

Church of God

The Biblical Grandview

Hiding From God | Three-Part Series

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I'd like to start today by turning to the very beginning of the Book, to go all the way back to the Garden. If you will go with me to Genesis 2, there is a theme that I want to spend time developing today. On one level it is very simple to understand, but it is much deeper than I sometimes think we take time to consider.

We are going to start here in Genesis 2:7.

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. Drop down to verse 15.

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

Very simply, God formed Adam, placed him in this garden of great abundance, gave him a purpose within it, a work to do, and established a relationship with him. Then God crafted Eve—his counterpart, his complement, his partner.

In verse 25 we come to the Scripture that I want us to begin with today. It is really the focus.

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

There are two very deep core ideas here. They were both naked, and they were not ashamed.

In Hebrew, the word “naked” does mean unclothed. They were physically bare. But in Hebrew it also carries a figurative idea of being exposed, open, transparent, and raw. It can imply vulnerability and the absence of deceit or pretense.

In this moment they were physically naked before God, and Scripture makes sure to tell us that they were not ashamed. There was nothing within them that produced shame.

That leads to the second key concept: shame. The Hebrew root behind this word carries the idea of guilt. That guilt leads to shame within us. It exposes disappointments and causes us to lose confidence within a relationship.

Here, in their physical nakedness, Adam and Eve had no reason whatsoever to feel guilty about anything. They had no reason to feel exposed. They had no reason to lose confidence in the relationship they had with Almighty God.

But equally, what is being communicated is what was happening emotionally and internally. Up to this point they were also spiritually bare before God. They were transparent. They were exposed. In that complete openness, with no pretending, there was no need to pull back from the relationship.

There was no feeling of guilt or shame. They had no reason to think that God was disappointed with them,

and therefore no reason to lose confidence in their standing before Him. We understand that men later inserted chapter and verse divisions, but sometimes those divisions cause us to stop at the end of a chapter instead of flowing into the next thought that God inspired.

As we follow the natural flow, we move directly from Adam and Eve being naked and not ashamed into the introduction of the serpent. The story immediately shifts from innocence to everything changing.

In Genesis 3:6 we read:

“So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Then verse 7 says:

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

There is a great deal happening in this verse. In Hebrew, the opening of their eyes carries the figurative meaning of a new mental perception—a new insight, a new awareness, an awakening to a new condition.

We often use similar language in the Church of God when we talk about being called into the truth. We say that our eyes were opened, that we began to understand things we had never understood before. Suddenly there was a new awareness and new understanding.

Here Adam and Eve certainly saw their physical nakedness, but much more than their physical exposure, they experienced something internal for the first time. They experienced emotional and spiritual exposure.

They experienced vulnerability.
They experienced guilt.
They experienced fear.
They were laid bare, and now, being laid bare, there was something they wanted to hide from God. They no

longer felt free to remain open and transparent. Vulnerability had entered the relationship, and they clearly did not like that feeling.

So, they worked to cover themselves. The Hebrew describes what they made as a garment tied around the waist, something like a loincloth. It was not a full covering. It was humanity's first attempt to cover the part for which they now felt ashamed. It became shame management—a human attempt to hide guilt through a temporary covering of leaves.

What happens to a leaf once it is removed from the tree? At first it is pliable and flexible, but before long it dries out, falls apart, and crumbles. It was a temporary covering. It was humanity's attempt to hide guilt.

Their natural human instinct—and it remains ours today—was to hide, to conceal, and to cover.

Continuing in Genesis 3:8:

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

Even in this moment, their leaf covering was not enough. They went and hid behind the trees. They withdrew, pulled back, and concealed themselves.

They were seeking avoidance.

What were they seeking to avoid?

The presence of God.

His relationship.

His attention.

His personal engagement.

They pulled back from the relationship, and all of this was instinctive. They were not taught to do this. Is it not still natural for all of us, at moments in our lives, to try to hide from God? As I considered this, I thought about many reasons we might hide.

One reason is exactly what we see here.

We still hide because of sin.

How many of us—and I am not asking for a show of hands, although I will raise mine—have done something that caused us to stop praying?

At the very moment when we should have been drawing close to God, we instead did the opposite.

Because of shame, we stopped having our daily conversations with God.

We knew we had messed up.

We knew we had given in to temptation.

We sinned.

We missed the mark.

In that feeling of exposure we lose confidence in our relationship with God, so we pull back.

We do not just do that with God.

We do it with one another as well.

If I have damaged my relationship with you, I may try to avoid having a conversation with you. I might see you coming and walk into the next room because I do not want to experience the awkwardness of knowing that I have failed you. That is what happens.

We hide.

As a result, relationships naturally become more distant. The relationship suffers. We can also hide by refusing to take responsibility and instead blaming others.

Notice Genesis 3:11:

“And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?’”

Then the man said,

“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

Then the LORD God said to the woman,

“What is this you have done?”

And the woman said,

“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Instead of responding to their exposure with acknowledgment...

Instead of accountability...

Instead of repentance...

Instead of seeking God’s forgiveness...instead of repairing what had been broken and being reconciled... They blamed someone else for their own behavior and choices.

Some also hide through isolation.

If I pull back from people...

If I stay by myself...

If I avoid relationships...

Then no one can really see me.

I am not exposed. If no one gets close to me, no one can see my faults. No one can see my failures.

Some hide through busyness.

Some feel better by staying constantly occupied because busyness becomes a way of avoiding what is really happening inside.

If I never slow down...

If I never stop...

If I keep moving from one responsibility to the next... Then perhaps I will not have to deal with what I am trying to avoid. Yet none of these approaches actually resolve the problem. They simply become different forms of hiding.

Some hide through busyness. Some people feel better working than conversing in relationships. Staying busy and serving is a wonderful thing. We just had two men ordained, and they have wonderful, supportive wives. All four serve in many ways, and that is wonderful.

But I have sometimes seen hidden motivations at work. Serving can become easier than having open, honest relationships. Work can become a shield.

I thought about the story of Mary and Martha. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus Christ, learning and engaging in a relationship with Him. But Scripture says that Martha “was distracted with much serving.” Another definition of

that Greek term is “drawn away.” She was drawn away by much serving. She wanted Christ to correct her sister and make her come help.

But Christ said to her in Luke 10:41–42:

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Some also hide behind a façade. We all know that Jesus Christ was often highly critical of the religious leaders of His day—the Pharisees, as we commonly refer to them.

In a series of criticisms recorded in Matthew 23, I will read verses 27–28, although the whole chapter provides more context.

Jesus Christ said:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all

uncleanness. Even so, you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

They were hiding behind a lie, and they wanted others to believe that lie—to see them through the lens of their false façade.

I have even worked with some who, instead of allowing themselves to feel their nakedness, exposure, and shame, ended up convincing themselves to believe their own lies. They began to believe that the façade was reality, and they lied to themselves.

One person specifically told me that they had repeated the same lie so many times that they could no longer tell, within the stories they were telling, what was true and what was false. The lie had simply become what they believed.

Others hide behind substances to numb shame and the feelings of exposure. They do not want to feel

what they feel, so they choose numbing instead of healing.

This is the reality of what we, as human beings, do.

But notice how quickly God wanted this pattern revealed in the Bible. Within the first few chapters, the pattern comes to the surface and moves to the forefront because hiding lies at the core of what human beings are and what human beings do.

But two other facets appear here that I find amazing.

Another tremendous theme emerges in the midst of exposure, shame, and hiding: the story does not end there. Still in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve had sinned. They felt emotionally and spiritually vulnerable before God, so they hid. What did God do? We should not miss His response.

Genesis 3:9 says:

“Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”
“Where are you?”

God called them and sought them out. In this first question recorded in the Bible, God did not abandon them. He searched for them. That theme echoes throughout Scripture.

One of the clearest pictures appears in Luke 15. The chapter begins by telling us that tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Jesus. Against that background, Jesus said in Luke 15:4:

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?”

Until he finds it. He does not merely begin searching. He continues until he finds the lost sheep.

My family has a familiar saying. They call me “the best looker ever.” That is not really the case. I merely look harder than they do. My wife has added another phrase: “because he never quits.” That is really the key.

When something goes missing in the family, they ask me to look because I will turn the couch upside down. I will remove all the cushions. First, I will look where the missing item is supposed to be, because often that is where it is. I will lift objects and move furniture. I will do whatever the search requires. They call me the best looker ever, but I am not.

God and Jesus Christ are the best lookers ever. They labor to find those who have wandered away. They work diligently. They turn over the couch cushions, figuratively speaking. They continue looking, and they do not quit.

Luke 15:5 says:

“And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”

That is God’s response when He finds someone who was lost. He does not simply pat the sheep on the head and point it in the general direction of the flock. He works again to make sure the sheep returns to the

group—to the place where it belonged before wandering away.

Luke 15:7 says:

“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

The story clearly concerns repentance. God desires repentance from every person. Repentance causes heaven to break out in tremendous joy over a sinner who turns back.

But what is repentance?

As we heard briefly in the sermonette, repentance does not mean merely feeling bad or sorry about what we have done.

In Greek, the word means to change one's mind or direction, to reconsider, and to turn back after reflection. Repentance involves a transforming change of heart and direction. Repentance is not mere regret.

Repentance is not emotion or sorrow alone.

Repentance is not even confession alone. The simplest definition I like to use is this:

A change of mind that leads to a change of life. A change of mind that leads to a change of life.

A scripture may come to mind when we think about hiding from God and the separation that hiding causes in relationships.

That scripture is Isaiah 59:2. I will read the one verse. Most have probably heard it many times:

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

How does this statement fit with what we have examined?

As with Adam and Eve, sin caused separation. Their sins, followed by their response of pulling away, created distance. God sought them, but God never forces anyone into a

relationship. God desires the relationship. God seeks the person. But each person must also desire a relationship with God and want to walk with Him.

We can develop the idea that when we fail, God turns away from us. But we have already seen that human beings turn their backs on God. When a person remains rebellious and determined to continue in sin, the relationship with God suffers.

Scripture shows that a person cannot willfully choose a contrary path, deliberately defy God, and still expect God to bless that conduct and answer every request.

This principle reaches the heart of the unpardonable sin. A person turns away from God and refuses to change, repent, or yield.

A willful determination to walk contrary to God—and a refusal to repent or yield—causes separation in the relationship. Still in Genesis 3, another powerful theme connects with everything we have examined.

God not only sought Adam and Eve.

God covered them.

Do not miss that point.

They made an insignificant covering from fig leaves. Their covering would become frail and fall apart.

But Genesis 3:21 says:

“Also, for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”

Why did God do that?

The word translated “tunic” is interesting. Strong’s Concordance traces it to a root associated with covering.

Adam and Eve fashioned a leaf loincloth that was insufficient and temporary. The garment represented their human attempt to cover shame, but it did nothing to remove the guilt of their sin.

Adam and Eve made a covering that could not last and could not repair the breach.

God made a covering that could.

God made a full covering.

His covering came at the cost of a life and the shedding of blood.

The foreshadowing should already appear. These events serve as shadows and types of something still to come. An undeniable connection exists between that covering and another full and permanent covering that God intended.

Let us examine the idea of covering.

Turn briefly to Leviticus 17:11:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

The word translated “atonement” is the Hebrew word *kaphar*. The term means “to cover.”

The first appearance of that word in the Bible occurs when Noah receives instructions to cover the ark with pitch. That is the basic meaning: to cover.

When Scripture connects covering with sin, English translations commonly render the word as “atonement.”

The Hebrew term appears more than one hundred times in the Old Testament. Let us examine a few uses.

Leviticus 1:4 says:

“Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.”

The wording could also be rendered “to make a covering for him.”

The first five chapters of Leviticus use the term repeatedly. A life was shed to make a covering.

Now turn to Leviticus 16. That chapter uses the same idea many more times.

I will read Leviticus 16:15–17:

“Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.

“So, he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of

the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so, he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

“There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel.”

These Old Testament coverings were temporary shadows.

When we turn to Hebrews, we see the antitype—the fulfillment toward which those shadows pointed.

Turn to Hebrews 9. We will read a few verses from chapters 9 and 10, looking at the main point.

Hebrews 9:11–14 says:

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Now turn to Hebrews 10:4:

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

Then Hebrews 10:14:

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

Let us recap the pattern.

Sin exposes us.

We feel shame.

We may become afraid.

We pull away.

We hide.

All of that damages the relationship between us and God or creates separation within it. We attempt to deal with exposure through human means. We create frail coverings that accomplish almost nothing.

In the Old Testament, God provided temporary coverings as types: a sin offering, a life, and blood to make atonement.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Holy Place and made a covering. But God provided the lasting covering through the sacrifice and blood of His perfect Son.

Christ became the perfect atoning sacrifice—the perfect covering for sin—through His righteousness, His blood, and His life.

How, then, do we stop hiding from God?

What should happen when we recognize a period in life when

separation has developed and we are hiding in one form or another?

The first response is to recognize and admit that we are hiding. Hiding does not always look or feel like hiding.

As we discussed, hiding can appear as busyness.

It can appear as silence.

It can take the form of avoidance.

It can involve filling life with distraction and noise because we do not want to address or discuss certain areas.

It can involve blocking God out.

Adam's first step out of hiding was to respond.

God asked in Genesis 3:9, "Where are you?"

Adam answered:

"I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

God was searching for Adam.

The truth is that God knew exactly where Adam was the entire time. God knew that Adam was hiding, and God knows when we are hiding. But for our own sake, we must respond. We must say, “God, I am here. God, I was afraid. God, I was ashamed because of my behavior. Here is where I am hiding.” That honesty begins to break the pattern of hiding.

The second step is to move into the light.

Hiding is rooted in shame—the feeling that exposure will follow when concealment ends. Shame convinces us that if God sees us as we are, He will reject us. Shame does not want us to face the reality of what we have done because we feel embarrassed or know that we should have acted differently.

So, we hide and attempt to cover ourselves. When Christ spoke about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Luke 12:2–3, He said:

“For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will

not be known. “Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.” Scripture tells us that God knows. Why try to hide from God when He already knows?

1 John 1:7–9 contains several remarkably encouraging verses: “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Everyone needs that cleansing. Everyone must confess sin. God remains faithful and just to forgive and cleanse.

Now turn to Psalm 32.

We often use David as an example because the Bible records moments of great failure in his life. Through those accounts, Scripture also preserves some remarkable prayers.

The heading in my Bible calls Psalm 32 “The Joy of Forgiveness.”

Psalm 32:1–2 says:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

“Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity.”

Let me read those verses again:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

“Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity.”

His sins are not charged against him.

They are covered.

How does that happen?

Psalm 32:5 gives part of the process:

“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden.

“I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

David was essentially saying, “I have admitted what I did. I am not trying to

hide my sins from You. I have brought them into the open and into the light.”

Then Psalm 32:7 says:

“You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble.”

Not behind trees.

Not somewhere else in the darkness.

“You are my hiding place.”

I do not want to hide from God.

I want to hide in God.

God is the safe place.

We need to walk in the light. We also need to face the light, rather than hiding in dark corners and hoping no one notices that we are sinners.

Instead of pulling away, we should draw near.

David said, “You are my hiding place.”

One of my favorite scriptures is

James 4:8:

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

What will God do when a person draws near? He will draw near to that person. How do we draw near?

We pray, even when prayer feels messy or imperfect. Prayer brings us before God and into His presence. Speak to God openly and honestly. God does not need anything from us. God does not need our prayers for His own sake. Prayer exists for our good.

The next step is to put faith in who God is. Think about the moment in the Garden when the serpent planted doubt in Eve's mind.

Genesis 3:4–5 says:

“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.

“‘For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”

Satan wanted Eve to doubt who God was, and he does the same with us. Satan tries to make us believe that forgiveness will not come. He tries to make us believe that God has become too upset by repeated failure.

He tries to convince us that God will love us after we somehow reach a sufficient level of righteousness and perfection. But that claim does not reflect the truth of the Bible.

Exodus 34:6–7 gives a description of the God we serve. I love the description:

“And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,
“‘keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’”

That is how God proclaimed His own character.

God is gracious and merciful.

God is slow to anger.

God seeks the lost.

God abounds in goodness.

The next step is to confess what God already knows.

Confession means admitting what we already recognize God knows. That honesty frees us to repent and move forward. As we saw with David, we must acknowledge sin rather than hide iniquity. We confess transgression, and God forgives. As we begin to conclude, turn to one more psalm. I will also quote two other brief passages.

Turn to Psalm 139.
For the sake of time, we will read verses 7, 12, 23, and 24.

Psalm 139:7 says:
“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?”

Verse 12 says:
“Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.”

God sees through both without difficulty. Then David says in verses 23–24:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; “And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

God already knows.

God already sees.

God has already provided the solution and the covering.

One more passage is Luke 19:10.
These are the words of our Savior, Jesus Christ:

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Christ came to seek and save. God provided the perfect covering. All the former shadows, types, and sacrifices pointed toward Christ.

The process does not end at baptism and the forgiveness of past sins. We must put on that covering.

We must put on Christ.

Adam and Eve first put on tunics of animal skin that God made. A life was

taken, and they put on the covering
that resulted from that sacrificed life.
But that event was merely a type.

The final verse is Galatians 3:27:
“For as many of you as were baptized
into Christ have put on Christ.”
Christ is the sacrifice.
Christ is the covering.
We must put Him on.

Brethren, from the beginning, the
human instinct has been to hide.
Adam and Eve felt exposed.
They felt afraid.
They felt ashamed.
So, they withdrew.

They covered themselves with fragile
leaves, hoping the covering would be
enough. But the covering was not
enough. Human coverings never are.
Our homemade leaf coverings—our
excuses, distractions, busyness,
silence, and isolation—cannot heal
shame. They cannot restore a
relationship. But when Adam and Eve
hid, God did not turn away. God
entered the Garden and asked,

“Where are you?” God did not ask
because He lacked knowledge.
God sought them.
God covered them.
God made a way back.

God continues doing the same work
today. Every time we hide, and every
time we feel too stained,
embarrassed, or unworthy, God
remains the One who walks toward
us rather than away from us.

God remains the One who seeks.
God remains the One who calls.
God remains the One who covers—
not with leaves that crumble, but with
the life and covering of His own Son.

We must stop hiding.
We must step into the light.
We must allow God to cover what we
cannot repair.

We must draw near to the One who
already knows, already sees, and still
chooses us.

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