



Key Scripture Passage

Genesis 2:25-3:7

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

1 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?'" 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, 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.

Commentary on This Week's Text

As we come to the third chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve are living in unparalleled splendor amidst the clear waters and green forests of Eden in delightful concert with each other and with the animals God had placed in the garden. Their one-flesh relationship reflected the eternal intimacy and order of the Holy Trinity and foreshadowed the intimacy and order of Christ and his bride, the church (Ephesians 5:31, 32). Their intimacy was a substantial glory to God as a reflection of what always was and a glimpse of what was to come.

Adam's authority in the order of the husband-and-wife relationship was part of creation before sin and the fall entered the picture. This is evident because: 1) Adam was created first, a fact that Paul makes central in his argument for maintaining creation order in 1 Timothy 2:13 — "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." 2) Eve was taken out of man, which Paul likewise notes in a similar argument in 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9 — "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." 3) Eve was designated Adam's "helper" (2:18), whereas this could not be said of Adam. And 4) the authority structure of Genesis 2 and 3 rests on the careful order of God, the man, the woman, and the animal (serpent). This, of course, was tragically reversed by the fall, as commentator Kenneth Mathews points out: "The woman listens to the serpent, the man listens to the woman, and no one listens to God." This usurping of authority will be addressed immediately after the fall in God's successive judgment speeches to the serpent, to the woman, and to the man.

But now, before the fall, Adam and Eve have listened only to God. The sinless pair ride the pinnacle of innocence and openness. “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (2:25). They were spiritually naked before God. God came first in their love and in their thoughts, “and that without painful effort” (C. S. Lewis). There was no need for disciplined devotion. All of life was devotion. Loving God was as natural as breathing, and as effortless!

Domestically, they were naked with one another. Clothing had never occurred to them. There was nothing to hide or protect. The gravitational pull of self did not exist. Neither one was the center of his or her own life. God and each other were their centers. They were, in today’s parlance, “other-directed.” All that they were was simply there for the other to see and love. They were both naked in their environment — ecologically at home in the garden and with its denizens.

Here at the pinnacle in 2:25 we should note that 2:25 and 3:7 enclose a unit, because both focus on the couple’s nakedness, but in radical contrast. Whereas 2:25 pictures Adam and Eve at the pinnacle of innocence and intimacy, 3:7 describes them in the pit of guilt and estrangement. This section describes the first couple’s descent from innocence to guilt. It is real history. But as primal history, it describes what has happened countless times down through the ages. It is universal. And wise people will listen well.

The Dialogue of Descent

Verses 1-5 describe the dialogue that leads to the descent of Adam and Eve, and verses 6-7 describe the couple’s actual descent into the pit. The surprise here is that the initiator of the dialogue is a talking snake! And more, it is not a bad snake — because everything that God created he called “good.” Neither is it a good snake gone bad. Sin had made no entrance into the world at this point. Its description as “crafty” (or “shrewd”) does not imply evil. The word has the idea of being wary and of knowing when dangers lurk. The Scriptures encourage the naive and simple to cultivate such an attitude (Proverbs 1:4), but if it is misused it becomes guile (Job 5:12; 15:5; Exodus 21:14; Joshua 9:4). This is a snake, a naturally shrewd creature, under the control of Satan — and a natural tool. The New Testament identifies this serpent as the devil, referring back to this scene in paradise (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). The snake’s designation as “more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made” may suggest that it was not a common part of the garden’s pet population and may also explain why Eve was not put off by its talking.

God’s Word Attacked

Did the snake suddenly drop from a tree? Did the serpent extend itself upright so that it could address Eve forked tongue to tongue? Did it hiss or lisp its words or speak with a voice like Eve’s husband? We do not know. But we do know that through its voice Satan attacked God’s word. Here we must remember that God’s word was responsible for everything Eve enjoyed — day and night, the sun and the moon, the dappled blue of the sky, the beauty of the garden, the flowers, the singing birds, the adoring creatures, her Adam — all came from God’s good word, which Satan now attacked. It would seem to us that Satan’s attack would not have a chance. But appearances are sometimes deceiving.

The Serpent’s Question

The serpent opened the dialogue with a surprised, incredulous tone. “He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”’” (v. 1b). Satan was so subtle. He did not directly deny God’s word, but he introduced the assumption that God’s word

is subject to our judgment. Such a thought had never been verbalized before. It was enticing. The serpent also carefully avoided the use of God's covenant name, "the Lord" (*Yahweh*). In chapter 1 *Elohim* (signifying God as Creator) was used in every instance to refer to God, but in chapters 2-4 the title *YahwehElohim* is everywhere employed (combining his Creator and Covenant Redeemer names) — everywhere except here in the deadly dialogue of 3:1-5. Satan was careful not to mention God's personal covenant name but stuck to *Elohim*, the more remote designation. Ominously, Eve followed his lead as she too only used *Elohim* in their dialogue. Satan's incredulous tone and conscious disuse of God's personal name set up his studied distortion of God's word. Whereas in 2:16 the Lord had generously commanded, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden," Satan now asks, "Did God [*Elohim*] actually say, 'You shall *not* eat of any tree in the garden'?" (emphasis added). That was a complete distortion and travesty of God's word. God's generosity was perverted by Satan's question to suggest divine stinginess! Satan's approach was so subtle that Eve did not suspect that God's word was being attacked. It was just an "innocent question." But a seed of doubt about God's word had been planted in Eve's heart that would bear immediate fruit.

Eve's Revisions

The snake's distorted question provided Eve with a memorable chance to set the serpent straight. But our mother failed. Instead, as Moses carefully records, she descended to her own revisions of God's word in three sad instances in which she first *diminished* God's word, then *added* to his word, and then *softened* his word. God had said in 2:16, "You may surely eat of *every* tree of the garden" (italics added), but now Eve leaves out the "every," simply saying, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden" (3:2). Thus she minimized the provision of the Lord. Her inexact, unenthusiastic rendition of God's word discounted his generosity. She was in tacit agreement with the serpent. Something bad was happening in her heart.

Eve's subtle shift in heart was further revealed in her telltale addition to God's word: "But God [*Elohim*] said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you *touch* it'" (v. 3a, italics added). God never said, "neither shall you touch it"! Eve magnified God's strictness — "Just touch the tree, and zap! — you're dead!" Her comment suggested that God is so harsh that an inadvertent slip would bring death. This is so typical of us sons and daughters of Eve. A father says to his young son, "You and your friend have been too out of control — so your friend will have to go home." Then his son runs to his mother crying, "Daddy says I can't ever have friends over again!" The boss calls in an employee who's been late several times and says, "I think this is something you need to give attention to. It's important." The employee walks out of the office and says to his coworkers, "You know what that stuffed shirt said? If I'm late again, I'm fired!"

When we don't like a prohibition or a warning, we magnify its strictness. The suggestion that our superior is unjust mitigates our culpability. And if we do not perform, we may imagine that we have a morally superior way out. We must beware, lest we begin to think that God's word is unreasonable or too requiring. Do we find ourselves overstating Scripture's call to purity as "unrealistic"? Have we represented the Bible's teaching on forgiveness as impracticable? If so, we need to take a step back and a deep breath — and pray.

Lastly, Eve paradoxically softened God's word by merely saying, "lest you die." She left out the word "surely" (2:17). The certitude of death was removed. So in the extended sentence that makes up verses 2 and 3, Eve, in a breath, at once diminished, added to, and softened God's

word. Her revisionist approach to the holy word of God put her in harm's way. And it likewise does so today

Satan's Contradiction

It also emboldened the snake's blasphemous contradiction: "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die'" (v. 4). This is an in-your-face to God. The Hebrew places the word *lo* ("not") in front of God's declaration: "not — you shall surely die." It is the serpent's word versus God's word — an absurd juxtaposition. Note, too, that the doctrine of divine judgment is the very first doctrine to be denied. Satan attacked it from the beginning. Modern culture's loathing for the doctrine comes from the fact that this is the devil's world. Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2: 2). Nevertheless, divine judgment has fallen and will fall as surely as it did for Adam and Eve. The pathology of this dialogue of descent is so clear: Satan offers a question based on the perversion of God's word. Eve then begins to question it herself, as is evidenced by her revisions of God's word. And then Satan is free to declare God's word as wrong. Eve should have recoiled in horror and run screaming to Adam. And Adam should have stepped forth to uphold the good word of God. But Eve was "buying it." She remained entranced before the serpent.

God's Goodness Attacked

Encouraged by Eve's revisions, Satan went after God himself, attacking his goodness: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (v. 5). God was cast in an ugly light. According to the serpent, the threat of death was nothing more than a scare tactic to keep Adam and Eve in their place. God was repressive, and obviously jealous that they might ascend too high. What an incredible attack in light of the fact that the thousand "goods" of creation, not to mention the gift of each other and their rulership of the earth as well, came from God. Such a blatant slur on God's character! But Eve was believing it. If you are going to lie, it might as well be a big one, big enough to totally reinterpret life. This was big. It would alter life forever. The lie bore the lure of divinity for Eve — "you will be like God." Sin has an intrinsic spiritual lure. It holds a seemingly golden promise. Its lure seems to be the pleasures of life, which God's word has withheld. But it is actually the lure of Hell. If you are in the thrall of sin, you will see God's prohibitions as barriers for the "strong" to climb.

If Eve would just stretch forth her hand and resolutely take the fruit, divinity would be hers to grasp and know. The lie also held out the lure of moral autonomy — "you will be like God, knowing good and evil." By taking the fruit she would become wise. Equal with God, she would autonomously decide what was right and wrong. How intoxicating! She would make the rules. She would do it her way. That promise still intoxicates. I read once that among the unbelieving population Frank Sinatra's "My Way" is a funeral favorite: "But best of all I did it my way." But the truth is, "My Way" is the dirge of death, marking the implosion of the autonomous self. But what deadly magnetism it carries.

The Descent

During the dialogue of descent Satan attacked God's word and then God's goodness. And Eve had stood still for it. She was at the abyss.

Eve's descent

The serpent now departs from our view. Eve is alone. Moses provides a brilliant picture of Eve's descent in verse 6, in which there is no dialogue — only Eve's thoughts. She saw that "the tree

was good for food” (physically appealing) and “a delight to the eyes” (aesthetically appealing) and “to be desired to make one wise” (this is the great enticement — wisdom apart from God’s word). The prospect of God-like moral autonomy drew her in. God’s command seemed insubstantial and like the meaningless command of an impersonal Being. She could see no reason not to eat. So “she took of its fruit and ate.” Moses expresses no shock here.

Contrary to the meaning of the event, the unthinkable and terrible is described as simply and unsensationally as possible. From the human perspective, it is all so natural and undramatic. But it was cosmic and eternal. John Milton in his epic poem, *Paradise Lost* describes it as follows:

*“Earth felt the wound, and
Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works,
Gave signs of woe
That all was lost.”*

Adam’s Descent

With Eve’s sin completed, the narrative quickens with a rapid sequence of verbs — “she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (v. 6b). Here is a shocker: Adam was apparently privy to the conversation between Eve and the snake! The text says that he was “with her” (though that in itself does not prove he was with her during the temptation). What is decisive is that during the temptation in verses 1-5 Satan addressed Eve with the plural “you,” which implies Adam’s presence. Adam passively watched everything. And Adam was not deceived by the snake. He’d had his powers of discernment honed by the naming of the animals, a rigorous intellectual process that probed the essence of each animal. Adam was no ignorant rustic as we patronizing moderns like to imagine. “His mental powers,” surmised St. Augustine, “surpassed those of the most brilliant philosopher as much as the speed of the bird surpasses the tortoise.” The writer John Milton insisted that Adam had insight into the mysteries of the soul. The Apostle Paul was insistent that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived” (1 Timothy 2:14; Romans 5:12, 17-19). Adam sinned willfully, eyes wide-open, without hesitation. His sin was freighted with sinful self-interest. He had watched Eve take the fruit, and nothing happened to her. He sinned willfully, assuming there would be no consequences. Everything was upside-down. Eve followed the snake, Adam followed Eve, and no one followed God. The result was seismic.

The Pit

Adam and Eve had fallen from the pinnacle of innocence and intimacy into the pit of guilt and estrangement: “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths” (v. 7). What Satan had told them was true — half true. They did not die that day, as they supposed they might. Indeed Adam lived another 930 years. Yet they did die. Their constant communion with God underwent death. They would go to earthly graves. They would need a Savior. Their eyes were opened — grotesquely. They got the knowledge they sought, but they got it the wrong way. They saw evil. And they saw themselves. They realized they were naked and desperately sought to cover themselves. Their innocence evaporated. Guilt and fear gripped their hearts. Now they would have to labor to love God and each other.

The New Testament encourages us not to be unaware of Satan's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11). And Genesis is packed with primary wisdom in this regard. From Eve and Adam's sin we learn that sin takes hold when we begin to doubt God's word and God's goodness. Growing doubt about God's word naturally spawns biblical revisionism, both conscious and unconscious. We tend to minimize Scripture's great promises by our less than enthusiastic rehearsal of their benefits. We discount God's grace to us. Our colorless renditions of God's glorious promises blanches their incredible wonders to a dull finish. Thus we feel justified in ignoring his word. We not only minimize his word, but we exaggerate what we do not like by adding to his word. His commands become absurd caricatures that no one can be expected to obey. And we count ourselves off the hook. Then our minimizing and adding to his word leaves us free to subtract from his word.

The Scripture's teaching on sensuality is said to be culturally bound and unrealistic for today's urbane man and woman. And thus it is jettisoned. The same is done with the Bible's teaching on materialism and business ethics. Ultimately such minimizing, adding, and subtracting leaves us without the word — and free-falling into temptation. The free fall is enhanced by doubts about God's goodness. "How can God be good and not give me the person or thing or position or experience that I deem essential to my happiness? God is keeping me from being all I can be." When we doubt both God's word and his goodness, the ground is coming up fast!

Moses, who gave us this account, was ever so passionate about the necessity of God's people being people of God's word. In Deuteronomy, his fifth and final book of the Pentateuch, in the chapter following the giving of the Ten Commandments, Moses eloquently called his people to put God's word at the center of their existence: "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (6:6-9; 14-25) Then at the end of Deuteronomy, after Moses had completed his writing of the Torah and placed it beside the Ark of the Covenant, he sang his final song, ending with these words: "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life" (32:46-47a).

This "your very life" attitude became the standard for all the Old Testament. The Psalter opens with a call to make the word central: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2). The 176 verses of Psalm 119 were divided into twenty-two parts in an acrostic poem based on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, from aleph to tau — saying in effect that God's word is "everything from A to Z!" The final chapter of Isaiah records, "This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (66:2b). God's word was the life of God's people.

When we come to the New Testament, Jesus, the second Adam, is the man of the Word par excellence. When Jesus was tempted, he, unlike the first Adam, threw himself on God's Word, defeating Satan with three deft quotations from Deuteronomy. Astounding! The eternal Word of God resisted temptation by turning to the written Word of God. Principal among the Scriptures that Jesus quoted to Satan was Deuteronomy 8:3 — "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by

every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4: 4). Jesus said that the Word must be our food. Moses, the earthly savior of Israel who delivered them from slavery in Egypt, said the word of God is our life. Jesus the eternal Savior said it must be our food. The Word must be our life and food. This same Jesus, the second Adam, through massive dependence on God’s Word, triumphed over the tempter, living a perfect life, and died victoriously with the cry, “It is finished!” Jesus rested everything on God’s good word and on the good God of the Word.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Study

- How do we know that there was an authority structure inherent in Creation, and how did the Fall subvert that God-ordained authority structure?
- What three things were done to subtly alter God’s Word in the conversation between Eve and the serpent? How does our inclination to do that to God’s Word even today result in sinful behavior and patterns?
- What is the primary way that we should seek to avoid the temptations and subtle subversions of God’s Word that take place in our hearts and minds? Who provided an example on how we should be equipped and prepared to counter the temptations of Satan?
- Why are the names of God that are used throughout Genesis chapters 1-3 but in particular these seven verses so important? What does the name of God used in these verses illustrate for us about Eve’s thoughts about God?

Family Catechism and Scripture Memory

New City Catechism Question: *“How can we glorify God?”*

Answer: *“We glorify God **by** enjoying Him, **loving Him**, trusting Him, and by **obeying His will, commands, and law.**”*

Scripture Memory Verse: *“Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws, and his commands always.” - Deuteronomy 11:1*

Song of the Week: *“All Creatures of Our God and King” - David Crowder Band*

Weekly Unreached People Group

Every week, in this space, we highlight an unreached people group somewhere in the world. Please consider spending some portion of your prayer and reading time during the course of the week praying for the highlighted group. Pray that their hearts would be softened, that the Lord would provide laborers to take them the good news of the Gospel, and that they would come to know the glory of that Gospel and of Christ himself and be saved. Pray also that your own heart would be softened for the reality of the nearly 6,000 people groups that have not heard the Gospel and consider what part the Lord is calling you to play in fulfilling our common command to be about making disciples of all nations.

This week's unreached people group are the **Ghirath of India**

Population 283,000	% Christian 0.00%	% Evangelical 0.00%
Largest Religion Hinduism (100.0%)	Main Language Kangri	Progress Very Few Believers

Introduction

The name Ghirath refers to the traditional occupation of agriculture and animal husbandry, for which this community is well known. Marriage rituals are performed by a Brahmin according to Vedic rites, and the bride and groom circle the sacred fire or a pomegranate or fig tree.

Ministry Obstacles

The Ghirath community speaks a number of languages, as most castes do. Separate church planting projects may be needed for each language group.

Outreach Ideas

Workers are needed to minister to these people using oral means as well as with the written Word.

Pray for the Followers of Christ

Pray for the followers of Christ that the Lord will soon bring forth from the Ghirath community, that they will understand clearly how to know and follow Christ, and be faithful in his service.

Pray for the Entire People Group

Pray the Ghirath community will be able to care properly for their families, for peace with their neighbors, and for good schools for their children.