

3 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^[a] shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ 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.'"⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ 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,^[b] she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool^[c] of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"^[d]¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring^[e] and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for^[f] your husband,
and he shall rule over you."

¹⁷ And to Adam he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it',
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.^[g] ²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

²² Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live for ever—” ²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life



Questions for Discussion

1. Read Genesis 2:25-3:24. Find as much fault as you can with the serpent. This is not difficult! What was his strategy? How did he go about seducing and deceiving Eve and Adam? How does he still today go about seducing and deceiving you? At the end of v.5, who, and who only so far, has done anything wrong?
2. But by the end of v.6 Adam and Eve had fallen into the grip of Satan's deceit. What were Adam and Eve really guilty of? Don't restrict your answer to just 'disobedience' (but include it); bring into the discussion their nature as creatures, and the nature of the one they are disobeying as creator. Discuss what we are really doing when we sin.
3. So what happened as a result (v.7-19)? Lots! List everything that happened in consequence of mankind's sin, and briefly discuss the appalling range and extent of the catastrophe.
4. Pick up the shame and guilt motifs, and share amongst the group (if you feel you can) how shame and guilt and concomitant embarrassment wrecks the peace of our own consciences. Read John 1:5, John 3:19, and John 12:46. Then compare with Genesis 1:2-3. Discuss just how dark the world is around us in our day. Share how you feel that the godless people around us in today's society are living in the dark, shamelessly (in their estimation), but actually covered in shame (as God sees it), and are destroying the supreme integrity, dignity and value that God invested in them in making them in his own image. Where in our own society do we see this at its worst, do you think? Pray about this in your prayer time at the end.
5. Preachers and commentators frequently observe that Adam and Eve thought they were ridding themselves of a mean and selfish master (God) in order to be free to be their own masters; whereas actually the master they tried to be rid of was benign in the extreme, not malign; and they did not become free, but acquired a whole load of far more malign masters. These are primarily the devil, but under his overall rule, we can add ambition, and ..., and ..., etc. How would you extend this list with other present day powerful malign masters that to one extent or another master us – yes, us Christians? How can we practically abandon these masters to return '*to the shepherd and overseer of our souls*'?
6. '*You shall surely die*' (2:17). Clearly this chapter is not about physical death, for Adam and Eve die on the day they sin (2:17 again), yet biologically they are still alive. Clearly they die spiritually, and Adam and Eve's relationship with their creator is wrecked (as symbolised by the expulsion from the garden). And yet this chapter gives an early clue in v.15 that there is 'a way back to God from the dark paths of sin' (old children's song from the 1950s!). Read Romans 5:12-17 and Romans 6:23. So: should we get to the end of Genesis 3 in a state of (a) sadness? (b) despair? Who is the serpent-crusher in v.15? Discuss!

