

Healthy Initiative Study

Understanding Yourself: Body, Mind & Spirit

1.4: Genesis

Chapter 1 - DESIRE: Addiction and Human Freedom

Offered by Healthy Initiative Ministries - Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. - medicalmobilizers.org/healthy-initiative-studies

Resource: Addiction and Grace by Dr. Gerald G. May. Published by Harper & Row, 1988. Dr. May was trained as a physician specializing in psychiatry. He wrote this book while doing an exploration of spirituality and the human brain when working for the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D.C. His key topics are: Desire, Experience, Mind, Body, Spirit, Grace, Empowerment and Homecoming.

Genesis (Story of Creation)

1. **Summary** – Dr. May’s journey led him to full-time work in exploring the interfaces of psychology and spirituality. This book, written in 1988, was his sixth book on the subject. At that time, he discovered that neurological research was on the brink of understanding how addiction takes place in the brain. Dr. James Hurley, professor of counseling at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson Mississippi, where I earned my M.A. in Counseling, recently told me that there has been tremendous progress in the study of the brain and that the impact on counseling progress was huge. Dr. May wrote *“to me, these neurological insights harmonize beautifully with what spiritual authorities have been saying for many years. The themes themselves began long ago, with the Biblical story of creation”*.

Discussion: Based on what you know of the story of creation, what themes are related to this discussion?

2. **Summary:** Let’s review the creation story together. The snake (Satan, Enemy, Evil One, etc) lied when he enticed Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge. The blame game begins. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the snake. This was simply willful rebelliousness against God. Innocent and gullible like children, Adam and Eve were foolish and would have proceeded to eat from the tree of life had God not sent them packing to live outside the Garden of Eden (a place of delight). Obviously, Satan lied to Eve as she did not become as God. This is called the Fall. They fell from a position of grace and extreme comfort. This is where we all are today - standing in the need of God’s Grace. Like our first parents, we seek to be the masters of our own destiny – little gods. Our pride always brings us to a fall –a betrayal of human willfulness against a very good position of free will.

Discussion: What other observations or applications would you make about the creation story in the book of Genesis? What questions do you have as we better understand our history as man?

3. **May:** *“Adam and Eve’s real problem with not rebellion but foolishness. Their lack of wisdom made them extremely vulnerable to temptation. Once they gave into that temptation, their freedom was invaded by attachment. They expressed the need for more. God knew that then they would not - could not – stop with just one tree (one act of disobedience). If not removed from the temptation, they would no doubt have picked from the tree of life also. God could not allow that to happen.”*

Discussion: Do you agree that Adam and Eve were naïve and foolish and simply lacked wisdom making them vulnerable to temptations? Or were they actually hostile rebels much like Satan - the enemy? In this case, does it make any difference? God had no choice but to deal with their rebellion by sending them out of the garden.

4. **May:** *“In this powerful story, the basic elements of addiction and grace are distilled: freedom, willfulness, desire, temptation, attachment and, of course, the fall”*. It seems to me that each of our addictions reenact Adam and Eve’s story.”

Discussion: Dr. May said that humankind’s ongoing struggle with addiction is preparing the ground of perfect love. Do you agree? What does that mean? (Reminder: Dr. May said that addiction can bring us to our knees begging for God’s Grace.)