

Lesson 5: September 30, 2018

God Creates, Humans Sin

Bible Background • GENESIS 3

Printed Text • GENESIS 3:8-17, 20-24 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 51:1-12

Irresponsible rebellion pervades our world. Why is disregard for rules, which are necessary for ordered life, so pervasive? Although God created a perfect place for Adam and Eve, their unwillingness to trust and obey God led to the Fall, making humanity prone to disobedience.

Words You Should Know

- A. Enmity 'ebah (Heb.)—Long-lasting, intense hostility.
- B. Beguiled nasha (Heb.)- Deceived.

Say It Correctly

- Beguile. beh-GAHYL
- Cherubim. cher-UH-bim.
- Enmity. EN-mi-tee.

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: RECOGNIZE that all people experience temptation and sin; EMPATHIZE with the pain that sin creates in our lives; and CONSIDER how to heal relationships that have been hurt by sin.

In Focus

"I don't remember anything about last night. The last thing I remember is having another drink," Rodney said under his breath.

"You're lucky that woman survived," said his sister Lecretia. "Do you realize you could have killed her? Do you realize that you're going to face jail time and that we have a \$20,000 fine to pay? What about your daughter? What were you thinking?!"

Rodney's felt broken and overwhelmed. His heart felt pierced. What about his daughter? He was not used to drinking a lot but had gone to a party with friends the night before and drank way more alcohol than he should. He knew he should have called for a ride. Instead, he decided to drive himself home because he lived so close to the bar.

Rodney found out later that while driving he had hit a woman crossing the street. He was at a complete loss. His decision to do what he knew was wrong had almost cost someone's life. He was grateful the woman survived, but was overwhelmed thinking about the high cost his decision would have on her family and on his own is daughter. He decided at that moment he needed to stay away from alcohol. All he could do now was pray that God would show him mercy when he had to go to court.

What goes through your mind when you encounter temptation to do what you know is wrong? What consequences can acting outside of God's will for our lives have on those closest to us?

Keep in Mind

"So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made" (Genesis 3:23, NLT).

Focal Verses

KJV

Genesis 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

NLT

Genesis 3:8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees.

9 Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

11 "Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

12 The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

13 Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?" "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

14 Then the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live.

15 And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

16 Then he said to the woman, “I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.”

17 And to the man he said, “Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

20 Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live.

21 And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

22 Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!”

23 So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made.

24 After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

People, Places, and Times and Background

Garden of Eden. Eden existed perhaps in East Africa or the Middle East (Genesis 2:10- 14). The Pishon and Gihon rivers have been suggested to be the Blue and White Nile rivers. Cush is the land known as Ethiopia today. Yet the Tigris and Euphrates are in the Middle East, making it difficult to place Eden geographically. The name Eden is derived either from a Hebrew root word meaning “to be fruitful, plentiful” or from a Sumerian word meaning “steppe, flatland.” In Eden, we learn that Satan does not honor or respect any sacred environment which God consecrates as a place of paradise and worship. Eden is a place where our original parents failed God and their posterity. It is a dismal and dreaded moment in human history that marks our distant past and mars our present and future.

Serpent. The serpent is used in the Bible to represent evil and, sometimes, the enemies of Israel (Deuteronomy 8:15; Psalm 58:4). Also in the wider ancient Near East, the serpent had great mythological and religious significance as a prominent image to explain the origin of chaos in the world.

Background

In Genesis 3, we are introduced to the complications after Creation. A snake deceived the woman, humans succumbed to sin, and God punished humanity and banished them from the Garden. Because of human sin, they endured pain in childbirth and faced mortality. The knowledge of good and evil that they gained awakened them to their shame in exile. Their exile awakened their shame and their knowledge of themselves. In some ways, the chapter shows the human passage from childhood (or being childlike) to adulthood (taking responsibility for one’s actions). Genesis 3 also represents a change in the way people relate to each other socially. In the Garden, social roles and sexual expression were irrelevant as there was perfect harmony, but after the exile, social roles changed for the worse.

In Genesis 3, we also receive our first glimpse into deception about who God is and what God says. The serpent introduced the idea that obedience to the commands of God was an option rather than an expectation. In the talk between the woman and the serpent, God was referred to, but God was not a conversation partner. The woman allowed the serpent to misrepresent God, which opened her up to the possibility of disobedience. In the woman’s mind, God was no longer a friend who protected humans by creating boundaries for them, but a barrier whose rules must be overcome. She and the man ate the fruit, and they became exposed to the dangers of the world. They had taken life into their own hands.

At a Glance and In Depth

At-A-Glance

1. Nowhere to Hide from Sin (Genesis 3:8–13)
2. Consequences for Disobedience (vv. 14–17)
3. God’s Punishments Have Purpose (vv. 20–24)

In Depth

1. Nowhere to Hide from Sin (Genesis 3:8–13)

God’s stroll in the Garden to visit with humanity became an interrogation with two admissions of guilt. Their sin had opened Adam and Eve’s eyes to the reality of their condition. They were created naked and had no shame about it, but their new eyes caused them to understand their nakedness in a new way. When they heard God approaching, they hid. But God called out to them.

The man is the first to respond to God’s call. He admits his sin but blames God and the woman for it. Had God not given him the woman who gave him the fruit, he argued, he would never have eaten it. The man’s response demonstrates the way that people often shift responsibility for their actions (or inactions) to other people. The woman also confesses her sin and, like the man, refuses to take full responsibility. She tells God that the serpent had tricked her. Her use of the word “tricked” is misleading because she knew God’s command as is evidenced in her ability to relay the command to the serpent. She chooses to find a way around the command. God did not give the serpent an opportunity to confess or to defend his actions.

What does God’s continued conversation with humans, despite our disobedience, reveal about God’s relationship with us?

2. Consequences for Disobedience (vv. 14–17)

The consequences of the disobedience are given in the reverse order of the interrogation because God is reversing the freedoms that the snake, woman, and man were given at the beginning of Creation. The snake was cursed and despised by the other animals. Snakes would crawl on their bellies; and women and their children would revile snakes. Of course, the new order of things would prevent snakes from deceiving humans again. The woman was punished with painful labor. As an added consequence, the husband and wife will now struggle for dominance over one another that neither is supposed to have. The man was punished with hard labor on the ground, which reversed the comfortable relationship he shared with the ground in Eden. All parties received their punishments without additional explanation.

What does the way the first humans received punishment teach us about how we might respond to divine punishment?

3. God’s Punishments Have Purpose (vv. 20–24)

After providing the humans with garments of skin to cover their shame, God exiled them from the Garden. The humans were not expelled only for their disobedience but also because of the new eyes their disobedience provided them. The man had become “like God” and might try to eat from the tree of life to avoid mortality. Because of human disobedience, there was a wedge between the divine and humanity.

Humans were driven east of Eden. Cherubim guarded the entrance. Cherubim are heavenly creatures that have wings, faces of many creatures, and many eyes; they are closely associated with the glory of God (see Ezekiel 1 and 10). The eastern entrance, the cherubim, and the sacred trees suggest an analogy to the Jerusalem temple, which had similar architectural and iconographic features and a limitation on access (Exodus 25:18–36; 1 Kings 6:29).

How does the way God expelled humans from the Garden of Eden reveal God's compassion toward humanity?

Search the Scriptures and Discuss the Meaning

Search the Scriptures

1. In Genesis 3:10, the man tells God that he hid from Him because his nakedness made him afraid. Why did the sudden knowledge of their nakedness terrify the humans?
2. How did the punishments for disobedience (especially those given to the humans) move humanity forward? What was the divine purpose behind the punishments?

Discuss the Meaning

1. When we sin against God it is often tempting to blame someone else instead of taking responsibility. Why do people avoid taking responsibility for their sin?
2. When we do things to hurt others, it can be easy to lash out or withdraw when confronted with their hurt. How can we begin to make things right when we sin against someone?

Lesson in Our Society and Make it Happen

Liberating Lesson

Scripture teaches that God gives humanity clear commands. God gives us a vocation, a permit, and a prohibition. We are responsible for following God's commands, which exist to create healthy boundaries for us that protect us. God does not desire to cause us harm or place limitations on our freedoms. We are currently living through politically divisive times. Many Christians want to align Jesus with their political worldview. Genesis 3 reveals that God ought not to be made a pawn in our theological or political conversations. God must be our constant partner in any conversation about God, for how can we talk about God without talking to God? It is not for humans to attempt to figure out the mind of God. It is for us to be prayerful, and to listen and obey the God who created us.

Application for Activation

Confess your sins before God. Understand that we do not serve a God of condemnation. Avoid playing the blame game. It is a sign of Christian maturity to take responsibility for your actions. Repent for the times that you have been disobedient. Do not be afraid of being honest with God. Understand that God wants to be in a relationship with humanity. God is not against us.

Consider the times when you endured punishment because of your disobedience. Was there a purpose behind the punishments you experienced?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light On The Text

Genesis 2:18

18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Until verse 18, God had declared everything good. The first thing that God declares as “not good” is the idea of being alone. The word “alone” is taken from the Hebrew word bad (BOD). It speaks to the fact that Adam, the first human being, needed another human being to be complete. In many African cultures, this is a revelation that a human is a communal being.

Genesis 2:19-20

19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Verse 19 confirms that God created the first beast from earth. We also find that God gives man responsibility for naming the beasts. This task of naming also gives human beings certain authority over all the creation. Here we also find that God respected the naming ability that He gave to man. The relationship and responsibility of man to the animal world began in the garden.

In the process of naming, Adam realized that there was no companion fit for a human being. The Hebrew word ‘ezer or “help” simply means to give someone aid or uplift them. There was no one to lift up the heart of the first man Adam. There was no one like Adam and yet sufficiently different to challenge and stimulate him

intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. The knowledge that one is alone is one of the deepest realizations of human feelings. It can either lead one to seek fellowship or to despair.

Genesis 2:21-22

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

God understands the danger of loneliness. He helped Adam out of his lonely state before it resulted in problems for Adam. God sent a “deep sleep,” (Heb. tardemah, tar-deh-MAH) placing Adam in an unconscious state similar to those in trances or receiving visions (Genesis 15:12; Job 33:15).

Another key word is the Hebrew for rib. The word tsela (tsay-LAH) is an architectural term referring to a side support, usually one that has a matching support in the opposite side; in this case “rib” means from the side of a person. It was the side of Adam that God opened to form the woman, according to the text. We are told that God “brought the woman to Adam.” God, therefore, formed this relationship.

Genesis 2:23

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Adam’s response to this new relationship is to acknowledge the deep connection between himself and this other human being. The Hebrew word ‘etsem (ET-sem) translated as “bone,” could also mean “strength,” thus meaning “strength of my strength.” By extension it can refer figuratively to the strong identity of an individual. Therefore, Adam could also mean to call Eve “the very substance of my being.” “Flesh,” of course, refers to similarity of bodily form, which must have been quite striking to Adam.

After naming all the animals, Adam names one more piece of creation. He calls her “woman” (Heb. ‘ishshah, ee-SHAH) because she was taken from the man (‘ish, EESH). Later he would name her Eve (Genesis 3:20).

Genesis 2:24

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

We see the responsibility that this new relationship calls forth for men. The Hebrew word azab (ah-ZOB) translated “leave” denotes the loosening of a bond, here the parental relationship. This permits the adult male to begin his own household. It does not imply a lack of commitment or a failure to care for one’s parents, or to forsake them—denying help when necessary. The loosening of the parental relation gives way within the text for the tightening of a new relationship.

The King James Version uses the phrase “cleave unto his wife.” Cleave (Heb. dabaq, dah-BOK) means to cling or adhere. By implication, it could also mean to pursue or to stick together and to follow her closely. Therefore, the man shall loosen the parental relation and take a wife. One must leave in order to cleave. They shall be “one flesh” is vital for it calls forth a deep sharing that is to characterize the marriage relation. The Hebrew word basar (bah- SAR), translated “flesh,” simply refers to the human body. But it can also refer to the sharing of the whole person.

Genesis 4:1-2

4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Adam and Eve sinned against God and are now removed from the Garden of Eden. They heeded the words of the serpent and ate from the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden from which God forbid them to eat. As a result, sin entered the world. The perfect relationship God had with humanity was broken. God informed Eve that bearing children would be painful and told Adam he would have difficulty tilling the ground or farm. They were cut off from the Garden and the tree of life. The whole world now feels the curse from the effect of sin.

Nevertheless the fact that sin separated Adam and Eve from God did not negate the command of God to “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” (from Genesis 1:28). Adam “knew” (Heb. yada, yah-DAH) Eve, which in this case is used as a euphemism for sex but included more fully experiencing Eve. There were no sexual relations between humans until they were expelled from the Garden. Adam and Eve conceived, and Eve gave birth to her first children, Cain and Abel. Cain means “acquired” in Hebrew, and Eve said that she has acquired a son from the Lord. This speaks to the reality that all life comes from God. Eve conceived not because of simple sexual reproduction but because God willed her to have children. God gave Cain to her intentionally. The name of her second son Abel (Heb. hebel, HEH-vel) means “breath,” in this case referring to vapor. His name was foreshadowing in the narrative that he would not live long, but like a breath be temporary.

Cain and Abel are described as working (v. 2:2); Cain was a tiller of the field (farmer) and Abel a keeper of the sheep (shepherd). Cain and Abel were born and began to fulfill the purpose that God had for humanity to subdue the earth, and have dominion over it by farming the land and caring for God’s creation. God intentionally gave humans a purpose, which is fulfilled through living and work. The work was meant to be easy, as Adam and Eve were able to care for creation before, but the introduction of sin made it difficult. The entrance of sin into the world did not change God’s purposes; it simply made it difficult for us to fulfill our God-given purpose. The work God has called us to is a fulfillment of His purpose for our lives. Cain and Abel demonstrated this by continuing to be stewards of creation by shepherding and farming respectively.