So while he hates sin, he hates sin because he loves you, the sinner. He wants to set you free from sin. He wants you to have eternal life so he can enjoy your company for all eternity.

Only you can fill that place in God's heart. If you decide to hate God for putting you in such an awful situation, and if you put yourself outside the reach of his love, then God will not violate your freedom and save you anyway. He will forever have that you-sized hole in his heart because you wouldn't let him fix you. Now how do you feel about God?