

STUDY 3

THE FALL

GETTING STARTED

So far, we have looked at God's plan for Creation. With an appreciation of how the quality of our relationships affects the way we do business in our mostly capitalistic societies, what insights might we gain from the story of 'the Fall'? Where have we gone wrong? What links are there to be made between our rejection of the principles of God, our exploitation of other people and our misuse of the planet?

A VIEW FROM THE DIOCESE OF BELIZE, CHURCH IN THE PROVINCE OF THE WEST INDIES

By the Rt Rev'd Philip Wright, Bishop of Belize



Darmine and Kenton have been friends since childhood. They grew up attending St John's Cathedral in Belize City and were active in the youth ministry there as teenagers.

Over the past fifteen years, both young men have been engaged in the tourism industry. Darmine started his tour company, Five Star Excursions and Adventure, offering activities such as cave tubing and ziplining. Kenton started working with a food delivery company in the town of San Pedro, one of Belize's prominent tourist destinations, but later worked as a tour guide and snorkelling instructor. About ten years ago, the two childhood friends joined forces. Their joint operation did quite well.

The tourism sector has been severely hit by Covid-19. Within weeks, Darmine and Kenton found

themselves without a regular income and had to survive on their limited savings and the government's relief programme. They soon discovered how easily the smaller operators like themselves could be squeezed out of having equitable access to the kinds of resources that could help them recover in time. Larger investors and companies were able to forge alliances with select groups, effectively discouraging potential collaborations amongst the smaller operators. The two young men have now ventured into another business involving household food orders and deliveries.

When asked about lessons learned, Darmine and Kenton point to things like having faith in God, the need to be humble, the wisdom of frugality and the value of family.

QUESTIONS

- What have been your experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic and how do they compare to those of Darmine and Kenton in the story?
- How can you personally relate to the lessons Darmine and Kenton say they have learned as a result of the pandemic?

MALACHI 3:6-12

- ⁶ 'I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.
- ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,' says the Lord Almighty.
'But you ask, 'How are we to return?'
- ⁸ 'Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.
'But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'
'In tithes and offerings.
- ⁹ You are under a curse - your whole nation - because you are robbing me.
- ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.
- ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,' says the Lord Almighty.
- ¹² 'Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,' says the Lord Almighty.

QUESTIONS

- In what ways are we 'robbing God' when we do not care for God's Creation?
- What blessing do we have today that we do not have 'room enough to store'? How have we taken these blessings for granted?
- How has Christian thinking about 'dominion' contributed to destruction of relationship between God, people and the Earth?
- What has the Covid-19 pandemic taught us about the relationship between God, people and the Earth?

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, guide us in the ordering of our lives and in our relationship with you, with each other, and with nature. May our relationships be built on trust, honesty, integrity, respect and love. Help us to seek Your perfect will in all things and, when we have rightly discerned it, grant us the courage to perform it to Your honour and glory. May we always act in the best interests of others as well as ourselves - seeking the common good in all we undertake. Let our efforts at securing justice and peace in our homes, churches and communities take the value of each and every one of your children created in your image and likeness seriously.

We make our requests in the name of your Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

ACT

This week look at how you use water. Take steps to reduce your water consumption. Buy a water butt. Turn the tap off while brushing your teeth. Time your shower and then reduce the time you spend in the shower by half. Run the short cycle on your dishwasher and always make sure it is full.

For each action you take put £1 in your Lent Box or jar. ■