

Session 14

The Illusion of Omniscience

Genesis 3:1-7

Memory Verse

The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

– GENESIS 3:6, CSB



The Illusion of Omniscience

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Falling into the temptation to trust our own wisdom instead of God's always has consequences.

CALL TO ACTION: Seek to continually lean on God's understanding and wisdom over your own.

The cinematic classic “Aladdin” tells the story of a boy who grew up on the streets that met and fell in love with a princess. The story creatively brings these characters together (each longing for a life different from the one their upbringing built for them), but the most creative element of their story is the presence of the enigmatic genie of the lamp.

In the beloved cartoon version produced in the 1990s, the genie charmed his way into our hearts through extravagant musical numbers and hilarious quips brought to life by the late actor Robin Williams. In the more recent live action adaptation, the singer and actor Will Smith brought the genie character to life, charming a new generation of fans.

In each iteration, audiences are captivated by this character who has the power to summon wishes to life, turning a “street rat” into a would-be prince who might actually have a chance to win the fair Princess Jasmine’s heart. Imagine it! With just the rub of the lamp, a normal human could have the wishes of their heart (with very few limits) come true. It’s easy to see the allure!

In the story, the young orphan Aladdin finds the lamp and uses it to pursue Princess Jasmine, but the villain of the tale, Jafar, who has been searching for the lamp and the power it would bring him, steals it away. Power in the hands of the corrupt never ends well, but as with many children’s stories, a happy ending is in store. In a triumphant scene, Aladdin tricks Jafar into using a wish to become an all-powerful genie himself. Jafar wishes to be all powerful, but he gets more than he bargains for . . . a life trapped in a small lamp, locked in the mystical Cave of Wonders in the desert.¹

The genie life appealed to Jafar for the same reason the character of the genie fascinates audiences. Everything he wanted was, theoretically, at his fingertips. He was promised more—more knowledge, more power, more money.

And the allure of getting “more” on our own, apart from our Creator, has led humans into trouble for millennia.

 How do you see people today searching for “more” apart from God?

 Why is it problematic to search for fulfillment and satisfaction outside of God?

Session Summary

In Eden, God provided everything Adam and Eve needed (and more!), but the cunning serpent encouraged Eve to shift her focus away from God’s abundant provision and onto something she “lacked.” His clever words twisted the truth, planting the idea that there was no danger in disobeying God’s command, and that God was actually withholding something good with the commands He put in place.

The fleshly allure of “more” would prove to be too tempting. Eve, with Adam at her side, picked the fruit God had forbidden, and ate it, facing consequences God had tried to protect them from.

1. The Serpent’s Temptation (Genesis 3:1)

 How did the serpent twist God’s words in the question posed to Eve?

 What would it have looked like for Eve to respond in faithful obedience to God?

In chapter 2 of Genesis, we get a beautiful picture of the creation that God called good (Genesis 2:8-9). Picture the most beautiful garden that you have ever seen. The natural beauty in gardens have the power to feel magical but consider how much more beautiful a garden planted by the Creator's own hand would be!

God created “the heavens and the earth and everything in them” (Genesis 2:1), then created a garden and filled it with “every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food” (Genesis 2:9). God didn't simply provide food, He also provided beauty! He placed Adam and Eve in a garden that had everything they needed, and more.

God gave man purpose and one simple rule:

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”

—Genesis 2:15-17

As it sometimes goes, God's rule was simple, but not necessarily easy when human nature enters the equation. The allure of “more” became a great temptation for Adam and Eve.

The serpent was simply a created being, who was used by Satan.² The serpent was described as “the most cunning of all the wild animals” (v.1), but what does that mean? We get the sense that this cunning equates to being tricky. His wisdom is his own, not rooted in the true source of wisdom, the Lord.

Notice how the serpent phrased his question. Remember, God placed Adam and Eve in a verdant, thriving garden. He had given them everything they needed, plus natural beauty for their enjoyment. They had plenty to eat! What the serpent said was not true, but he did not attack God's command directly. Instead, he sought to slowly turn focus away from God, and onto the one thing God had warned against. Where God is generous and loving, the enemy seeks to portray Him as restrictive, lording rules and power over us.



What are some other ways the enemy seeks to portray the character of God wrongly?

The text doesn't specify that Eve was unhappy with the situation God put them in. According to her words, it doesn't seem like she was resentful about not being able to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. But the enemy's suggestions, always strategic, can be powerful.

The enemy still tempts us like this. Rather than being thankful for the abundant blessings God has given us, the enemy invites us to dwell on the things we are "missing" (encouraging us to comprise or stew in unhappiness, focusing on what we lack).

God equips us to remember the truth by His Word. Jesus said not to worry about daily needs (Matthew 6:25-34). The Psalms remind us with God as our shepherd, we have everything we need (Psalm 23:1). Scripture is rich with reminders that God will take care of us (and warnings of what can happen when we take matters into our own hands).

2. Deceptive Reasoning (Genesis 3:2-5)



How did Eve misrepresent God's words in her response? How might we do that, even unintentionally?



The serpent moved in with a more direct attack on God's Word as the conversation progressed. How have you seen that happen in moments you sought to fight against the schemes of the enemy?

Eve began by refuting the serpent's claim (Genesis 3:2-3) but Eve's response was slightly different than God's original commandment (Genesis 2:16-17). Do you notice the difference? Eve said they must not eat or touch it, while God's commandment was simply not to eat from it.

Perhaps the cunning serpent recognized Eve's confusion around God's actual commandment and sought to take advantage with more aggressive tactics. He suggested there wasn't actually any danger in eating the fruit God had forbidden and implied that, in fact, not only was there no immediate danger, but in this commandment, God was really trying to hold them back.

How familiar this lie is! The enemy is still using it today, and it is so effective in our current me-focused cultural moment. The enemy twists the truth and attempts to convince us that God is only trying to control us. To spoil our fun. To hold us back from enjoyment of some kind. In a society that tells us to embrace the desires of our flesh, the lie that God is wrong to hold us back from such things is one that can be easily accepted.

 The serpent told Eve if she ate of the tree, she would be like God. How can modern tools like A.I. tempt humans to try and “be like God” when improperly used or relied upon?

Adam and Eve were tempted by the thing that God had forbidden. They were tempted to become “like God.” With these words from the serpent, the trap was set. Sadly, Adam and Eve would fall into it.

3. Devastating Consequences (Genesis 3:6-7)

 Where did Eve place her trust in these verses? How are we tempted to do the same?

 How are we to avoid disobedience to God when the temptations we face are “delightful to look at” and “desirable for obtaining wisdom”?

Eve fell for the lie that she could be “like God.” This dangerous line of thinking is a familiar one throughout the story of Scripture. This drove the people of Babylon to build a tower reaching into the heavens (Genesis 11:4). Job and his friends

displayed this type of logic when they assumed they knew why God had allowed misfortune to befall Job, though they lacked the knowledge and perspectives to make that judgment (Job 38). The Proverbs repeatedly warn of the dangers of living in a way that seems right to us, but is outside of God's desire and commandments. Adam and Eve's disobedience cost them life in the beautiful garden God created.

The serpent's sticky words worked. Now, Eve looked at the tree and saw it "was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom" (v. 6). Adam and Eve redefined what God called "good." God made the world and everything in it. He called it good. He gave them a good, healthy boundary. But they decided that they wanted to decide what was "good," and acted on that impulse.

Don't miss in verse 6 that Adam was with Eve when this happened ("she also gave some to her husband, who was with her"). The verbs here are all plural.³ Adam was with Eve, and yet he didn't correct her statement about God's commandment. He didn't stop her from taking the fruit from the tree. Rather, he stood by and watched, knowing she was being disobedient to God's command, and then he took the fruit "and he ate it" (v. 6). Both Adam and Eve were guilty. They both gave into the temptation to be like God. They bucked against God's commandments, deciding for themselves what was good. And they both paid the price.



Genesis 2:15 says Adam was placed in the garden to "work it and watch over it." How did he fail in this call with the serpent? How should he have responded instead?

Though there would be more consequences, our passage ends with Adam and Eve's eyes being opened, realizing they were naked and feeling shame. They didn't die, but instead of the godlike power they sought, they received humiliation and shame. The temptations of the enemy that promise fulfillment and satisfaction often turn out this way—empty and regretful.

Conclusion

Genesis 2 paints a stunning picture of God’s generous provision in Eden: a garden He planted Himself, filled with beauty, abundance, and everything Adam and Eve needed. God gave them a fulfilling purpose (to work and watch over the garden) and one clear boundary—not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent was crafty and sought to shift Eve’s focus from the wholeness of God’s provision to the perceived lack in the one boundary God put in place.

The enemy still uses this tactic to turn our eyes away from all the ways God has provided for us. By focusing on what we think we’re missing, we breed discontentment instead of gratitude and unhappiness instead of joy. Adam and Eve learned the danger of grasping for “more” apart from God.

Eve initially pushed back against the serpent’s accusation, but her recollection of God’s commandment was slightly distorted. Instead of saying they simply couldn’t eat the fruit, Eve said that they couldn’t even touch it. The serpent pounced on this slight confusion, insisting that there wasn’t actually any danger in eating the fruit and planting the idea that God was actually withholding something good from them with His commandment. This lie sprung the trap Adam and Eve would fall into.

The serpent’s words succeeded in tempting Adam and Eve to disobey God. Tempted by the idea that they would be “like God,” they picked and ate the fruit. Both Adam and Eve were present. Eve didn’t trick Adam. They both sinned and both faced consequences. When the enemy tries to draw us outside of God’s design, the results are always disappointing rather than fulfilling.



Where are you tempted to focus on what you lack instead of what God has provided?



How can tools like A.I. tempt us to believe we can be like God or operate at a capacity we were not meant to?



How can we support and encourage one another in the proper use of technology like A.I. without seeking to overstep our boundaries and “become like God”?

Memorize

The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

- Genesis 3:6, CSB

References

¹*Aladdin*. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Pictures, 1992. Film; *Aladdin*. Directed by Guy Ritchie. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Pictures, 2019. Film.

²Robert D. Bergen, “Genesis,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 10.

³Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible*, One-Volume Edition, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 5.