

THE BEGINNING

THE FALL OF HUMANITY

FALL

Lesson 02

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 3–4

FOCUS VERSE

Genesis 3:15

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.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

Humanity broke covenant with God, but God provided grace.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will repent when I break covenant with God.

COVENANT CONTEXT

After living for some time in close, covenant relationship with God, His crowning creation, Adam and Eve, chose sin and broke covenant with Him. Genesis 3 offers the first promise of a Messiah to restore humanity to right relationship with God.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Based on your observations or even experiences within a family, what would you say is the most damaging outcome of a divorce, and what are the keys to a lasting marriage?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to show how Adam and Eve's covenant relationship with God was broken because of sin.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. LIFE IN THE GARDEN

A. A Perfect Home (I)

DISCUSS: *As you recall a time you felt God's presence in the strongest way, how did that change your life?*

B. A Single Commandment (V)

DISCUSS: *What problems arise when people “choose their own truth,” and what are some good ways to respond to those who make such claims?*

- C. I will not let my desire for understanding destroy my ability to trust God.

II. TEMPTATION IN THE GARDEN

- A. The Serpent Deceived Eve

DISCUSS: *What are some dangerous ways people add to or take away from God’s Word in their lives?*

- B. Adam and Eve Rebelled

- C. I will recognize the subtle ways rebellion can creep into my life.

DISCUSS: *What are some of the more subtle ways temptation can manifest in our lives, and how can we resist it?*

III. LIFE OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

- A. Sin’s Immediate Consequences

- B. Sin’s Ongoing Consequences

- C. God’s Promised Messiah

- D. I will repent when I break covenant with God.

Internalizing the Message

DISCUSS: *What broken relationship lies at the heart of our current social crisis, and how does the gospel provide an answer for it?*

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us to trust Him, even when we don’t understand
- That we would repent when we break our covenant with God

LESSON CONNECTION

She sits at the kitchen table, eyes rimmed red and wet with tears. Her heart feels like it is being slowly crushed in a vise. Questions whirl through her mind with such speed that she cannot form the words to ask them: *What went wrong? Why didn’t she see it coming? Was there anything she should have done differently?* Meanwhile, her husband—ex-husband (she’ll have to get used to saying that at some point)—sits across the table, eyes completely dry and face expressionless. Between them on the small table under the unforgiving fluorescent light sits a pile of documents filled with intimidating legalese and the glaring phrase “Divorce Proceedings” brazenly splashed across the top page.

Suddenly behind her, she hears a quiet, “Mama? What’s wrong? Why are you crying? Why are Daddy’s suitcases by the door? Where is he going?” A new wave of heart-rending sobs fills the small kitchen as the little girl in pink bunny pajamas pads across the floor to her mother’s waiting arms. More questions surge into her mind: *What will I*

tell the kids? How will I explain that Daddy doesn't love Mommy anymore? How are we going to be able to make it without him?

Scenes like this (and its reverse) happen every day, many times a day, in North America. The law firm Terry & Roberts in Pearland, Texas, reports the following stunning statistics:

- There are approximately eighty-six divorces *every hour* in the United States.
- It is estimated that 41 percent of first marriages will end in divorce.
- Almost 60 percent of second marriages and 73 percent of third marriages also end in divorce.
- The average lifespan of a first marriage that ends in divorce is only eight years.

But statistics cannot capture the emotional and relational scars on spouses and children when their family unit is shattered. Psychologists say the emotional pain and grief of a divorce is similar in intensity to the death of a loved one; perhaps the key difference is it is more difficult to achieve a sense of “closure” in divorce than in death, as the departed spouse is still living and custody and child support battles can linger for years. No wonder Jesus said of the sanctity of marriage: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6).

Tragically, God’s blissful covenant relationship only lasted one chapter in our Bible before sin separated Adam and Eve from God. Divorce is just one of a myriad of sinister effects of sin’s entrance into humanity, but it may be a prime example of sin’s most disastrous and devastating consequence—ruined relationships. Because of sin, we are condemned to live estranged—from God, from one another, and even from all we were created to be. Instead of the innate security and peace of a happy home, many today find themselves barraged with fear, worry, and anxiety as they face an unknown future without a spouse or parent there to support them. All this pain came because of one disastrous day in God’s gift of the Garden of Eden.

BIBLE LESSON

I. LIFE IN THE GARDEN

A. A Perfect Home

Though many vistas of breathtaking beauty exist on earth, none of them can compare with the beauty that was the Garden of Eden. However, our typical depictions of humanity’s first dream home are often drawn on two subtle but important misconceptions. Rather than the Garden being in Eden, the Bible is clear that Eden was in the Garden. Genesis 2:10 states: “And a river went *out of Eden* to water the garden” (italics added). Thus, the lush garden with its luscious fruit trees and gorgeous flowers actually surrounded this place known as Eden, which formed the Garden’s center and source of its water supply.

Our second misconception relates to the Garden’s size. Many artists depict Eden as relatively small, perhaps a large flower garden or an orchard. However, Genesis states the Garden was home to *four* rivers: the Pison, the Gihon, the Hiddekel, and the Euphrates (Genesis 2:10–14). To require so much water, the garden must have been massive. We should imagine Eden at least on the scale of a national park like Yellowstone or Banff.

However, the most astounding feature of the Garden is captured in what, for us, is an unimaginable claim: “And

they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). Their nakedness is a visible sign of their perfect innocence and safety. The Garden God gave them provided all their physical needs; their companionship together in the work of keeping the Garden met their emotional and relational needs; and their open, face-to-face fellowship with God met their spiritual needs. Eden was a place of perfect, God-intended human wholeness. It was the truest picture of *shalom*.

DISCUSS: *As you recall a time you felt God’s presence in the strongest way, how did that change your life?*

B. A Single Commandment

While the Bible doesn’t use the term *covenant* in the first few chapters of the Bible, we have seen the elements of covenant at work as God desired to forge a deep, lasting relationship with His people. And, of course, part of forging a covenant involves both parties agreeing to binding terms.

Even in the Garden, life under God’s blessing was not without these terms; even in our perfected state, humanity was designed to serve and obey God. God’s one prohibition was spelled out in Genesis 2:16–17: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, though shalt not eat of it.” And He added the accompanying warning: “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

What might that forbidden knowledge of good and evil have been? Given their innocence, some scholars suggest Adam and Eve didn’t know right from wrong. But this seems to mistakenly present Adam and Eve not as innocents but as simpletons. Adam and Eve most certainly had enough moral understanding to recognize that obeying God’s command was right and disobeying His command was wrong.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil did not offer moral consciousness—the ability to *know* right from wrong—but moral autonomy—the right to *decide* what was right and wrong for themselves. This right was forbidden to humanity because God wanted them to trust Him as their loving Creator to make those decisions for them.

DISCUSS: *What problems arise when people “choose their own truth,” and what are some good ways to respond to those who make such claims?*

C. I will not let my desire for understanding destroy my ability to trust God.

“Curiosity killed the cat,” they say. God gave us inquiring minds to help us grow to understand His ways and deepen our relationship with Him. He made us with the desire to understand, but as has been wisely noted, truly understanding the ways of God usually requires first “standing under” His sovereign authority. Sometimes our desire to know the “whys” and “hows” is the biggest enemy of our ability to trust in God and His wisdom. Even when the “why” and “how” escape us, the “what” of serving God (His commandments and expectations) has been made clear in His Word. Do you trust Him enough to obey when you don’t fully understand?

II. TEMPTATION IN THE GARDEN

A. The Serpent Deceived Eve

The Bible does not record how long Adam and Eve made their home in the harmony of the Garden, but on that fateful day when Eve arrived at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she encountered the devil in the form of an evil serpent. He had apparently invaded from the wilds beyond the Garden's borders. We are told he was more crafty than the beasts of the field, alerting us to his evil intentions (Genesis 3:1).

The serpent's first words raise suspicion, turning God's commandment into a question: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1). The devil was focused more on one prohibition than all the privileges God had granted them. God told Adam he and his wife could eat freely of every tree of the Garden, except one (Genesis 2:16–17). Eve's initial response was a perfect objection to the serpent's false claim: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden." Then she proceeded to add: "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat it, *neither shall ye touch it*, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:2–3, italics added). God never said they could not touch the tree. How might Eve have arrived at this interpretation? Did Adam relay an amended version to protect Eve? Did Eve "overcorrect" in her attempt to defend God's honor? Only God knows what happened in the Garden, but the enemy soon realized Eve did not know exactly what God had said.

DISCUSS: *What are some dangerous ways people add to or take away from God's Word in their lives?*

B. Adam and Eve Rebelled

The serpent's trap was set. If Eve was no longer certain of God's commandment, how could she be certain of the consequence of disobeying it? Then the serpent twisted God's words to an outright contradiction: "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4; See also Genesis 2:17). Then he followed up with a Satanic lie: "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

In the end, Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit. They wanted to take on God's role of deciding what was right and what was wrong. To describe this intentional divorce from God as "the fall of humanity" makes it sound like it were a disaster that happened *to* humanity rather than something humanity did. No words are adequate to describe the height of our proud rebellion, thinking we could "set the rules" in God's own Creation, when we are nothing more than dirt—literally.

Tragically, Adam and Eve were conned into rebelling against God by the serpent's offer that they would be "as gods" (Genesis 3:5). But the opening of the Creation story shows us that Adam and Eve were already made "in the image of God." The serpent literally tempted them with something they already possessed—the likeness of God.

C. I will recognize the subtle ways rebellion can creep into my life.

The tragedy of temptation is two-fold. First, it works in such a way that, even though we are deceived, we remain responsible for our actions. The serpent never forced Adam and Eve to eat the fruit; they chose to do so. The second tragedy is the too-late realization that temptation offers mere counterfeits of glorious gifts God has already given. Illicit sex is just a cheap copy of the joys of committed marriage; drugs and alcohol are just junk versions of the enthusing power of God's Spirit. Temptation is always mirage and counterfeit, actively stealing from us the good gifts God has already given.

Today we need to open our eyes to the ways temptation can draw us away from the clear commands of God into the murky waters of deciding good and evil for ourselves. The serpent's opening teaches us that rebellion starts with a question that discounts God's provision and focuses on His prohibitions, leading us to doubt God's always-good intentions for us. Don't let deception rob you of your trust in God.

***DISCUSS:** What are some of the more subtle ways temptation can manifest in our lives, and how can we resist it?*

III. LIFE OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

A. Sin's Immediate Consequences

Sure enough, as soon as Adam and Eve ate the fruit, their eyes were opened but only to the realization that they were completely naked and vulnerable. Instead of being enlightened, Adam and Eve were blanketed in shame. When God arrived, they hid themselves from the all-seeing, all-knowing God of Creation. Don't miss the irony.

Adam and Eve also hid from each other, even before they hid from God, by creating aprons of fig leaves to cover themselves. In Genesis 2:23, Adam affectionately described Eve as "bone of my bones" and "flesh of my flesh"; then in Genesis 3:12, he disdainfully called her "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me." Instead of ruling together over creation, Adam would "rule over" Eve (Genesis 3:16). Finally, the earth from which Adam was made was now an adversary rather than an ally. Instead of bringing forth food, it would bring forth "thorns and thistles" (Genesis 3:18). Breaking covenant with God cursed Adam, Eve, and all creation.

B. Sin's Ongoing Consequences

The ultimate consequence was exile from the Garden, especially from unhindered access to the presence of God. Yet even in this act, there was mercy: by limiting access to the Tree of Life, God prevented Adam and Eve from being eternally separated from Him. The story took a darker turn when their son Cain murdered his brother, Abel, out of jealousy. God gave Cain a chance to "redo" his offering and warned him that his anger made him vulnerable to sin's control. In spite of this, Cain still chose to murder Abel. One generation after Adam and Eve ate forbidden fruit, humanity spiraled all the way to premeditated murder. The consequences of sin often destroy the innocent as well as the guilty.

C. God's Promised Messiah

But God shone brilliant light through that deep darkness. God made His first messianic promise of salvation through the seed of a woman, who would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). This promise was sealed by the sign of God covering Adam and Eve's nakedness with the skins of an innocent substitute. God symbolically and temporarily removed their shame as a foreshadowing of what this promised "seed" would finally and fully accomplish.

D. I will repent when I break covenant with God.

That promised seed of the woman has already come. Jesus' shed blood provides the final covering for all our sin and shame. Forgiveness and cleansing are available to all who hear and heed God's call to covenant. Learn a warning

from Cain's jealous rage: Do not reject the opportunity to repent and escape sin's dominion.

Teacher Option: *Share the information below or a story of your own to illustrate the value of turning from anything that would break covenant with God.*

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

A 2019 article in the journal *World Psychiatry* by Brian D'Onofrio and Robert Emery documents the destructive effects of divorce (and unmarried cohabitation) on children. The increased risks include lower grades and higher dropout rates; disruptive behaviors, including substance abuse; depression; risky sexual behavior; and poverty. Even apparently resilient children "often report painful feelings or encounters, such as worrying about events like graduations or weddings when both parents will be present." Concluding the survey, they warn: "Marital instability presents not a single risk factor, but a cascade of [consequences] for children." In our fallen world, sometimes divorce is forced upon Christians who do not desire it, and sadly its effects are real and lasting on everyone involved.

While the illustration is not a one-for-one comparison, the pain of severed human relationships should remind us of the pain of severed covenant with God. Sin's lasting effects become abundantly clear when we stop thinking of sin as just mistakes and missteps and consider its impact on "ruined relationships"—with God, with one another, and even with all creation. Divorce, childhood cancer, and the threat of global nuclear war are all linked together as calamitous after-effects of sin's sinister entrance. No wonder Paul described the mission of the church as a "ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18)—a ministry of healed relationships.

The gospel makes it possible to be restored to right relationship with God. By God forgiving and cleansing our sins and filling us with His Holy Spirit, we are enabled to walk in renewed fellowship with our Creator. The new birth restores us to our identity as being in the image of God and enables and empowers us to fulfill our created purpose as members of His body, the church.

God's intention is not simply to restore our relationship with Him but also to bring us into proper relationship with one another. The welcoming of Gentiles into the Jewish Book of Acts church is a prime example of this push toward interpersonal reconciliation. Paul's declaration that in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek,...neither bond nor free,...neither male nor female" destroys all barriers of racism, classism, and sexism in the body of Christ (Galatians 3:28). In Christ, strangers are now friends, enemies are now brothers.

Our world is right to recognize the dangers that divisions pose to society, but these divisions are not recognized as ultimately rooted in spiritual issues; they are constantly attributed to physical or mental causes. Proposed solutions come in economic, political, and sociological packaging—all humanistic answers. But unless and until we recognize the spiritual root of our societal problems, we are destined to stumble down the road to ultimate destruction. That is why God has raised up His church in this last hour with the message of true and lasting salvation: "Be ye reconciled to God" (II Corinthians 5:20). Restored to right relationship with God, we will find the power to restore all other

broken relationships.

DISCUSS: *What broken relationship lies at the heart of our current social crisis, and how does the gospel provide an answer for it?*