



I N T H E B E G I N N I N G

W E E K 4 D E V O T I O N A L : P A R A D I S E L O S T

DAY 1

T E M P T A T I O N

Did God really say...

GENESIS 3:1b

R E A D G E N E S I S 2 : 1 5 - 1 7 , 3 : 1 - 1 5

Q U E S T I O N S

- 1) In what way does the serpent tempt Eve in the garden? What does he say? How does he respond to Eve's answers?
- 2) How do Adam and Eve react to their sin?
- 3) What consequences emerge from their sin, not just for Adam and Eve but for all creation?
- 4) What parts of the story resonate with you? In what ways do you see yourself play the parts of Adam and Eve?

DAY 2

SCRIPTURE SUMMARY

All Scripture is God-breathed...

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

READ THE STORY WITH FRESH EYES

Is there an apple in Genesis 3? Nope. The Bible only mentions "fruit." Sometimes Bible stories become so familiar to us that we are lulled to sleep as we read them and we fail to notice significant details. To help us discover these details, consider the following questions:

1. What was God's original command about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? (Read Genesis 2:17)? To whom did God give this command?
2. How would the woman have known God's command? What does the woman add to God's command?
3. In what ways is the snake an "odd" character?
4. Read what the snake says to the woman. Does the snake lie?

WHAT IS THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL?

It may be helpful to understand this tree as representing a choice that is given to Adam and Eve. Being made in the likeness of God, humans have the freedom to choose. They can choose to obey God's command to not eat this forbidden fruit and trust that God knows what is best for them and will provide what is needed. Or, they can reject the limits God has given to them and seek to be independent. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a test of their loyalty to their Creator.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? WHAT WAS THE SIN OF ADAM AND EVE?

Remember that this is a story that seeks to convey theological truths. Eating a piece of forbidden fruit isn't usually "the end of the world." But in this story, it is. Because eating this fruit represents an act of rebellion against the creator of the world.

When God created the world, it was “formless and empty” (Gen 1:2). God created order and filled the world with good things. But the woman and man were not satisfied with all that God had provided. They wanted more and since they suspected that God was holding out on them, they decided to take matters into their own hands. The woman took and ate.

The results were tragic. To rebel against God is to embrace death-- because God is giver of life. God is the one who breathed the breath of life into Adam and who created woman from the rib of Adam. To rebel against God is to choose a life of independence. It is to seek to be our own god. And it results in a life without the blessing of God’s complete protection and provision.

Adam and Eve were created as flesh-limited, weak, vulnerable, touchable, woundable. That was good, very good. They might have accepted their vulnerability and the precariousness of their fleshly life, trusting the Father to care for them. Adam might have been content to wait for the Lord to give him his full inheritance when the Father saw that he was ready. Eve might have rejoiced in fleshly weakness and trusted her Father to supply whatever strength she needed. Instead, they were discontented and impatient. Created good, very good flesh, they wanted to be more, and they want to be something more now. (Peter Leithart)

H O W D O E S T H E S E R P E N T T E M P T T H E W O M A N ?

The serpent is a very odd creature in this story. It walks. (It doesn’t slither like a normal snake.) It talks. And it seeks to build a relationship with the woman by holding a conversation. It seems almost human, but it is not human.

The serpent is described as “crafty.” One of the ways in which the serpent is crafty is that it does not tell the woman bald-faced lies. The woman did see things very differently after she ate of the fruit. And, she did not fall down dead (Genesis 3:4). The fruit probably seemed good to her at first. But the serpent has twisted the truth and planted seeds of doubt about God’s goodness with this temptation. As CS Lewis writes in *The Last Battle*, lies mixed with a little truth become far stronger.

Marty Solomon argues that the serpent’s temptation to take and eat the fruit that is “good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom” (Genesis 3:6) is a temptation to give in to desires and become like an animal. Humans are the only creatures in the garden who are made in the image of God. Thus, they are the only creatures who are capable of harnessing their creative powers and desires. The serpent, an animal who acts human in many regards, tempts the woman, a true human, to act like an animal. When the woman and Adam succumb to this temptation, the image of God in their lives is marred and life is forever changed. The crafty serpent gets them to rebel against God, and the man and woman who used to enjoy sweet communion with their Creator, now hide in fear.

The result of sin is the withdrawal of God’s presence. For He is a holy God, the ultimate standard of good, righteousness, and justice. He cannot countenance compromise with sin. Adam’s and Eve’s decision in the garden to go it alone resulted in the fall of humanity. The result of this fall was a thick and sticky stream of anxiety that runs through human history, oozing into our lived experience. The root of our emotional toxicity, our deep anxiety, and our fears lies in the absence of His presence. (Mark Sayers)

Q U E S T I O N S

1) In what way does the serpent lie to the woman?

2. Adam and Eve failed to trust that God is completely good and that God's commands are for their good. What lies are you tempted to believe about God?

3. Mark Sayers wrote that, "The result of sin is the withdrawal of God's presence." Do you agree?

DAY 3

" SEND ME "

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"*

ISAIAH 6:8

READ PROVERBS 9 : 10 AND
ISAIAH 6 : 1 - 8

QUESTIONS

1) Previously in our studies, we have looked at scripture that illuminated God as Creator and Father and highlighted His attributes of love and goodness. How do these passages focus on God differently?

2) Can you imagine having a vision like Isaiah, and to be caught standing before God? Why is it important to also maintain this perspective of God?

3) How can we walk in faith with God, while also maintaining a dual perspective of God as being full of judgement but also full of love, mercy, and hope?

DAY 4

HUMAN NATURE

Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

ROMANS 7:25

READ ROMANS 7 : 1 5 - 2 5

QUESTIONS

- 1) How does Genesis 3 explain what Paul wrote in this passage? How does this passage explain how the law of sin works for all of us?
- 2) Which verse or verses most resonate with you? Why?
- 3) Verse 25 offers hope for our sinful nature. How does this passage demonstrate that Christ is not just a luxury but a necessity?

DAY 5

G O I N G D E E P E R

*We've been given a glimpse of the real thing,
our true home, our resurrection bodies!*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:5

R E A D 2 C O R I N T H I A N S 5 : 1 - 1 0

Q U E S T I O N S

- 1) This passage can be confusing because Paul uses a metaphor here. In verse 1, what is meant by the "tent?"
- 2) Why is our soul "groaning?" What is it longing for? (See verse 6. What does it mean to be "away from the Lord?")
- 3) Draw a connection between this passage and Genesis 3. What has caused this tension to occur?
- 4) Verse 5 again offers hope for our earthly plight. Who has given us this tension and desire for more? What is the future guarantee that is spoken to us by the Holy Spirit?
- 5) How do you see the tension of 2 Corinthians 5 play out in your life? Are there times when you are overly frustrated by our imperfect, temporary "tent?" Are there other times when you are, perhaps, too at home in our "tent?"

B O N U S

R E C O N C I L I A T I O N

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

1 JOHN 4:7

R E A D P S A L M 2 2 , 3 2 , O R 5 1

R E F L E C T I O N

1) Read any of these passages as a prayer of brokenness and repentance, asking for forgiveness and longing to be reconnected with our Father and Savior.

F O R G R O U P S

Q U E S T I O N S

1) How does "the fall" impact Adam and Eve's relationship with God?

2) In what areas of life do you feel creation groaning [to be reconnected with God]? (Romans 8:22)

3) What impressed you about God as you read the Scripture passages?