

## *Beginnings: Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Four: The Beginning of Human Rebellion Against God – Genesis 3:1-7*

Overview: Read Genesis 3:1-7 carefully.

- 1) From Matthew 13:19, John 8:44, John 12:31 and Revelation 12:9, who is the serpent of Genesis 3? Include other names from these passages. Do these verses depict him as merely a concept of evil or as an actual being? *The serpent is also known as the evil one, prince of this world, the devil, liar and father of lies, the great dragon, and the ancient serpent. Satan is depicted in the Bible as an actual personality, not merely a concept of evil.*
- 2) Read about and compare the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 to the woman's temptation. What similarities and what differences do you find? *The woman engaged in conversation with her tempter, while Jesus answered him only with Scripture. The woman was in a state of ideal physical condition, while Jesus was extremely weak, physically and probably emotionally. In both scenarios, the tempter arrived at an opportune moment: Eve was presumably in close proximity to the tree in question when the serpent tempted her to eat its fruit, and Jesus was physically weak after weeks of fasting. Also, on both occasions, Satan cast doubt on God's goodness and twisted God's words. Finally, Satan offered to exalt both of them: he claimed Eve would be "like God" and offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world (immediately, rather than in God's time).*
- 3) What do you learn from the passages above that better equips you to face temptation? *Since Satan tempts us to doubt God's goodness, we must guard against becoming too focused on immediate and difficult circumstances. When we are tired, depressed, or ill, we are more likely to be tempted. We should be careful about lingering in close proximity to objects of temptation. Since Satan is the father of lies, we must continuously evaluate our thoughts and the messages of our culture against the light of God's truth (this requires familiarity with God's word). Personal sharing*

Reread Genesis 3:1-5.

- 4) According to Genesis 2:17, what was the name of the forbidden tree in Eden? What does the name seem to imply? *The forbidden tree was called the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17). Although God had made man in His own image and innocent, free will provided the opportunity to obey or disobey His instructions regarding this tree, introducing the potential for evil. The tree's name implies an ability to impart special knowledge. Some scholars believe that its fruit had no *inherent* ability to impart knowledge of any kind; "knowledge of good and evil" was derived from the experience of having disobeying God. Others disagree and think that the fruit itself was able to impart some special kind of knowledge. Regardless, the important point is that there was no benefit gained by Adam and Eve from eating this fruit that could outweigh the consequence of death.*
- 5) Compare the serpent's quotation of God's instructions (3:1) with God's actual instructions (2:16-17). *The serpent's words were "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" God's actual instructions had been "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*
- 6) What subtle doubt did the serpent plant concerning God's nature? Are you currently facing a similar temptation? *Instead of acknowledging that God wanted to protect Eve from something harmful, Satan suggested that God was keeping Eve from something good. He wanted her to doubt God's goodness. He also accused God of lying about the consequences of eating from the tree (verse 4). Personal sharing*

From Genesis 3:1-5:

- 7) Was everything the serpent said in verses 4-5 a lie? Explain. Although Adam and Eve did not experience physical death immediately, Satan falsely claimed that they would not die at all. His deceptive suggestion was that they had nothing to lose and everything to gain by disobeying God. However, it was true that their eyes would be opened to good and evil.
- 8) Can you think of any new “knowledge” Eve would have gained if she had chosen *not* to eat from the forbidden tree? Once Eve faced the temptation to eat the fruit, it seems that she would have gained knowledge of good or evil *whether she ate or not* – but knowledge on two entirely different planes. If she ate, she would have experiential knowledge of evil. However, every day she continued to choose not to eat, she grew in her potential to understand the blessings of choosing obedience to God. Eve would have come to understand the nature of temptation and of her free will, and the joy of choosing obedience to God in the face of temptation. In this sense, she still would have had her eyes opened to good and evil, but in a helpful way (understanding the danger), not a harmful way (experiencing the negative consequences).
- 9) What lies about God and His word are prevalent in your culture today? Answers may include: the idea that Scripture is not God’s word at all (or that it is full of errors and fictitious stories), the lie that God is not a personal Being or is completely non-existent, the lie that Jesus is *a* son of God but not *the* son of God, etc.

Read Genesis 3:6-7 with 1 John 2:16 and James 4:1-10.

- 10) Identify the sources of temptation listed in these three passages. Eve looked and “saw the fruit was pleasing and desirable” (Genesis 3:6). When we look and meditate upon things we know to be wrong, we are setting ourselves up for a fall. Eve also “took.” She placed herself within proximity of something she knew she was to avoid. If we don’t establish a boundary between evil and ourselves, we are likely to fall into temptation. 1 John 2:16 and James 4:1-10 summarize the sources of our temptations as the world, the flesh, and the devil. (“The flesh” is another name for the sinful nature that we have inherited from Adam and Eve. “The world” does not refer to creation but to the world system [human culture]).
- 11) What helpful truths about the nature of temptation (the forms it comes in, the ways it can be resisted, etc.) do you discover in the above passages? Circle the principle(s) in your list that are most helpful to you currently. Examples of principles: Loving the world will lead us into temptation because all that is of the world is not from God (1 Jn); Entertaining (or putting oneself in close physical proximity) to temptation makes one extremely vulnerable (Ge 3:6); Ultimately, we sin because of the selfish nature inside of us (Ja 4); Humbling oneself before God and rejecting worldly things puts us in a position to receive friendship from God and grace to resist temptation (Ja 4); Submitting oneself to God’s will while resisting temptation will result in victory over the temptation (Ja 4) “Washing our hands” of present sin in our lives protects us from deeper temptation in those areas (Ja 4). Personal sharing about which is currently most helpful.
- 12) How much of a temptation is it for you to focus on what you *don’t* have rather than all you *do* have? What action, if any, is required on your part (give specific examples)? **Personal sharing**

From Genesis 3:6-7:

- 13) What did Adam and Eve become aware of after they ate the fruit? Had their circumstances changed? If not, what had changed? Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness. There was no actual change (they had been naked before they sinned and were still naked after they sinned). However, after they sinned, they (for the first time) felt exposed. This attitude toward their physical condition resulted from guilt, shame, and fear of being found out.
- 14) Adam and Eve made fig coverings for themselves. What kinds of “covering” do people hide behind today because of shame? Money, a smile, lies, flashy clothing, work, good deeds, medication, shifting blame (e.g. calling sin mental illness, suggesting another person is at fault, etc.)

**15)** It seems unlikely that Adam and Eve could have grasped the immense fallout of their disobedience (all of the consequences for themselves *and* for future generations). Is there anything God is asking of you right now that doesn't make sense to you? What have you learned about the risk of disobeying His instructions? Since Adam and Eve had no previous, experiential knowledge of sin, it seems unlikely that they could have conceived of the realities of death, guilt, fear, and shame, the burdens they would become, and the horrors that have resulted from human depravity (let alone that billions of people would share their consequences).  
Personal sharing