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WHY ARE WE IN THIS MESS?



Growing up, what were some rules you sometimes had trouble following?

QUESTION #1

THE POINT

We ruined a perfect relationship with God through our sin.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Do you have a favorite game you like to play? Mine is *Monopoly*. My wife objects to my strategy. I tuck away a few of the larger bills I've earned when she isn't looking. She sells properties to me thinking I have no money to spend on houses or hotels. But as soon as she sells me her properties, I pull out my hidden money and it's "game over." She blames me for cheating. I blame her for not catching my stealth-like moves. We teasingly point fingers at each other.

You may have noticed the world we live in isn't a perfect place. But it was in the beginning. God created a sinless, spectacular world for us to enjoy. Adam and Eve chose to ignore His instructions for living, and sin entered the world. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. Adam even tried to blame God! Adam and Eve played the "blame game."

Our world is in a mess because we sinned against God. Sin always devastates. Our condition is nobody's fault but our own. We should point fingers at ourselves.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Genesis 3:1-7

¹ Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. ³ But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴ “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Things went great—perfectly!—in Genesis 1–2, but someone new showed up in chapter 3. The serpent appeared and was characterized as “cunning”. The Hebrew word is not necessarily positive or negative, so we might wonder initially if this was a good character or a bad one. Snakes were categorized as unclean animals because they crawled on the ground on their bellies. (See Lev. 11:42.) In the early moments of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Indiana Jones declared “I hate snakes, Jock, I hate ‘em!” to his pilot friend. The Hebrews would have felt similarly about snakes. Snakes were a source of uncleanness.

I love a good movie, and musical scores let us know when something bad is about to happen. When we watch *Jaws*, every time we hear that low, rhythmic bass sound start to crescendo, we know the shark is about to attack. But in the garden in Genesis 3, Eve was neither in a movie, nor did she hear music to warn her what was about to happen. Eve heard nothing, and she had nothing to fear. Or so she thought.

How did the serpent bring confusion to God’s simple command?

QUESTION #2

The sly serpent cut right to the chase. No time for small talk. His very first words fit his description of “cunning.” The serpent knew very well Adam and Eve could eat from any tree except one. (See Gen. 2:16-17.) Feigning naiveté, however, the serpent asked what seemed to be an innocent question, but he had sinister intent. “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Cue the shark music.) The serpent wanted to introduce a thought into Eve’s mind. He wanted her to believe God was withholding important information from the first couple.

The first couple sinned by failing to keep God’s command concerning “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (2:17). God’s command—His will for us—is always right. His will for us is grounded in His love for us, so anything we choose that is outside His loving will for us is sin. We experience life at its fullest when we obey God, but when we step outside of obedience and trust, we sin. We face consequences. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). As we will see, Adam, Eve, and the serpent will all face consequences for their roles in disobeying God.

Genesis 3:14-15

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than any livestock and more than any wild animal. You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

Talk about a mess! Fingers were pointing. Accusations were flying. Adam blamed Eve for their sin. Adam blamed God for giving him Eve in the first place. (See Gen. 3:12.) Eve blamed the serpent for deceiving her. (See v. 13.)

What are some unhealthy ways we try to be like God?

QUESTION #3

How do these verses apply to the gospel?

QUESTION #4

Sin had entered God's perfect world. God's relationship with mankind had changed. Adam's relationship with his wife had changed. Eve's relationship with her husband had changed. Everything had changed. And all the while, Satan knew he'd accomplished his goal.

God responded by pronouncing a curse against the serpent. We find nothing redemptive in God's address to Satan. Only judgment awaited the cunning one who tempted humanity into sin. Many consider verse 15 to be the first prophetic verse in the Bible. A descendant of Eve would ultimately deliver a fatal blow against the serpent. Jesus would deliver Satan's ultimate doom.

Genesis 3:16-19

¹⁶ He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you. ¹⁷ And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust."

While God cursed Satan and the ground, He issued no curse against the woman or the man. Yes, He did punish them, but He did not curse them. Thus, we are left with the hope of redemption and blessing. The punishment God declared over Eve was two-fold.

- ▶ **The pain of childbearing would increase greatly.** I was present when my wife delivered both of our sons. Labor is difficult, even with the help of medications to reduce the pain.
- ▶ **Eve's desire would be for her husband, and "he will rule over you."** Although this could mean that her sexual desires would overpower her in spite of the pain of childbearing, it more likely means her inability to rule over or somehow control her husband would be a constant source of frustration. Adam would be God's appointed leader in the home, exercising leadership over her. Husbands and wives were thus locked in an ongoing struggle for control.

THE POINT

We ruined a perfect relationship with God through our sin.

Adam was not immune from judgment. God declared that man would be in conflict, not cooperation, with the ground. No longer would man easily tend the garden with its fruit-producing trees. Instead, the land would require constant vigilance. It would “produce thorns and thistles” requiring hard, painful labor. Man would eat, but he would not eat easily.

We experience the consequences of our sin—even when God forgives the sin itself.

Why are we in the mess we’re in? We’re in it because of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, we—the descendants of this first couple—were forever changed. We’re now born with a sin nature. That sin nature leads us to naturally choose sin; it’s who we are.

We’re sinners who need a new nature. We are people who need new hearts—hearts that choose God’s Word and God’s ways. Thankfully, there is a solution to our sin problem. God loves us and He would not leave us in this helpless state. Although Satan slithered his way into the garden and led Adam and Eve astray, God was not caught off guard. God knew this would happen, so He planned a response to our sin.

How do the consequences of sin make your life more difficult?

QUESTION #5



TEMPTATION

From 1 to 5, rank these temptations based on the ease or difficulty in resisting them.

- _____ Telling a lie to get out of trouble.
- _____ Taking something that doesn't belong to you.
- _____ Getting romantically involved with someone other than his or her spouse.
- _____ Saying something that hurts another person in order to advance oneself.
- _____ Not worshipping God (such as attending church, praying, reading the Word, and so on).

What has helped you overcome these or other temptations?

Thank God for the forgiveness He has extended to you through Christ, the relationship He has restored, and the strength He gives to live a life overcoming temptation.

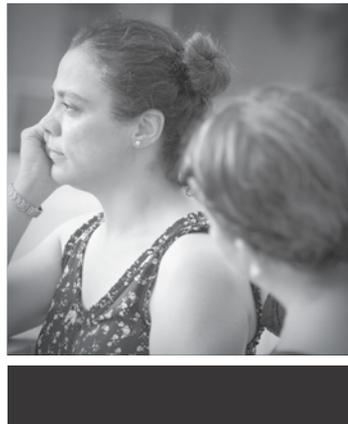
"The Christian has a great advantage over other men, not by being less fallen than they, nor less doomed to live in a fallen world, but by knowing that he is a fallen man in a fallen world!"

—C. S. LEWIS

LIVE IT OUT

We're in a mess because we chose to sin instead of following God's way. We can point fingers, or we can point to solutions.

- ▶ **Memorize 1 John 1:9.** Our sins can be forgiven if we confess them to God. Memorize 1 John 1:9 as a promise and source of encouragement as you confess your sins to God: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- ▶ **Seek forgiveness.** If your sin involves someone else, ask their forgiveness. Seek to make amends for your part in hurting another person or harming your relationship.
- ▶ **Avoid sin.** If certain sins are a constant struggle for you, determine what makes it easy for you to give in to the temptation. Make a plan for removing those things from your life. If specific individuals encourage or enable your sin, stop associating with them.



God created a paradise for us to enjoy, but we messed it up. Rejoice that God is gracious and had a plan to redeem us!

My thoughts