

The Serpent, The Word, and The Fall of Innocence

Genesis 3:1-7 examines the breakdown of human obedience, the mechanics of temptation, and the immediate entry of shame into the world.

I. The Sly Tempter (Genesis 3:1)

“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’?”

-Revelation 12:9: The text calls the huge dragon the "ancient serpent" or "old serpent" who is hurled down to the earth along with his angels after losing a war in heaven against Michael the archangel.

-Revelation 20:2: An angel captures the dragon—"that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan"—and binds him for a thousand years in the abyss.

The Serpent's Approach (v. 1a): The serpent introduces an ominous and unnatural presence into paradise, appearing as a cunning creature capable of speech.

The Attack on God's Word (v. 1b): The tempter subtly twists God's generous mandate by asking, “Did God really say, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?”

Satan initiates temptation by planting seeds of doubt, getting humanity to question the truth, goodness, and boundaries of God's commands. Satan actually isn't that clever; his typical playbook is to question (not reasonable doubt, but any doubt) given truth, minimize consequence, offer and celebrate human autonomy in temptation. Sin always enters when we substitute our own judgment for that of God.

II. The Art of “Half” Truth (Genesis 3:2-3)

“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.’”

Eve's Response (v. 2): Eve engages in dialogue with the serpent and correctly acknowledges their general freedom to eat from the garden. “Neither shall you touch it,” is an obvious distortion of God's truth that Satan uses to twist truth and make one question God's motivation.

Adding to the Word (v. 3): Eve misquotes God by adding a restriction not originally spoken in Genesis 2:17—claiming they must not even touch the fruit, lest they die. Satan leads Eve to add to godly instruction that she has been introduced to.

The Vulnerability: Altering or exaggerating God's commands leaves room for deception and makes God's law look arbitrarily harsh rather than protective.

III. The Distorted Promise (Genesis 3:4-5)

“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.”

Calling God a Liar (v. 4): The serpent flatly contradicts divine judgment, telling the woman, “You will not surely die.”

Accusing God’s Character (v. 5a): The tempter claims God is withholding wisdom and keeping them from reaching their full potential out of jealousy.

The Promise of Autonomy (v. 5b): The serpent promises that eating the fruit will open their eyes and make them like God, determining good and evil on their own terms.

IV. The Heart of Disobedience (Genesis 3:6)

“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.”

The Appeal of the Fruit (v. 6a): Eve evaluates the tree through human senses and rebellious desires—seeing it was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise.

Taking and Eating (v. 6b): Eve takes the fruit and eats it, abandoning trust in God's word for immediate gratification.

The Shared Transgression (v. 6c): She gives some to her husband Adam, who was with her, and he eats as well, marking a joint failure of human stewardship.

V. Immediate Consequences of Sin (Genesis 3:7)

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”

Eyes Opened to Guilt (v. 7a): "Then the eyes of both of them were opened," fulfilling the serpent's promise of awareness, but not in the way they expected.

The Loss of Innocence (v. 7b): Instead of feeling like God, they realize they are vulnerable and exposed—knowing they are naked and feeling profound moral shame.

Covering and Isolation: They sew fig leaves together to cover themselves, marking the first human attempt to hide sin, manage guilt independently, and fracture their relationship with God and each other. Shame, hiding, fear, blame shifting - all show sin's effect is directly to damage relationship.

The So-What...

1. **Take care with God's Word.** What God actually said is of the utmost importance.
2. **Do not distort - add or subtract from - God's Word.** Close enough is not nearly good enough.
3. **Don't deny real consequences!** Yielding to temptation brings instant damage. “Small Sins” and “White Lies” distort the very real results of a life open to temptation.

Small Group Questions

Genesis 3:1–7 describes the Fall of Man, showing how the serpent tempts Eve and Adam to doubt God's instruction, disobey His directives, and consequentially, step into the sin and shame of a fallen world.

1. The Character and Strategy of the Tempter (Verses 1-3)

Why do you think the tempter's first move was to make God seem restrictive or withholding? How do we see this same tactic used in our lives today?

2. The Lie and the Appeal (Verses 4-5)

The serpent directly contradicts God in verse 4, saying, "You will not certainly die." How does temptation often require us to doubt either God's goodness or His truthfulness?

3. The Fall (Verse 6-7)

The text notes that Adam was "with her" when she ate the fruit. What does this tell us about Adam's role and responsibility in this moment?