

TALK FOOTBALL

Theme: Creation – Genesis 1-3

Focus:

Creation – God made us and wants to walk with us.

Temptations – We are all tempted and can overcome temptation.

Blame & Hide – We blame others and hide from our wrongs.

Substitution – Jesus came and changed the game.

Made New – We need to choose to be made new.

CREATION

Week 1

Creation

In Genesis we read how God created the world in the story of creation. After God had finished, ***“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”*** Genesis 1:31.

Have you ever watched or played in a game that you thought, “this is good”?

What was the game? Why did you think it was good?

We generally think games are good when they are exciting, when there are great goals, skills, passing moves, tackles or saves. I love football and the way it was created, but there are areas of football I do not like and I think are bad.

What part of football do you think is bad and why?

When God created the world he created us. ***“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”*** Genesis 2:7. God created us and he thinks we are very good.

Have you ever created anything you thought was good? How did you feel about it?

I am a father so when my daughter was born I thought, “Wow, this is really good!” I love her and I am so proud of her. As a dad I want to be in constant relationship with my daughter, to watch her and be with her as she grows up. You see, there is no difference with God. He created us and wants to not just watch you, but be in relationship and friendship with you. It doesn’t matter if it’s a time of joy, sadness, fear or stress God wants to be there with you as your father. In Genesis 3:8 we read how ***“God was walking through the garden”*** and God wants to walk with you. But it is your choice if you allow God, who created you and who loves you, to walk with you!

Will you let God walk with you?

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1

Temptations

When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden God said, ***“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*** Genesis 2:13

Have you ever been told not to do something? Did you listen or disobey?

God had asked them not to eat from the tree but as Eve was walking through the garden, ***“the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”*** Genesis 3:1

Have you ever felt like Eve, where you have been in a situation where you know you shouldn't but something or someone says, 'what harm can it do?', 'It looks like fun' or 'no one will ever know'?

This is **temptation** – we have times when we are tempted to do something.

Once in a grassroots Christian league we were playing a team who were top of the table. We were under pressure and a corner had just been given to the opposing team. As the ball came in, it was headed by their striker towards our goal. Our goalkeeper had wandered into no man's land so it was just me standing on the goal line – the ball was trickling towards the line so I went to kick it away, but by the time I kicked the ball it was fully behind the line. The referee however did not see the incident, so all of their players were shouting 'GOAL', while I just kept on playing not saying anything. At the time I knew I should have spoken to the referee but I didn't and we escaped the situation not conceding and went on to win the game 1-0 – But I still regret that decision to this day! **What would you have done in that situation? Would you be tempted not to speak to the referee and carry on?**

Have you ever seen or done something wrong on the football pitch? What was it? Did you regret it?

Pulling a shirt

Claiming a throw

Getting angry

Fouling

Foul play

Adam and Eve were tempted by the fruit and they decided to eat it. As soon as they did this they were full of guilt and their eyes were opened. You see as soon as they decided to eat the fruit they decided to take life into their own hands, to say no God I don't want you to be in control – I want to be in control of my own life. I want to be my own God. When we concede to wrong temptations we are turning our back on God and saying, “No thanks - I got this!” We all experience temptations every day, the choice we have is whether to say no and keep close to God or to concede.

Are there temptations in your life you need help with?

You can beat your temptations and overcome them through Jesus and through the help of others! (Be open to offer additional help and support on temptations.) God says, ***“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”*** 1 Corinthians 10:13. God will help us overcome all temptations if we come to Him.

Blame & Hide

Last week we read that Adam and Eve had taken and eaten the fruit. Their eyes were opened. God was then walking through the garden. As soon as they heard God they hid.

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” Genesis 3:8-9

Have you ever seen or tried to hide on the football pitch from being punished? Have you done this in life?

Why do you think people hide?

When God found Adam and Eve, he asked them if they had eaten the fruit – this was their reply;

“The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Genesis 3:12-13

The interesting thing in this verse is that neither Adam nor Eve takes responsibility. Instead they decide to play the blame game and blame someone else for their wrongdoing.

Have you ever seen the blame game in football? Managers blaming players, players blaming fans, the pitch, or the weather.

Have you ever blamed someone in football or in life for something you know was your own fault? What happened?

We all feel guilty as Adam and Eve did so we run from God – we try to hide and instead of going to Him we reject him blaming a person or situation for our wrongs. We become ashamed and don't like the idea of facing God or others who we have wronged. So my big question is...

Are you hiding from God? Do you feel guilty and have decided to reject and blame God?

But you see God is different...we all do wrong at times, but it is how you respond to that wrongdoing that makes all the difference. You can take it, hide it and keep it to yourself. This means you won't let it go and it will be used to bring you down. Or you can come to God and tell him your wrongdoing and ask for forgiveness and He will give it to you. He will help you overcome it.

But the choice is yours you can hide? Or you can come to God who will forgive and set you free!

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” Proverbs 28:13

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” Galatians 5:1

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

Substitution

Adam and Eve blamed others for their wrongdoing and then they hid from God. So, because of their wrongdoing they were not able to be in close relationship with God and they were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. ***"So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken."*** Genesis 3:24

Do you think it was fair that they were thrown out of the Garden of Eden?

Have you ever been thrown out or had a red card in a game? How did it feel?

Have you ever stopped being friends with someone because of what they had done to you?

If someone does wrong do you think they should be punished?

When I watch football I always cry out when it is a free kick or where they should be a card. When people do wrong in life and on the football pitch we all desire for there to be a punishment. God is the same, ***"For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver..."*** Isaiah 33:22. God is a judge, but He is a just judge so people get what they deserve in line with what they have done. So Adam and Eve were thrown out because they disobeyed God.

BUT...

Many of us would see the punishment as the end of the situation, but God is not just a judge He is also love, ***"God is love."*** 1 John 4:8. So before Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden ***"God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."*** Genesis 3:21. Then He stayed with them and did not leave them. They received the right punishment for their wrongs but God still loved them and stayed with them. They were unable to stay with God because of their wrongs and that is where the birth of Jesus changes EVERYTHING!!

Have you ever seen a change/substitution in a football match that affected the result of a game?

Have you ever seen someone change their life around from a bad path? What happened? Why did they change?

Jesus was the substitute that God brought onto the pitch to change the result of the game/life. We all deserve to be away from God, blocked off and separated because of our wrongs. But when Jesus came to earth, He lived a perfect life and was able to take our punishment/red card for us on the cross. So when he died and rose again it meant we could be close to God if we believe in Jesus.

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." 1 Peter 2:24

"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

Do you want to change the result of your life? Not to be separated from God but to walk with Him?

Be prepared to ask them to make a decision if you feel this is right.

Made New

Last week we read how Jesus had changed the game. His birth, death and resurrection means we can walk with God like Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden. That is great news. Some of you may have decided to start walking with God or already do which is great. **But has it changed you?**

Did you ever see the incident of Luis Suarez biting another player? What did you think? Amazingly, even after apologising each time, he has still bitten players 3 times in matches on the TV.

Do you think he was sorry? Do you think he will ever bite again?

Have you ever had someone who kept saying sorry for wrong things but then kept on doing them? What does that say to you about the person?

After Jesus had been baptised he went on to start teaching the people, the first thing he said was ***“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*** *Matthew 4:17*. Now being the first teaching this must have been the most important as he felt it was the most urgent teaching to say. If there was a fire in the building you wouldn't start by saying 'please recycle', you would say 'THERE IS A FIRE - GET OUT!' This states the importance of what Jesus was saying.

Do you know what the word repent means?

Jesus was not just talking about being sorry for wrong doings but about a complete 180° turn so you say 'NO, I do not want to do this again.' It will be Luis saying, 'I will never bite ever again.' It is a complete change in character. It is turning away from your old life where you may put money, people or technology in front of God and instead saying, "I want to follow God first and have ***‘life to the full’***".

How do you know if someone is a true fan of a football club?

Well I love Arsenal (not before God) so every day I find myself looking at football websites to find the latest news. I chat with other Arsenal fans (most of us are grumpy). I know the history and still remember the unbeaten season with players like Robert Pirès & Thierry Henry. I go to see them play (when I have the money) and I try to imitate them by wearing shirts and playing the Arsenal way. This is the same with God, when someone is a true fan or follower they want to know more about Him through His word, the history, they spend time with others who follow Him, they share stories about what He has done for them, they try and become more like Him in the way they act and speak.

See, Arsenal can't replicate my love but God is our father so we can be in constant relationship with him. When Jesus was baptised God said, ***“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*** *Matthew 3:17*. We are God's sons and daughters and He loves us. He wants to be in constant conversation through prayer, He wants to hear from you all the time. He wants to walk with you.

When Jesus left the earth he said ***“I am with you always”*** *Matthew 28:20*.

Are you ready to be a true follower of God? Do you want to walk with Him?

You may want to offer an invite to church, or a Bible group to allow them to take the step to become a true follower.