
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 3.1-7. In the first two chapters of the Bible, the setting, we learned about how marvelous God is and how he created a universe that was good, meaning it was pure and useful for his purposes. People had all they would need to succeed in living as God's image, by reflecting his character, representing him, reproducing his image, and ruling over the rest of creation in his name. Faced with a creature who was deceptively misrepresenting God and tempting them, how should the people have reacted? They should have reflected God's character by doing what they knew was right, represented God by rebuking the snake's falsity, and ruled over the snake in God's name, not trusting and taking guidance from the snake in place of trusting and obeying God. Adam, as the head of the human family, should have protected his wife from the snake, from temptation and deception, instead he let his wife be led by the snake and let her lead him.

Reflect: God set things up so that Adam and Eve would not decide for themselves what was right or wrong, rather God would give them that revelation. Perhaps God set it up that way because human reasoning was imperfect even before the corruption of sin, because people did not have the infinite wisdom and insight of God; nor do we today. How can we strengthen our ability to make the right decisions when we face deception or temptation? How do temptation and deception approach in your life [media containing spiritually deceptive ideas or tempting images; influential non-believing friends; places you frequent...]? Can you minimize your involvement with those sources?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 3.1-5; 1 Timothy 2.14. Eve softened the aspect of freedom, added to the restriction, and de-emphasized the penalty by omitting "certainly." If she misunderstood, perhaps it was because she learned all this second-hand from Adam, perhaps that same day. In any case, it is interesting that it is the snake who came closest to quoting God's revelation accurately, when he lied about it, and that God's revelation was quoted three times, but never completely accurately: the snake questioned it with a misleading representation, Eve paraphrased it, and the snake denied it. Adam was not deceived, but willfully went against God's revelation. Perhaps Adam had a strong desire for control; consider his attempt to change his name [2.18-25]. Eve found the fruit's utility, aesthetics, and sensual desirability too attractive to resist.

Reflect: How much do you rely on the Bible for your moral choices and how much do you rely on your own ideas or feelings? Is it hard to trust in the outcome, in God's provision, when you have to wait a long time for something or when it seems God is withholding something? Can you think of times you have acted a little un-Christlike [maybe telling a "white lie" or being rude] when taking matters into your own hands, because you felt justified in getting what was right? Do you fail to honor legal authorities in certain situations [speeding on the highway, for example]? Do you fail to do what God asks [make evangelistic outreach a priority, for example]? For each of these situations, how can you prepare yourself now to trust and obey God instead of acting in the flesh?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 3.1-7. Eve was naïve [this might have been Eve's first day], so she was not upset about the snake talking. The snake was a small creature, subordinate to people in God's plan, not dangerous looking. Thus evil was in disguise as something innocuous. Today, most people don't like snakes, and many snakes are poisonous, so we could miss the implication, but evil appeared as something which would *not* frighten Eve; this was part of the deception. The snake appeared to be friendly despite its ambition to break the relationship people had with God, bring disobedience and distrust, cause sin and harm.

The snake began by emphasizing God's single prohibition, rather than God's massive provision. The snake changed God's Word to make it sound more harsh and restrictive. God had told Adam people could freely eat from all the fruit bearing trees with only one exception, whereas the snake asked whether God denied them the right to eat from any tree. The snake then countered, outright denied God's Word: God said they certainly would die if they ate this particular fruit, but the snake denied it. The snake misled Eve about God's motivations and planted doubts about God's goodness. The snake implied that God was jealous to protect his favored status, holding them back

from their destiny, rather than guiding them into what was good and healthy. The snake held out the promise of becoming like God, and hinted they were missing out. So the snake twisted the truth about the plant to make it tempting, something they should eat to gain benefits. The snake made it seem like rebellion, the bottom line, would be the best choice, because they could get something attractive that way, and they should not trust and obey God on the top line, since he would not give them this helpful fruit.

Reflect: Can you think of any examples of deception or temptation that seem innocent or good at first glance? What situations most tempt you to act in an un-Christlike way? What sort of distortions about God or his revelation are commonly spoken in our culture today? If you were deceived right now about some aspect of God or his revelation, would you know it? How would you find out?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 3.1-7 [try a different translation]. It is fascinating that our text is not interested in revealing why the snake has turned evil or how evil arises in the paradise garden amidst a good and pure world. God is so focused here on revealing something about *people* that he largely ignores revealing anything about the origin of *evil*! Think of the ways Adam and Eve failed here: they did not trust and obey God's revelation; they did not trust in God's provision; they succumbed to temptation and chose to go against God's will; Eve allowed herself to be deceived and Adam willfully rebelled; they did not reflect God's character; they did not represent God in this situation; they did not rule in God's name over the snake [they actually let the snake influence them instead].

Reflect: From this text, what do you learn about people in general? Adam and Eve took the "bottom-line," acting on their own reasoning [influenced by the snake] apart from God's revelation, instead of trusting and obeying God's revelation. This is how God evaluates people and actions, and how we can evaluate characters and actions in the Bible and life. Can you think of "bottom-line" actions by otherwise good biblical characters [Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon all chose the "bottom-line" at times]? If you want to reflect more, read 2 Samuel 12.1-23 and Psalm 32.

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 2.25-3.1. One way God and the human authors of the Bible let us know about connections between scenes is through diction, especially with wordplay. In 2.25, Adam and Eve were naked [עָרֹם = uh-ROME] but not ashamed because they had no sin in them. The Bible often uses nakedness to symbolize vulnerability; they had total openness and trust in their relationship, they could be vulnerable before each other without shame. The very next verse emphasizes the serpent was crafty or shrewd [עָרִים = uh-ROOM]. The Bible uses this term to represent understanding the dangers and ways of evil. This is true of the prudent good person and the scheming evil person. Adam and Eve were naïve and vulnerable about danger and evil, but the snake was shrewd, wise to it. Read 3.7: do they still sound innocent, naked without shame? No, now they were guilty and felt ashamed. They moved from innocent nakedness to shameful nakedness; from purity to guilt. They wanted knowledge of good and evil, but it was not what they thought it would be. They lost their emotional innocence and sense of security, they lost relational trust and openness with each other, they lost their sense of identity and validation as God's image, because when they chose to sin, when they chose to pursue the bottom line, they turned away, they walked away, from God. Their alienation from each other and from God reveals their spiritual death. God soon repeats his threat to bring them physical death, since they rebelled against him by eating this fruit.

Reflect: We have to be shrewd to protect ourselves from the ways and dangers of evil. We also have to protect ourselves that, in becoming shrewd, we develop into the prudent good person, not the scheming evil person. How can we do that? How might a well-intentioned person inadvertently cross that line? Ever try to manipulate people to get what you want? Ever tell "white lies" [deception!] to avoid trouble? In your closest relationships, can you be more vulnerable, more open and transparent? What holds people back from being this way, fear of being known in our flaws or fear of being vulnerable to the other person? In which relationships should we try to overcome those issues and in which maybe not?