

GENESIS

Why The Beginning Matters

Study 5

The Fall of Man- Rejecting a Good God

Genesis 3:1

A. The Anatomy of Temptation

Part 1 of 3: Temptation Always Involves a Loss of Trust

Verse 1

Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

1) Objective question. Select all that apply. Based on the video lecture and passage, which of the following is TRUE about doubt?

A. Serpents in the ancient near east culture is considered not wise and non-magical creature

B. Erosion of trust begins with doubt, which the serpent has sown the seeds of doubt

C. Doubts are caused by inadequate views of God

D. An inadequate view of God is thinking that God has power but no love. Eg. God may be powerful enough to heal you, but He may not do it because He doesn't love you enough

E. An inadequate view of God is thinking that God has love but no power. Eg. God loves you, but He may not be powerful enough to heal your diseases.

Verse 1-5

Genesis 3:1-5 (ESV)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

2) a) Objective question. Select the most appropriate answer. Based on the video lecture and passage, which of the following is FALSE?

- A. Satan the devil always exploits vulnerable areas of our lives
- B. Eve never had any doubt in her heart about God before the serpent's incident**
- C. When trust is broken, one will begin to doubt God's motive
- D. Satan often narrows your view by using one aspect of God that is true but manipulates it in a way that makes a person fail to see the other aspects of God
- E. The issues that are often painted in an unbalanced way are The holiness of God VS Love of God, Justice of God VS Grace of God, and Sovereignty of God VS Free will/Responsibility of man
- F. Accumulation of past hurts, unanswered prayers and perceived unfairness can tempt a person to doubt whether God's intention for us is good or not

b) Reflection question. Can you share a situation in the past and present when you doubted God's intention when things didn't go your way?

c) Objective question. Select all that apply. Based on the video lecture and passage, which of the following is TRUE about lies?

- A. The best lies will often have an element of truth mixed inside**
- B. Satan will downplay the consequences of the sin**
- C. The lies that Satan implants in our minds can make us lose perspective about reality (eg. Adam and Eve can have a lot of good things in the garden of Eden, yet her eye-view is focused narrowly on the one tree she cannot eat from, unable to see the other good things she has)**

Part 2 of 3: Temptation Originates from a Loss of Identity

Quick References

Ecclesiastes 3:27

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Luke 3:38

the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Matthew 4:3

And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

Matthew 3:16

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;

3) a) Fill in the Blanks. Fill in the blanks by referring to the lecture slide on “temptation: who are you?”.

Temptation: Who are you?		
	Adam and Eve	Jesus
Acceptance of Identity	Denied their Identity	Affirmed His Identity
Faithfulness to the word of God	Unfaithful	Faithful
Outcome:	Death	Life

The Possible Meanings of “the fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and evil”

- 1) Man knows evil by giving into it, God knows evil by resisting it
- 2) Patient knows disease by experiencing it and doctor knows the difference between diseased state and healthy state
- 3) Based on Geneses 31:24 and 24:50’s use of ‘good and bad’ suggests that the right to decide what is good and bad comes from God alone

b) Reflection question. Eve saw the ‘good’ things about eating the forbidden fruit, she saw it as ‘good for food’, ‘delight to the eyes’, and ‘makes one wise’ and chose to rely on her own decision to eat the fruit against God’s wisdom. What are the issues in your life that you are struggling with to choose between human wisdom and God’s wisdom?

Quick References

Colossians 3:9-10,12

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Part 3 of 3: Temptation is Ultimately a Test of Love

Verse 6

Genesis 3:6 (ESV)

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

4) Fill in the Blanks. Fill in the blanks by referring to the lecture slide on the similarities in temptations that humans across time and history face.

Adam and Eve	Jesus	Us
Genesis 3	Matt 4 & Luke 4	1 John 2
Good for food	Hunger	Desires of the Flesh
Delight to the eyes	Sight of the spectacular	Desire of the eyes
Make one wise	Glory of the kingdoms	Pride of life

Quick References

1 John 2:15-17

On Not Loving the World

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

5) a) Discussion question. Fill in the blanks on what you think happens when legitimate desires become something more sinister. You may refer to the lecture slide to help you but not all the answers are there.

Legitimate desires (Neutral desires)	illegitimate desires (Sinful desires)
Food	Gluttony
Safety	Greed/Revenge/Wrath

Respect	Envy/Idolizing/pride
Loyalty	Idolizing
Love	Lust/Idolizing someone

b) Discussion question. What should we do with our desires? Indulge in it? Avoid it? Repress it?

Quick References

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”— C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

“God’s action is severe in that He gives us over not only to our desires but to a condition of ungovernable desires. We demand, God steps back. We choose to regulate our lives rather than honoring and obeying God; we lose the ability to regulate our desires. “— Harry Schaumburg, *False Intimacy*

Psalm 37:4

Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

James 1:13-15

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

B. Overcoming Temptation

6) Discussion question. How should we overcome temptation? Refer to the reference verse below to help you.

Quick References

Romans 5:8-9

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

1 John 4:19

We love because he first loved us.

7) Fill in the Blanks. Fill in the blanks by referring to the lecture slide on our identity.

Our True Identity		Our Identity is not based on:	
Chosen	Race	How popular	You are
Royal	Priesthood	How godly	You are
Holy	Nation	How clever	You are
People for	His own possession	What you have	achieved
Sons	Of God	How hardworking	You are
Heirs		How much you	Have sacrificed
God's	New creation	How big	Is your church

Takeaway for Genesis 3:1-6

A. The Anatomy of Temptation

Part 1 of 3: Temptation Always Involves a Loss of Trust

Part 2 of 3: Temptation Originates from a Loss of Identity

Part 3 of 3: Temptation is Ultimately a Test of Love

B. Overcoming Temptation (with Christ)

Case Study

Case 1 – Understanding God-given Desires

Carrie grew up in a very liberal environment in her family and had been sexually active very early in her adolescent life.

When she became a Christian, she was taught to be sexually chaste and not continue being promiscuous. She struggled with this because she really enjoyed the physical pleasure that comes with sex.

Each time she sinned she would feel very bad and in the end, she decided to become a nun in the convent to become more holy because she had realized that it was sex that would eventually lead her to hell.

The sexual desire was evil and was to be shunned and avoided in order for her to please God.

1) a) Discussion question. Is Carrie correct in her ideas about sex?

b) Discussion question. Was she right to dedicate her whole life to celibacy?

c) Discussion question. How should her pastor have guided her instead?

d) Discussion question. Why is it so important to remember both the goodness of creation (from Genesis 1-2) and the fallenness of creation (from Genesis 3)? What kinds of problems result when you forget one or the other?

Model Answer

a. Is Carrie correct in her ideas about sex?

Carrie's attitude towards sex is colored by her upbringing. She has singled out the pleasure of sex as something which she now believes to be evil and bad because the church told her that she is to refrain from sex with random strangers. Everything God has created including sex is good but corrupted by our sin and the issue is for us to redeem the good in creation from its corruption instead of cutting what we deem as evil out of our lives completely

b. Was she right to dedicate her whole life to celibacy?

This was unnecessary because her body was made for relationships and the physical pleasure of sex allows reinforcement of the covenantal relationship within marriage. Dedicating herself to celibacy was done based on her faulty belief that the pleasure of sex was bad. The pleasure of sex was immoral only as it was practiced outside of a covenant and she had in the past put sex out of its original intended context and corrupted it.

c. How should her pastor have guided her instead?

She should have been taught about biblical ideals of relationships and marriage and then the proper expression of her sexual desires would be given due recognition.

d. Why is it so important to remember both the goodness of creation (from Genesis 1-2) and the fallenness of creation (from Genesis 3)? What kinds of problems result when you forget one or the other?

The central point to remember is that Biblically speaking, sin... [does not] abolish [the goodness] of creation... Creation and sin remain distinct, however closely they may be intertwined in our experience... Sin... attaches itself to creation like a parasite. Hatred, for example, had no place within God's good creation. Nevertheless, hatred cannot exist without the creational substratum of human emotion and healthy assertiveness. Hatred participates simultaneously in the goodness of creation... and in the demonic distortion...

The great danger is to always single out some aspect of God's good creation and identify it, rather than the alien intrusion of sin, as the villain. Such an error conceives the good-evil dichotomy as intrinsic to the creation itself. The result is that something in the good creation is identified as [the source] of evil. In the course of history, this "something" has been variously identified as... the body and its passions (Plato), as culture in distinction from nature (Rousseau and Romanticism), as an authority, especially in the family (psychodynamic psychology), as technology and management (Heidegger and existentialists)...

The Bible is unique in its uncompromising rejection of all attempts to identify any part of creation as either the villain or the savior. All other religions, philosophies, and worldviews in one way or another fall into the trap of [idolatry] — of failing to keep creation and fall distinct. And this trap is an ever-present danger for Christians...

For example. Genesis 1-2 tells us that work is inherently good. Genesis 3 tells us that work is cursed. To either make work an inherent evil (as did Greek philosophy) or a way to get a name and identity for ourselves (as many in modern Western society do) — is a failure to keep creation and fall separate and in balance.

Case 2 – Lies with Elements of Truth

Abigail is a believer who is now in her 30s. She believes that marriage is a good thing and has always made it a goal in her life to be married one day. However, she has found it difficult to find a Christian man whom she has chemistry with as there are not many suitable Christian guys around.

She became close to a good gentleman, named Shaun, but he is an atheist who does not believe that God exists. Abigail knows that the Bible teaches that we should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever but she believes God still wants her to be happy and has a future for her.

She strongly believes that with enough faith, she can bring Shaun to know Christ through Alpha when they are married. Even though he does not believe it now, he is open to their children going to Sunday school one day.

Because of this, Abigail decided to marry Shaun. She reasons that, after all, we are supposed to bring people to Christ and she could do that by marrying Shaun into the faith.

2) a) Discussion question. The Bible teaches clearly in 2 Cor. 6:14 that we should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (i.e. that we should not marry unbelievers). Despite the obvious command from the Lord, why does she still reason with going against it?

Quick Verse Reference

2 Corinthians 6:14

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

b) Discussion question. To an extent, Abigail reasons that she has the right to weigh and judge what is right and wrong with regard to what God has said. Was she right to do that?

c) Discussion question. When did Abigail's disobedience begin? Was it when she married Shaun? Or when she started to reason that she could marry an unbeliever?

Model Answer

a. The Bible teaches clearly in 2 Cor. 6:14 that we should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (i.e. that we should not marry unbelievers). Despite the obvious command from the Lord, why does she still reason with going against it?

Abigail struggles to trust in the authority of God's Word.

Just like with Eve, in his first strategic approach, the serpent creates mistrust in the authority of God's Word. The serpent does not contradict but only at first insinuates and hints. How does he do this?

First, he 'tamper's' with the Word God has spoken. He exaggerates the original command, and then he asks a question — but it is clearly a rhetorical question, not designed to get information but to create an attitude. "Has God said, 'you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?!'" (v.1) The question is really a way of expressing incredulity. He implies that the command of God is burdensome and unreasonable. To paraphrase, he is saying, "So God actually said you can't eat the fruit of your own garden? If God really is as generous as we have been led to believe, surely he would not have forbidden such a natural thing!"

Or in a Malaysian slang: "Ha? God don't let you eat ah? Yerrrr... why He lidat one?"

So by tampering and scoffing, he creates an atmosphere in which the command of God is subjected to evaluation.

In Abigail's case, she puts the preaching of the Gospel of Christ in the context of marriage, which in itself is not wrong. However, this directly contradicts 2 Cor. 6:14. The fact that her reasoning goes against the Word of God is tantamount to disobedience. To obey is better than sacrifice.

Discussion question. To an extent, Abigail reasons that she has the right to weigh and judge what is right and wrong with regard to what God has said. Was she right to do that?

The first question the serpent asked Eve insinuates that God's command is something we have a right to weigh and judge. "The incredulous [question] 'So God has actually said — ?' is both disturbing and flattering: it smuggles in the assumption that God's word is subject to our judgment." (Kidner, p.67). Let's feel the full weight of this.

How does sin begin?

We learn here that it does not only begin when we decide to disobey. It begins when we assume that we have the right and wisdom to even decide if we should obey.

Discussion question. When did Abigail's disobedience begin? Was it when she married Shaun? Or when she started to reason that she could marry an unbeliever?

As soon as you begin asking: "is this obedience to God really beneficial to me or not? Should I obey this or not?" — then you have already disobeyed!

How so?

You are assuming God's place. You are not being neutral when you begin such questioning. Rather, you are already committed to the supposition that you can stand in judgment over the wisdom of God. So the first step in temptation begins not with disobeying his will, but with putting yourself in a position to judge the wisdom of his will.

The serpent's first stratagem (3:1) begins to work, for Eve's response is to exaggerate the command of God as well. She says that God told them not to eat of the tree, "nor shall you touch it, or you shall die" (3:3). So she "overcorrects the error, magnifying God's strictness" (Kidner, p. 68).

Why does she exaggerate? Apparently, she has begun to feel some self-pity and has picked up the 'spirit' of the first strategy. She is beginning to put herself into the position of the Judge.

Case 3 – The Reason for Obedience

Philo and Sophy are two good Christian friends who love attending Delta Bible study. They learned how God prohibited Adam and Eve from taking the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

Philo laments that all the suffering we face is a direct result of Adam's sin. Philo believes that if Adam knew the reason why God forbade him to eat the fruit beforehand, he would not have disobeyed.

Evidently, God gave a warning (that Adam will die if he disobeyed) but did not explain why. After all, what is so wrong with eating another fruit if they could eat all other fruits?

Sophy agrees and says that God was being unfair by not fully disclosing the purpose of this prohibition. She believes that God should have clearly explained this to Adam.

3) a) Discussion question. What explanation does God give Adam and Eve for this prohibition? Was there an explanation?

b) Discussion question. Should we obey God because it is best for our own interest or should we obey God because He is God?

Model Answer

a. What explanation does God give Adam and Eve for this prohibition? Was there an explanation?

In the garden of God, Adam and Eve are given one and only one prohibition—
"but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Gen 2:17).

This is the only boundary to human freedom that God lays down. Of all the trees in the world, you must only refrain from eating from one. This does not seem very difficult — considerably less difficult than following all of the 10 commandments! And yet there is a very difficult aspect to the command. God gives not a word of explanation as to why they were not to eat of the tree. They are told that they will be punished — "in that day you will surely die" — but they are still not told what is wrong with eating the tree or why they would be punished. God does not say: "don't eat of the tree because it is poison" or "don't eat of the tree, because it will release a terrible power into the world".

b. Should we obey God because it is best for our own interest or should we obey God because He is God?

The both are not mutually exclusive, seeing that God is an all-knowing good God, He'd probably know what is in our best interest since He designed us.

#1 There is a danger to obeying solely out of self interest but not because God gave the command. This is purely for our own benefit - without God in the picture.

For example, one may abstain from sexual relations before marriage because they are taught about STDs and they want to avoid that (at the same time it is taught as a command). But

they do it solely because of self preservation; not because they want to follow the Lord's command to be holy for Him.

This implies that if there are no medical consequences whatsoever, this person would proceed to disobey anyway.

Another example we might have for complying with the command "Do not lie".

One possible motive we might have is fear.

We might say: "if I lie, I'll get caught."

A second possible motive we might have is pride.

We might say: "I am a good person, and I am better than the low-down immoral people who lie."

Now both of these reasons are true — lying often does not 'pay', and people who tell the truth are more helpful to others and more honest than people who do not. But if either (or both) of these motives are the primary ones, then we are ultimately only watching out for our own skin. We are not honest for God's sake nor for honesty's sake — but for our sake.

#2 There is a danger to obey God because He is God and insisting it should be the ONLY reason because "God said so."

This can paint a tyrant God who does not have the interests of human in mind. The language of workers getting their pay, Jesus as the water that stops thirsts forever, the language of rewards for those who get persecuted for Christ and the warning of death for Adam and Eve shows that God cares for our interest, and any self-preservation or self-interest coming from humans are not necessarily evil in nature all the time.

Case 4 – The Essence of Sin

Fari See is a very devoted and pious Christian who is passionate about the Lord. She prays 3 times a day, reads her Bible every morning and night, and goes to church every Sunday. She also attends every Bible study and prayer meeting that her church organizes.

Unfortunately, she takes great pride in her achievements and looks down on everyone around her. She becomes very arrogant – eventually, she judges and belittles everyone else who knows and does less than her.

One day, a good friend pointed out that pride is a sin. However, she does not see her own

pride as a sin. Fari says that sin is breaking any of the commandments and that she never breaks any of them.

4) a) Discussion question. Is sin just “breaking the rules” given by God? If not, what is sin?

Model Answer

Genesis 3 shows us that sin is a deeper concept than just “breaking the rules”. Nothing could make that clearer than God’s choice for his first command. He did not make his first command “don’t kill” or “don’t lie”. Those, of course, are moral absolutes that are put in the heart of every human being. Why did God choose, instead, such an arbitrary rule — like “don’t eat of that particular tree”?

It shows us that the essence of sin is not keeping a rule, but rather it is trying to be your own God — your own Savior, and your own Lord. It is seeking to be one’s own Judge that is the very beginning of sin, even before you’ve decided to break a rule! And the desire to be God’s rival and to be “like God” has now passed into every human heart and informs absolutely everything we do, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether we are Christians or nonbelievers.

Case 5 – Good gifts

Dave is a very gifted public speaker and he is also good at Bible study. However, instead of using his gift of preaching to glorify God and edify the church, he decided to invest all his time (even on Sundays, by not going to church) into being a motivational public speaker.

He saw that he can earn RM20,000 for every talk he hosts and it was very appealing to him to earn so much.

However, when he preaches at the church, he does not receive anything.

5) a) Discussion question. Was Dave’s gift sinful?

b) Discussion question. Was Dave’s desire to use his gift for his own gain sinful?

c) Discussion question. If not, what was it that was sinful?

Model Answer

The first dimension of sin that is mentioned is the emotional dimension. Just as Dave saw his earning potential and it pleased him, Eve saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing [lit. 'attractive'] to the eye..." We have already been told that the trees of the garden were "pleasing to the eye and good for food" (2:9). Therefore, this aesthetic and physical appetite — this strong feeling — cannot be wrong in itself. Food and beauty are good things to desire. But now the desire/feelings for good things have become inordinate. When the desire for anything else grows greater than the desire to please God, then we are ready to sin.

This is very important to remember. Here at the beginning, we see that the heart of sin is not so much a desire to do bad things as an overdesire for good things. Satan has enticed Eve to go get her own happiness, enlightenment, and power by eating the tree. The tree was in itself a good thing, but now she turns to it to get herself what only God can give her. Thus a good desire is choking out and replacing our desire for God. And that will always entice and lead us to sin. Because of sin (because of the fundamental choice to put ourselves in God's place) all natural and good desires (for comfort, for love, for accomplishment) become disordered, and out of proportion.

Just as it happened in the garden, the disorder in our good emotions is hidden from us. "What could be so wrong about wanting to eat fruit? What can be so wrong with wanting to be in love? What could be so wrong about wanting to be successful in business?" The answer is — nothing is wrong with these desires in themselves. But now, since the garden, the human heart's good desires are infected by our choice to sit in the place of God. Because of the inherent goodness of so many of our desires, we are blind to how sin has made them inordinate and disordered. So the first result of sin is this: Even our good emotions and desires overpower us and can entice us away from God.

Kx comment: It's silly to like the bread more than the the baker! If you friend friend with the baker then you can have all the good and yummy bread, why insist on just having the one bread? Go to God who is good and is the source of all good things!

Case 6 – Love of the world

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the

pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

6) Reflection question. Sin is multifaceted and can manifest itself as the lust (desires) of the flesh, the lust (desires) of the eyes, and the pride of life. Which of these do you struggle with most? Why?