

But a graduate may also be surrounded by questions and doubts. This is a time in life to be asking a lot of questions... big questions:

(Graduate picks up question sign and looks confused.)

- Am I on the right track?
- Will I be happy?
- Is life just a rat race?
- Will I make lots of money? Should I be looking for more than money?

These questions don't just go away. In fact, the questions may get bigger and deeper:

- Who am I?
- Where did I come from and where am I going?
- What am I doing here on earth?

These are GREAT questions, and there ARE answers!

(Graduate puts down question sign and looks hopeful.)

The Bible tells us how God created us and has great plans for us. Do you want to hear about who you are and God's plan?

(Graduate nods very enthusiastically)

But let me warn you first. There is good news, but there is also some serious bad news, but then there is GREAT NEWS!

Here it is. It all begins in the Book of Genesis.

⁷then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food,

the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but 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 die.”

N: This is wonderful! You were created to enjoy the garden, and to be a part of the garden. Like the plants and animals, you were taken from the ground. There is work to be done in the garden, and you can enjoy its fruit. There is just one rule to follow, but that should be easy.

(Graduate gives thumbs up and is happy)

But there was still something missing.

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” ¹⁹So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” ²⁴Therefore a man leaves his

father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both happy and had nothing to be ashamed of.

(Eve steps up to Adam. They greet each other with a fist-bump like old lost friends. They happily play with the flower and the animals.)

N: This is a pretty sweet deal! You were created by God to take care of the Garden, be God's friend, have lots of other friends, and to enjoy life. What do you think of that?

(Graduate and Eve give the thumbs up and register their happiness.)

N: What could possibly go wrong? (pause) Well, actually a lot DID go wrong. Graduate, I have some bad news.

(Graduate and Eve stop dancing and look concerned.)

Now the serpent was more sneaky than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made.

(The Devil appears with an apple, looking very sneaky and evil. The Devil laughs as the apple is placed on the chancel rail. The Devil then makes an exit.)

He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree

was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

*(Eve pretends to eat the apple and hands it to **Graduate** who does likewise.)*

7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they were ashamed. **8**They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

*(**Graduate** and **Eve** crouch down behind the chancel rail as if hiding.)*

9But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” **10**He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was ashamed; and I hid myself.”

11He said, “Who told you to be ashamed? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” **12**The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

*(**Graduate** and **Eve** point at each other in blame.)*

13Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

*(**Eve** runs away. **Graduate** looks lost and dejected.)*

N: Yes, this is really bad! Because selfishness and evil came into the world, people don't get along, we always blame each other, we are ashamed (and that's a terrible feeling) and the world is a lonely place. Even the garden isn't what it once was. Weeds grow and work is very hard. Worst of all, God often seems so far away.

This is a very sad story, but it does explain a lot! It explains why the world is such a mess. It explains why we do dumb stuff and get into trouble, and why we hurt each other. It explains why life can be so confusing.

(Graduate sits down, depressed)

Graduate, life is hard, but don't give up. You have just heard the bad news, but don't go away. There is GREAT NEWS for those who will listen.

Our parents, Adam and Eve, had to leave the Garden where life was so wonderful and God was so near, but God did not give up on Adam or his children! He gave them clothing to cover their shame. Better yet, he gave them a wonderful PROMISE, and we have seen this promise come true!

God promised Eve that she would become the mother of all the living, and that she would have a very special child who would stop the Devil from making a mess of our lives. This special child would be our Savior, Jesus, who would come and help us, and make life good again.

(Jesus appears, calmly stepping up front and center and presenting himself. Graduate looks to Jesus with curiosity.)

Jesus came to show us that God still loves us very much. The greatest thing that Jesus did was to die for our sins. Remember how when Adam disobeyed God he brought the punishment of death upon himself and his family? Jesus took that punishment of death upon himself, dying on the Cross for our sins.

(Jesus points to the large cross, spreads his arms and bows his head to show how he died, and then points to graduate. Graduate is amazed, and points to himself as if saying "for me? Really?" Jesus nods.)

God loves us more than ever. Jesus and the Cross are proof. Jesus also shows how God wants to be with us and to be our friend and Father.

*(Jesus puts arm around **Graduate** in a sign of friendship.)*

Jesus is always with us and is always our friend. Even when we mess up – and we do that a lot! – Jesus will stay with us. Because of Jesus' love and forgiveness, we can better love and forgive each other. Jesus helps us to be friends, and where would this world be without friends? Adam and Eve can now get along!

*(Eve returns to **Graduate**. They are glad to see each other and fist-bump.)*

Life is not always easy and fun, like it was in the very beginning, but Jesus is with us to help us through and give us joy. Unfortunately, the Devil is also still with us—at least for a while—and will try to make more trouble for us.

*(The Devil scurries up to **Graduate** and flits about, sticking his tongue out at him and being a nuisance. **Graduate** looks annoyed. Jesus shoos the Devil away, and points for him to stay away. The Devil finally leaves.)*

Graduate, don't be afraid or discouraged. Jesus will be with you and will guide you. Call to Jesus in prayer and Jesus will listen.

And Jesus gives us special helps for our journey through life. God never wants us to be alone, so God made us into a special family, the CHURCH.

(Jesus waves his arm toward the congregation.)

The Church will always be there for you, and you need to be thinking how you can be helpful part of the Church family. With God's people we are to be working to tell others about Jesus, and to make this world a better place.

Jesus also gave us great wisdom and instruction for living life. We can learn this great wisdom as we read the Bible. This is God's book, with all kinds of life lessons and encouragement.

Graduate, I trust that you are feeling better prepared to face the world. All that I have told you is in the Bible, and there is plenty more good advice where this came from.

We were created to walk with God, take care of the earth, and to walk with one another. This plan may have been attacked by our enemy, and the journey will often be hard, but God is leading us on to great things. Don't be afraid or confused.

Let the **Cross** always remind you just how much Jesus loves you.

*(Jesus hands **Graduate** a small Cross from the altar.)*

Always stay an active part of the **Church**, for we need to live as family.

*(Jesus hands **Graduate** a small Church from the altar.)*

And let the **Bible**, God's love letter and instruction book, always be your guide.

*(Jesus hands **Graduate** a Bible taken from the altar.)*

Graduate, now you are really going places. Walk with God!

*(**Graduate**, looking confident and happy, holding the Cross, Church and Bible walks down the center aisle and out on life's way, closely followed by **Jesus** and **Eve**.)*