

# *Covenant Gifts*

## Bible Stories and Interactive Lessons

*“Make Your Starting Point Certain”*

**(2 Peter 1: 10)**



# *Covenant Gifts*

## Story Three: The Garden (Genesis 3)

*A long time ago there was a beautiful garden.  
God made the garden and everything else.  
And He made two people to live in it, a man and a woman.  
Anything they want to eat is free for the taking.  
He even comes in the evening to visit.*

*God gives them the job of taking care of the garden, and He gives them one warning:  
"Don't eat the fruit from the one tree in the middle of the garden"  
God calls it the tree of knowing good and bad.  
Do they even realize there is a difference between good and bad?  
It must be important, because if they take that step, death would start.*

*Snakes seem to be good at being quietly sneaky, blending in, and so on.  
The trouble with the quiet ones is you can't tell what they are thinking.  
But who knew one could talk? Or that it overheard what God told them not to eat?  
One day the snake quizzes the woman: "Did God really say you can't eat any fruit?"  
She: "No, we just cannot eat or even touch the one tree in the middle."*

*What is she to think about the snake's response?  
It scoffs: "You won't die."  
"God just doesn't want you to be as smart as he, knowing good and bad."  
When she sees the tasty, good-looking fruit, and believes it will make her wise, she eats,  
And she gives some to the man to eat too.*

*Immediately, they are uncomfortable with the thought of God visiting that evening,  
So they cover themselves and hide.  
When God comes to visit, they aren't there to greet Him. He calls out, "Where are you?"  
They answer, "We are hiding because we're afraid."  
How did God know they had eaten what He warned them not to eat?*

*First the man blames the woman: "She gave it to me."  
Then the woman blames the snake: "The snake tricked me!"  
So God reveals the consequences in turn. First the snake: "From now on you will crawl in  
the dust, and you and humans will always be enemies but you will never win."  
Then God turned to the woman, "When you start bearing children it will be very painful, and  
instead of being allies, you will compete with your husband."  
Finally He said to the man, "Now you'll have to work hard and overcome obstacles just to  
eat, much less to take care of the world."*

*God also did not want them to eat from the tree of life and live forever,  
So, He prepared them for life outside: first, He gave them names: Adam and Eve.  
Next, He equipped them with durable clothes.  
Then, He expelled them from the beautiful, bountiful garden,  
And set armed guards to keep them out!*

End of story

At the end of every story you will find a section to help 'connect the dots'. It will always include the following thought / discussion questions.

**Thought / discussion questions:**

1. Pray, then read or listen to the story
2. Retell the story in your own words
3. Discover the significance of this story. When you sense that you are familiar with it, select the most appropriate question(s) to ask yourself and/or discuss with others:

Q1: What does this story tell me about God?

Q2: What does this story tell me about the people in the story?

Q3: What does this have to do with me / what did I learn / what changes will I trust the Holy Spirit to make in me?

Q4: Who am I going to tell?

---

Additional material and questions are provided on the last page(s) of each lesson. These are intended for further study and/or discussion, and will include two sections (both intended for group interaction):

- **Food for further thought and discussion** (further Scripture, info and questions)
- **Wrap up** (what is not explicitly *taught*, but leads to what next and/or *action points*)

At the very end of this booklet *Covenant Gifts* under 'Supplemental Material' you will find lists of Starting Points and Covenant Stipulations, as well as step-by-step Instructions for filling out the Work Box, and even more research notes and suggestions.

**Food for further thought and discussion:**

This really happened. The facts include:

- God
- a garden
- two (original?) people, who
- are free to enjoy everything, except one prohibition
- are responsible to guard and care for the garden
- are tempted to eat what was forbidden and (eventually?) do so
- do experience the difference between good and bad
- do lose the garden and all the benefits, especially close friendship with God
- do instead gain hard(er) work, pain and suffering
- do begin to die
- do receive the promise of future redemption

A story: (*Genesis 2:8-17; 3:1-25*)

This is a *story* about that event, not the actual event. And it is not a 'fairy tale'. The story is told as it is for reasons we only partly understand.

After the creation story, it is the second human story of beginnings. It seems simple and brief for an act that changed the whole course of human history. But, it is the story just about the first step away from God, and that near the beginning of human life.

Also, it is one story of many that needed telling to remind the newly reconstituted people of Israel of their true beginnings. Perhaps it was told primarily for children, or at least for people who had forgotten much of their heritage. What we have in the Bible is the written record of an ancient oral story of true events, perhaps told around campfires, even sung, to be remembered and passed on — to their children and to us.

**After the Garden:**

Our human tendency, following that first wrong choice in the garden, is to replace God the *real* Starting Point for everything with something we invent (Romans 1:18-23). We may substitute our Assumptions / Starting Points / Preconceptions about the Natural universe: “created birds, animals and reptiles” (Type 1 Assumptions). Or we make Assumptions based on our human imagining: “images made to look like mortal man” (Type 2 Assumptions) (Schaeffer 1971, 40).

**Starting points:** (see List of Starting Points under “Supplemental Material”)

<b>Starting Points revealed/inferred:</b>	<b>Type 1</b>	<b>Inside Type 2</b>	<b>Outside Type 3</b>
<b>Core Starting Points: What is real / reality?</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <b>Only Physical / natural</b> (S. Hawking)         </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <b>Only non-Physical (mental/spiritual)</b> (Oprah or Chopra)         </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <b>God and creation</b> (Jesus Christ)         </div>
<b>Story 3 Starting Point (which do you think it is?)</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 10px; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 10px; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 10px; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>

**END**

Return: <http://rebuilding-the-pillars.the-porters.com/home/resources/>

## Supplemental Discussion and Leader Material

### Complete List of Starting Points / Assumptions / Preconceptions and their Types:

	<b>Starting Points revealed/inferred:</b>	<b>Inside</b>		<b>Outside</b>
		<b>Type 1</b>	<b>Type 2</b>	<b>Type 3</b>
<b>Question about Reality</b>	1. <b>Core Starting Points:</b> <b>What is real / reality</b>	Only physical / natural exists <small>(S. Hawking)</small>	Only non-physical (mental / spiritual) <small>(Oprah or Chopra)</small>	God and creation <small>(Jesus Christ)</small>
	2. Where everything comes from	The physical universe made itself	Mind / Universal Spirit everything = projection	God made everything
	3. How everything works	Natural laws operate the universe	Everything evolving toward perfection	God runs all per laws=His character
	4. Where everything is going	The universe ends in annihilation	Everything reaches perfect oneness	God completes all we will live w/Him
<b>People Question</b>	5. What is a human being	Random atoms; highly evolved animal	Evolving expression of mental/spiritual perfection	Created physical, mental & spiritual to reflect God
	6. What is the source of knowledge	Chemical processes in the brain	One's own mind / Universal Spirit	God reveals
	7. What is 'good'	Neither good nor bad; we decide	Whatever will make a better world	Only God is good
	8. What is our basic problem	Religion that is ignorant of physical only	Ignorance of the Ideal or inequality	We are not good

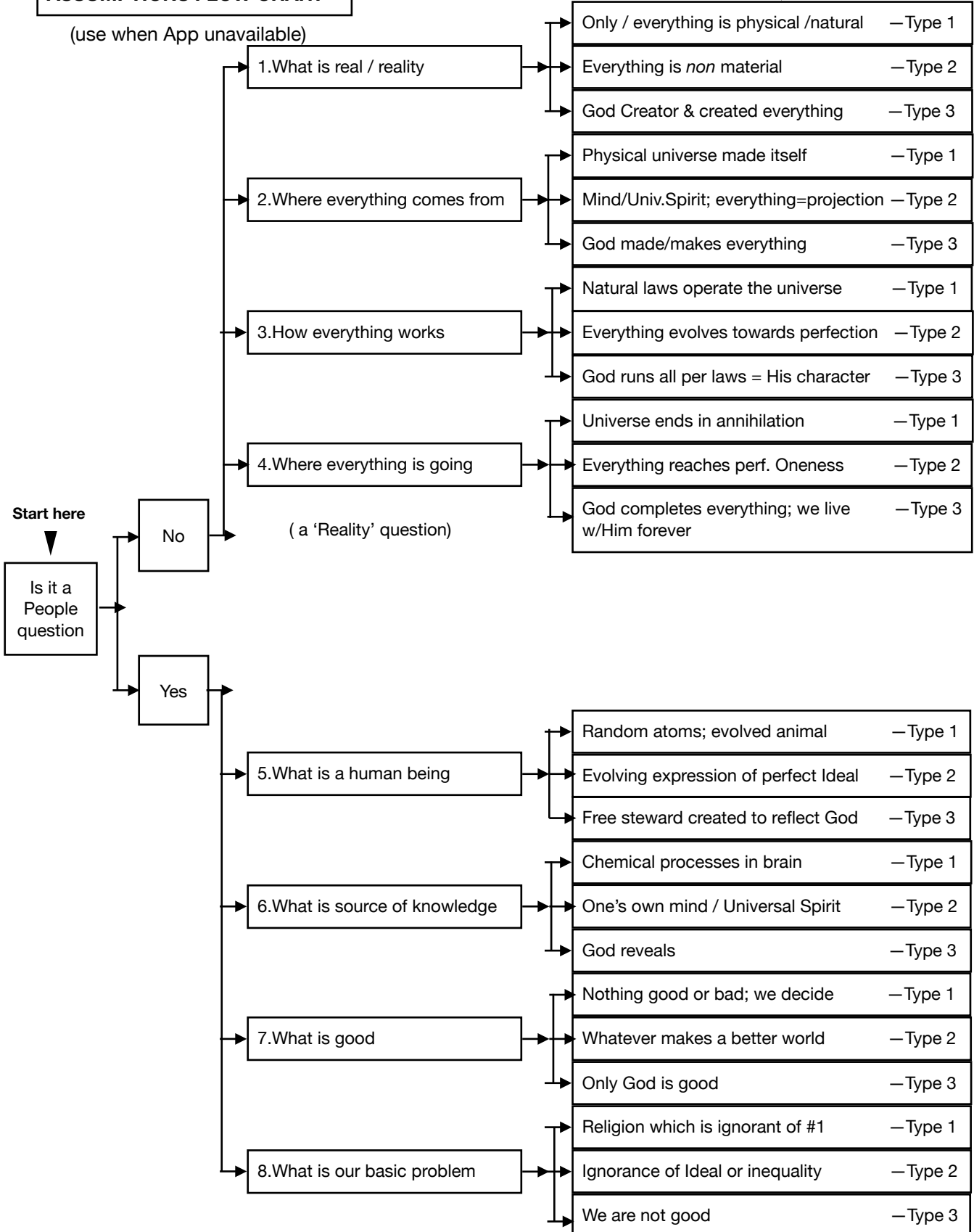
### **Using the “Transparent” App or Assumptions Flow Chart:**

All the choices on the Assumptions Flow Chart are contained in the App. You can buy the App on any App store for \$.99. When you turn it on, the first page contains the Question: “Is it a people question?” plus two choices: Yes? or No? Each choice leads you to further choices until you discover what Type of Assumption is being made for anything you see or hear.

The Assumptions Flow Chart can be used if you do not have the App or if you prefer this type of decision flow chart.

# ASSUMPTIONS FLOW CHART

(use when App unavailable)



**Follow step-by-step instructions to reveal which Starting Point is being demonstrated:**

Use one of the three Decision Types below (see **Example** below)

— together with —

The App or *Flow Chart* above to identify Starting Points / Assumptions / Preconceptions:

1. Something is **explicitly** stated, such as:
- Everyone knows that natural laws operate the universe
  - Whatever frees me . . .
  - There is no objective reality
  - We shape ourselves and/or our destiny
  - Everyone is basically good (inside), or there is no inherent evil

OR

2. If **not explicitly** stated, **ask** yourself or the text or the person: “Is this about . . .
- . . . the nature of reality?” or “what is real?”
  - . . . human nature?”
  - . . . what is good (right or wrong)?”
  - . . . where one looks for answers?”

OR

3. You can **determine fairly closely** by either asking yourself, or the source, something close to what they apparently assume: “Are you saying that . . .
- . . . humans are basically good inside?”
  - . . . reality is what we think or imagine?”
  - . . . whatever works is what is right?” etc.

These two tools enable you to reasonably determine which main Type you are encountering:

Type 1 like Stephen Hawking (everything is material / natural and therefore atheist)

Type 2 like Deepak Chopra (Eastern Pantheist / New Age), OR Oprah (Postmodernist who assumes reality = what they think in their minds)

Type 3 like what Jesus would say (to the *right* of the bold line)

**Using the Work Box** (see end of each lesson):

As its title states, the box is to help you discover which Starting Points are revealed, or inferred. Everyone has Assumptions / Starting Points / Preconceptions. They operate like GPS software. Without our notice, unconsciously behind the scenes, they guide our every thought, word and behavior. Crucial: *which Starting Points most closely align with Scripture?*

In order to use the Work Box for each lesson, you must (a) understand it, (b) understand how to use the “Transparent” App or if you do not have it, the Assumptions Flow Chart (above), and then (c) follow step-by-step Instructions (see **As an example** below).

First, notice two categories: ‘Inside’ and ‘Outside’, divided by a bold line. Most people, when they come to the end of their understanding, tend to look *inside* themselves, their human knowledge ‘system’ for what they assume to be true. Some however learn to look *outside* (their box, outside human knowledge) to God’s revealed Word (Bible) on the *right* of the bold line.

Next, notice the three ‘Types’ of Assumers, each characterized by a famous proponent. Most of us grow up a mixture of Type 1 (mostly older generation) and Type 2 (younger generation).

The *core* Starting Points / Assumptions: What is Real / Reality, upon which all others build, are always listed first in the shaded boxes. (see **example** below):

- some assume that reality is *only* physical / substantial or natural (Type 1)
- most assume reality is *only* non-physical (Type 2), either (a) our ideas, like Oprah, or (b) a universal spiritual Force, like Deepak Chopra or other New Age ‘gurus’
- only the Bible assumes two simultaneously actually-existing realities: God the Creator, *and* everything He created and cares / provides for (Type 3)—to the *right* of the bold line.

**As an example**, together let’s fill in the three blank boxes after Lesson 1 God Created (p. 8):

1. Since it is not stated explicitly in the lesson, try #2 above “...ask the text: what is real?”
2. On the App or Flow Chart, choose “No,” not about people but a ‘Reality’ question
3. Since the lesson is about creation, choose box #2: “Where does everything come from”
4. This yields the three positions for origins: (a) the universe made itself, (b) our mind/Universal Spirit is the origin and everything else a projection, (c) and God makes everything.
5. Fill in Work Box on pg. 7 Lesson 1 Starting Point: “Where does everything come from” and then the three boxes with #4, a-c (see filled in Example below).

Starting Points revealed/inferred:	Inside		Outside
	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Core Starting Points: What is real / reality?	Only Physical / natural (S. Hawking)	Only non-Physical (mental/spiritual) (Oprah or Chopra)	God <i>and</i> creation (Jesus Christ)
Story 1 Starting Point (Where everything comes from)	Universe made itself	Our Mind / Un. Spirit everything projection	God makes everythiing



**Covenantal Stipulations (10 Words / The Ten Commandments, Criteria & Issues):**

It has been observed that the Ten Words (Commandments) given to Moses by the hand of the Lord on Mt. Sinai are the *key* instructions God wants us to know. As such, they are a summation of the Starting Points that God wants us to know from outside. They are called 'covenantal stipulations' because they function more like marriage vows than like civil Laws. They lay out what God is like and what being in relationship with Him entails.

A further helpful exercise is to try to identify which are being instructed / learned in each Bible Story. The following is a list of the Ten Words, and how they provide criteria for our response to God and all that He has created.

**Covenantal Stipulations:**

(#1-3 Based on the Lord)

**1. I am the Only Lord; None other**

Criteria for: Ultimate reality

**2. No substitutes/icons/idols**

Criteria for: Who/what you love

**3. Do not misuse My name**

Criteria for: Glory/power/authority

-----  
**4. Remember the Sabbath**

-----  
Criteria for: Whom do I trust to set limits?  
(rest & recreation) Use time wisely?

(#4-5 mediating)

**5. Honor parents and all authority**

Criteria for: Trust/respect

-----  
(#6-10 Worked out in community)

**6. No murder**

Criteria for: Life & Death

**7. Love only one; no fornication**

Criteria for: Loyalty or Lust

**8. No theft**

Criteria for: Individual & Work Value

**9. No falsehood/lying/slander**

Criteria for: Integrity

**10. Be content; no coveting**

Criteria for: Pleasure & Appetite



### Lesson #3

#### Supplemental Scriptures:

*Genesis 6:5* Every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart is only evil always.

*2 Samuel 11* The story of David and Bathsheba, the best king of Israel, the man “after God’s own heart” lusted, stole a man’s wife, and had him murdered.

*Romans 3* All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory; none are good, not one.

*Romans 7:7-25* Even if we wanted to, we cannot.

Most people do not want to hear this. Despite the evidence all around us: (a) raising children: even toddlers lie, disobey, hurt without being taught, (b) criminal behavior in society, and (c) increasing dishonesty in society, people want to believe “there is a good person inside.” They naturally link “people are not good” to ‘hell and damnation’ preachers. How do we communicate this truth lovingly to others?

**Three construals of the human condition:** In the beginning there were only three sources of ‘authority’ (ground or basis for assumption): (1) the (animated) snake, (2) human, and (3) God

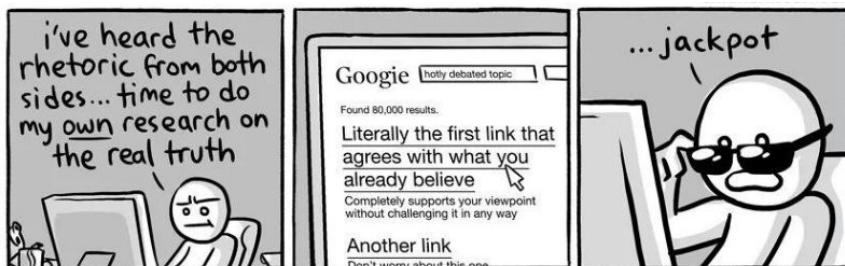
**Type 1: Religion & Superstitious Ignorance.** On one hand we have (hard) science, and on the other hand religion, superstition, personality theories, and other unprovable ideas. Based on purely Physical assumptions (Romans 1:22-23).

**Type 2: People are unequal & lack knowledge / are unenlightened.** Postmodern ‘Progressives’ sees the self / ideas as the only reality; together we can realize what we visualize. Eastern: if we can achieve enlightenment, we can become what we desire. Problems / contradictions include: rape in India, militant Hinduism, Buddhist prayer wheels. How do we know we are on the right path? (e.g., circular reasoning) (Romans 1:22-23).

**Type 3: What do we learn from Scripture? People are not good and against God** *Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-25*. Our first parents, given everything, chose to try on their own to be like God, sinned, causing a breach with God, instead gaining suffering and strife.

Remember that the Starting Points you just filled in, really everything you see, read or hear that is to the left of the bold line in the Starting Points chart represent Assumptions / Starting Points / or ‘beliefs’ that do not coincide with reality and are therefore not from God (why? see *After the Garden* p.3).

Keep in mind too that people and messages are notoriously inconsistent, a mixed bag. For example, they may be postmodern (Type 2) but also believe in random natural selection (Type 1). Typically, people with Christians in their family tree have a few residual “christianish” Assumptions.



[chainsawsuit.com](http://chainsawsuit.com)

“Whether a god is made of stone, wood, gold or silver, or whether it is a projection of the mind of modern men (who make their gods merely in their thoughts), the Bible says there is a great distinction between it and the living God” (Schaeffer, Francis. 1975. No little people, 40).

What is the Bible? It is a realistic book . . . in contrast with the romanticism that characterizes the twenty-first century concept of religion (from Francis Schaeffer. 1975. No Little People, 43).

(see also Discover Bible Story. 2020)

**Return:** <http://rebuilding-the-pillars.the-porters.com/home/resources/>