

The Illusion of Omniscience

April 12, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Genesis 3:1-7

Session Outline

1. The Serpent's Temptation (Genesis 3:1)
2. Deceptive Reasoning (Genesis 3:2-5)
3. Devastating Consequences (Genesis 3:6-7)

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.

Leader Guide

The Illusion of Omniscience

Introduction

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.

Death in the Garden

The privilege of dominion also carried responsibility and limitation. Being placed in the garden to “work it and watch over it” represented human responsibility (2:15). 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.

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 of 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"?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for the gift of creation and for generously providing for and protecting us through the loving boundaries He gives us. Ask for His help obediently following His design and desires for our lives, rather than taking matters into our own hands.

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

Additional Resources

- Exalting Jesus in Genesis by Phillip Bethancourt
- Genesis by R. Kent Hughes
- Genesis by John Walton



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 3:1-6

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.⁴

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