

# The Fall

*January 14, 2024*

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

Genesis 3

### **Session Outline**

1. The Temptation (Genesis 3:1-5)
2. The Fall (Genesis 3:6-13)
3. The Consequences (Genesis 3:14-24)

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### **Theological Theme**

Because of the fall, all of Creation has become subject to sin, evil, and death.

### **Call to Action**

Are you trying to “fix” your life issues on your own? There is only one true solution to “fix” all the sin and evil in this world.



## Leader Guide

# The Fall

### Introduction

Since the beginning of time people have asked, “Why?” Young kids ask why about almost anything and keep adults on their toes to find good answers. Usually for kids, nothing is off the table to question and wonder about. This includes anything from the color of the sky to the reason certain words are pronounced the way they are. The questions kids come up with range from the weirdly obvious to the deeply spiritual. Children seem to have an innate sense of freedom to question as part of the learning process. For various reasons, adults may not ask everything that comes to mind, but they still wonder.

Think about some of the big questions adults ask. After living a few decades on this earth, our questions tend to become more in depth and difficult to answer. Two of the more common tough questions that come up are *Why is there evil in the world?* and *Why do people do bad things?* According to a report from Focus on the Family, the question of evil in the world is one of the most frequent difficult questions people ask.<sup>1</sup> Today we will walk through a passage of Scripture that gives us the answer to this question and is foundational to our faith.

- ❓ What are some of the “why” questions you commonly hear from the kids around you?
- ❓ What is the hardest question you have been asked lately?
- ❓ When have you asked or been asked a version of the question about evil in the world?

### Session Summary


What happened in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3 has lasting consequences for the world. Everything changed once sin entered the world, and we are still dealing with all the effects of Eve’s encounter with the enemy. Satan appeared as a serpent to interact with Eve in the garden and she made the mistake of entertaining his ideas. This led to doubting the Word of God and then ultimately giving in to the temptation to sin.

We can learn a great deal from studying what happened in Genesis 3. We can see parallels between their situation and our lives today and discover ways to protect ourselves from falling into temptation. The way God dealt with their sin and provided the solutions they needed are a powerful reminder that we need the power of Jesus to work in us if we want to experience forgiveness and restoration from the havoc that sin brings to our lives.


## 1. The Temptation (Genesis 3:1-5)

After God created the world and everything in it, we pick up the narrative with Adam and Eve in the garden. Chapter three introduces the serpent and describes him as more crafty or cunning than any other creature. Although the serpent is not identified as Satan in the first few verses, it is made clear that this is an encounter between Eve and Satan.

As this passage illustrates, when we try to outsmart Satan on our own, we find ourselves falling short and experiencing defeat. The good news is that we can overcome the enemy by the power of Jesus. Being crafty means Satan knows how to approach us where we are most vulnerable and weak—and that is exactly what he did to Eve. He questioned what God had instructed and this opened the door for Eve to misconstrue and doubt what God said.

 When have you experienced defeat because you tried to outsmart Satan on your own instead of by the power of Jesus?

A favorite tactic of Satan is to create doubt by asking questions. Notice what asked Eve and think about how many times you have encountered a similar tactic from him. By initiating the conversation with a question, Satan drew Eve into a place she should not have ventured. We can easily fall prey to the same maneuver. Although we can speak to the enemy, we should be wary of entertaining discussions with him. The more we get involved with him the more opportunity he has to draw us off course.

 What is the danger of opening yourself to the ideas of Satan or anyone who is in opposition to God? How is this different than listening with a godly mindset to someone who disagrees with you?


As she talked to Satan, Eve found herself in a place she had no intention of going. While she shared some truth, she also added her own interpretation to God's instruction. This is dangerous for believers. We are called to know God's Word and obey it. When we put our own spin on Scripture or make additions to it, we stray into dangerous territory. When she added

### The Tree

The tree in the midst of the garden from which humans should not eat represented those areas of dominion reserved to Yahweh alone. The man and woman, however, disobeyed God and ate of the tree. They "died" with respect to their covenant privileges (2:17) and suffered the indictment and judgment of their Sovereign. This entailed suffering and sorrow and eventual physical death. God had created man and woman to enjoy fellowship with Himself and with each other. Their disobedience alienated them from God and each other.


that they were not even to touch the tree, she gave the enemy ammunition to grow doubt into her mind. That was not part of God's instruction, and these added false restrictions set her on a path to doubt God.

The interaction between Eve and Satan shows us the progression of how he orchestrated the devastating temptation she was about to fall into. First, he drew her into conversation. Then he questioned her about what she knew. Then he planted seeds of doubt in her mind about God's instruction. Once her vulnerability was exposed, he moved in for the kill and directly challenged God's Word. Satan works most effectively when he has a strong foothold and Eve unwittingly gave him the freedom to work.

 Application: What can you learn from seeing the progression of this passage to help you avoid falling prey to the enemy yourself?

## 2. The Fall (Genesis 3:6-13)

The fall of mankind started with a conversation and a temptation specifically designed for Eve just as the enemy specifically designs temptations that come to every Christian. Eve gave in to the temptation the same way we surrender today. She listened to the wrong voice that was questioning God. She entertained the enemy. She looked at the temptation and desired it. She ultimately gave in to the desire of her flesh and the lure of pride.

 How often can you see this same pattern repeated in your life? Where along the way do you have opportunity to shut the enemy down? When have you done this and what difference did it make?

As with every temptation that comes our way, Eve had the opportunity to flee. No one was holding her down and forcing her to listen to Satan or eat the fruit. She could have and should have fled at the first sign of her own weakness but instead she gave in and ate the fruit, leading to the fall of mankind. Once she sinned, Eve gave the fruit to her husband and invited Adam to join her in her rebellion. Eve was deceived and lured into sin. Adam sinned with his eyes wide open in clear disobedience. Adam also failed to stand up to Satan as it is made clear he was passively present with Eve. Each of them carried the responsibility for their own sin and the part they played in bringing sin into a perfect world.

Once they ate the fruit, everything changed. Sin changes things, and our actions have consequences. The Bible says their eyes were opened, and they recognized their nakedness. They were left feeling naked, exposed, and ashamed. To cover themselves, they sewed fig leaves together to hide

their bodies. This is a picture of what happens when we try and cover up our own foolishness instead of just turning to Jesus immediately.

- Why do you think we, like Adam and Eve, tend to try and cover up our sin with the things of our own making? Why does this always come up short?

Imagine the grief of this moment. These two, who were in the habit of walking with God in the cool of the day, had sinned and realized everything had changed. They made insufficient coverings for themselves and waited anxiously for their confrontation with God. When they heard the Lord drawing near, they hid. You might think it ridiculous for Adam and Eve to hide from God but take a minute to remember all the times you have done the same. They knew they had failed and felt ashamed. They likely realized that their coverings were not going to adequately keep God from knowing what happened and couldn't bring themselves to face God directly in that moment.

God called out to Adam and Eve with a question. Despite their failure, God sought them out as a loving Father. God knew what had happened, but He offered them the opportunity to come clean on their own. In the presence of God, Adam started with excuses and blame. Sin made Adam afraid of God just as it does us. A person who chooses rebellion has not treasured the voice or Word of God the way he or she should. Both Adam and Eve tried to pass the blame for their sin off and make excuses instead of taking responsibility and seeking His forgiveness.

- Application: What does this text teach you about how to respond when you've sinned? What should we do different than Adam and Eve? What makes this difficult?


### 3. The Consequences (Genesis 3:14-24)

Sin has consequences. We know this from Scripture, and we know it from experience. This original sin had consequences for the serpent, Adam, and Eve. The serpent would be cursed to slither along the ground and there would be enmity between the offspring of the woman and the serpent. Many people have a very natural and sometimes highly exaggerated enmity with snakes. But God's words here went deeper. Verses 14 and 15, known as the proto-evangelium, is the first proclamation of the good news. This serpent crushing offspring of the woman would be the answer to the brokenness just caused by the fall. Despite the devastation Adam and Eve faced, God promised a solution.


- What does it teach you about God that even in response to the first act of human rebellion, He promised a solution and a way of restoration with Him?

It was not just Satan that faced consequences of that day in the Garden. God told Eve that from that day forward, her sorrow and pain would be increased. This is a broad consequence that is specific to women. It is not just that pain and sorrow would be felt in childbirth, God's words to Eve about her husband describe a contrast between her natural desire for him and the challenge to submit to his leadership in the family. The brokenness of the fall meant God's design for marriage and family was also broken. Sin corrupted both the role of man and woman to create difficulty in obeying God's Word.

God also made it clear that Adam chose to sin with Eve instead of obeying God. Before the fall, the ground only produced good. After the fall, the earth would grow thorns and thistles and be difficult to tend and keep. We still see and experience this reality today.

-  What does God's response to Adam and Eve teach you about the accountability every person has for their sin before God? How does this remind you that you can't rely on another person's faith but must be in relationship with God yourself?

Although we know her as Eve, it is not until verse 20 that we are told her actual name. Adam named her Eve as a promise that she would be the mother of all the earth. Despite their sin, God was going to use them to populate the earth. God still had plans to use them for good. The way that the Lord clothed them with animal skins gave the reality of what it takes for sins to be forgiven. Sacrifice is necessary. To use skins for clothing, an innocent animal must die a sacrificial death. Ultimately the innocent Lamb of God, Jesus, had to die so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could be clothed in His righteousness.

-  Application: How does the sacrifice of the first animals for the covering of sins remind you of the cost that had to be paid for your sins? Why was the sacrifice of Christ worth infinitely more than anything or anyone else?

## Conclusion

Sin entered this world through an encounter between Satan and Eve. It all started with a seemingly innocent conversation that the enemy used to tempt Eve into disobeying God. Throughout the discussion with the serpent, Eve had opportunities to shut him down and flee the situation. She chose instead to engage in discussion that resulted in her questioning the word of the Lord and falling into temptation. When we allow the enemy to speak into our lives, we find ourselves vulnerable to questioning what God has said and our commitment to the Lord threatened.

Those who have trusted Jesus for salvation are no longer bound by sin, Satan, and death and do not have to give into the enemy's temptation. But once the decision to sin is made, we can be sure there will be consequences. All of creation experienced consequences because of the foolish decisions made that day. Both men and women now deal with specific things tied to Adam and Eve's disobedience. We also see the provision God made to atone for their sin. He sacrificed innocent animals to make coverings for them, pointing to the ultimate innocent sacrifice Jesus offers through His death on the cross for our sins. Nothing we do to try and fix our guilt will be adequate; it is only through the power of Christ that we can know true forgiveness and restoration. There is only one solution and one answer to the problems in your life and in the world—Jesus.

- ❓ What ways or places have you allowed the enemy to speak into your life in some way? What needs to change to stop this cycle?
- ❓ How can we as a group support one another in seeking Jesus as the solution to the problems we face and not looking for a fix in our own power or wisdom?
- ❓ How can you have a gospel conversation with another person by sharing the story of the fall?

## Prayer of Response

*Praise the Lord for His mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Thank Him for sending Jesus to be the sacrifice for your sins. Ask for wisdom to see where you can shut the enemy down or flee when temptation comes your way.*

## Memory Verse

*I will put hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel. - Genesis 3:15*

## Additional Resources

- *Genesis* by Kenneth Gangel and Stephen Bramer
- *Genesis* by John Walton
- *Genesis 1-11* by Kenneth Matthews

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples





# Historical Context of Genesis

## Purpose

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity.

## Author

Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the five books that include the book of Genesis, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author (Jos 8:35; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 8:9; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; Neh 8:1; 9:14; Dn 9:11, 13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:19, 26; Lk 2:22; 20:28; 24:44; Jn 1:17, 45; 7:19; Ac 13:39; 15:21; 28:23; Rm 10:5; 1Co 9:9; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of "Dan" (14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

## Setting

The Torah (a Hebrew term for "law" or "instruction") was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (literally, five vessels). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1–11) is a general history commonly called the "primeval history," showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12–50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the "patriarchal history," focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham's descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

## Special Features

The book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb *bereshith*, "In Beginning" [based on 1:1]; Gk *Geneseos*, "Of Birth" [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence: the creation of the universe and the planet earth; the origins of plant and animal life; and the origins of human beings, marriage, families, nations, industry, artistic expression, religious ritual, prophecy, sin, law, crime, conflict, punishment, and death.

# Extended Commentary

## Genesis 3:1-24

3:1 Though we know the serpent was an instrument of Satan (Rm 16:20; Rv 12:9; 20:2), it was just a created being. Its description as cunning suggests it offered a wisdom not based on the fear of God. It tried to take Eve's focus off the abundance of God's provision.

3:2–3 The woman's claim that God said, You must not . . . touch the tree, or you will die, goes beyond anything recorded in God's instructions to Adam. Therefore it seems that Adam had given his wife an additional command beyond what God said, or else Eve herself exaggerated the command as Satan tempted her to view God as selfish and overly restrictive. If Adam added to God's command, he almost certainly had a good motive—after all, if Eve never touched the tree, she certainly would not eat its fruit. However, the sad truth is that when people add to the word of God, they create confusion and trouble.

3:4–5 The serpent, recognizing the woman's confusion, found a point of attack. Knowing that the woman would not die by merely touching the fruit, he boldly contradicted what she had reported to be God's command. He then skillfully lied (Jn 8:44) by distorting God's word (Mt 4:6), implying that God had prohibited people from eating the fruit only to keep them from becoming as knowledgeable as he. The woman was now fully deceived (1Tm 2:14).

3:6 Since the woman did not die when she touched the fruit—in contradiction to what she had thought God said (v. 3)—she ate it. Though Adam was with her at the time, he did nothing to stop her. Perhaps he wanted to eat of it as much as the woman did, but fearing the consequences, used his wife as a “guinea pig” to make sure it would not cause instant death.

3:7–8 As the serpent had indicated, the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew, but instead of producing godlike power, the knowledge brought only a sense of human inadequacy, fear, and shame.

3:9 God took the initiative in reaching out to sinful humanity. This pattern—humanity sinning, then God seeking out sinners—becomes the primary theme of the rest of the Bible. Its ultimate expression is found in Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save people alienated from God because of their sin (Lk 19:10); in him God once again walked on the earth in search of sinners. The all-knowing God asked Adam, Where are you? for Adam's benefit, to encourage Adam to face his sin.

3:10 When Adam heard God, he was afraid. Rather than walking with God as righteous men of later generations would do (Enoch, 5:22; Noah, 6:9), Adam hid from him.

3:11 Through the use of two direct questions God brought Adam to accountability for his sin. God does not overlook sin, but he can be gently firm in confronting it.

3:12 Adam answered neither of God's questions; instead, he sought to shift the blame for his sin first to the woman, and then to God.

3:13 The woman passed the blame to the serpent and admitted that prior to eating, she was deceived (1Tm 2:14).

3:14 Though accountability began with God's confrontation of Adam, judgment began with the serpent. Because of the serpent's key role (being used of Satan) in bringing sin into the human experience, it would be permanently consigned to the position of ultimate shame, under the foot. Just as conquered kings were made to lie on the ground under the foot of their conquerors (Jos 10:24), so now the serpent would live under the feet of humanity.

3:15 Hostility between the first woman and the serpent would be passed on to future generations. This verse is known in Christendom as the protoevangelium, or “first good news,” because it is the first foretelling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Using an emphatic Hebrew construction, God announced here that a male descendant—He—would someday deal the serpent (meaning Satan) a fatal blow. The NT writers understood Jesus Christ to have fulfilled this prophecy (Heb 2:14; 1Jn 3:8). In an extended sense, the NT also indicates that God would work through the church—those indwelt by the Spirit of Christ—to destroy the works of the devil (Rm 16:20). The assertion that the snake would only strike his opponent's heel (as opposed to head) suggests that the devil will be defeated in the ensuing struggle (Rv 2:2, 7–10).

3:16 Even though the woman had been deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, she was still held accountable for her act. Notably, however, the word cursed is not contained in God's words to her (vv. 14, 16). Two penalties were imposed; both struck at the heart of a woman's roles in life. More than would have been the case had sin not entered creation, bearing children would add to the sum of painful effort in the universe (God said he would intensify, not originate, woman's labor pains). Marriage would also be marred; though the woman's desire would be for her husband, sin would mar God's plan for marriage and create tormenting inequality and subjugation. The latter is a description of the ravaging effect of sin on a husband-wife relationship, not a prescription for abusing one's wife. The NT teaches that marriage should reflect the relationship of Christ with the church (Eph 5:24–25) and be characterized by a husband's understanding of and respect for his wife (1Pt 3:7).

3:17 Because Adam listened to and obeyed his wife in preference to what God commanded (2:17), a curse would strike at the heart of a fundamental relationship in his life as well. Adam's relationship with the ground would now be damaged by sin. All the days of his life he would experience painful labor (cp. the woman's labor pains, v. 16) as he worked to bring forth the fruit of the earth. Because of sin, all creation is cursed and longs for its day of deliverance (Rm 8:19–22).

3:18 Prior to the first couple's sins God is only recorded as having put trees in the garden (2:8–9); now there would also be thorns and thistles. Prior to sin, humanity had only to reach up to get food; now they would have to bend their backs to gather plants of the field.

3:19 The simple plucking of fruit in order to eat food (lit "bread") would now be replaced by backbreaking labor and the sweat of the brow. Working daily in the soil, Adam would be continually reminded that he was dust and that he would return to dust.

3:20 The new name Adam gave his wife emphasizes the woman's life-giving role that counteracts the curse of sin, which is death. Yet the divine order calls for a reciprocity exhibited in male servant leadership and female submission, both of which are modeled in Jesus himself.

3:21 By making clothing from skins, the Lord God graciously provided for humanity's need in a way superior to what Adam and Eve had done with fig leaves. The use of animal skins anticipates the OT system of animal sacrifices (Lv 1; 3–7; Nm 15:1–31). In the NT, the apostle Paul spoke of a day when God would clothe his people with immortality (1Co 15:53–54; 2Co 5:4), thus providing the complete undoing of the curse of humanity's sin.

3:22 Because of sin, people now knew good and evil experientially. Since the gift of life was directly tied to obedience, man's sin meant that the penalty of death must be enforced. Expulsion was at the same time an act of mercy. Banning the humans from the tree of life allowed for their redemption rather than for them to live a life of perpetual sin in an unredeemed condition.

3:23 As the Hebrew text ironically expresses it, the Lord God sent Adam from the garden so that he would not send forth ("reach out"; v. 22) his hand for the garden's fruit.

3:24 Following their sin, the first couple went east, a direction associated with departure from God in numerous biblical examples. Other instances of eastward movement in Genesis include Cain's journeys after judgment (4:16), humanity's migration toward Babylon (11:2), and the migration of Keturah's sons (25:6). Cherubim are used as an artistic motif in the tabernacle (Ex 25:18–22; 26:1) and are also mentioned in Ezk 10 and 11. The ironies continue as the man who was once commanded to "watch over" the garden (Gn 2:15) is now banned from the garden.<sup>2</sup>

## References

1. Bret Eckelberry, "Tackling 5 Tough Questions about Christianity," Focus on the Family, August 8, 2023, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/uncategorized/5-tough-questions-about-christianity/>.
2. Robert D. Bergen, "Genesis," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 10–12.