

The Book of Genesis, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: The Fall

Genesis 3:1–24

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Genesis 3 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible for understanding the human condition, so handle it with both clarity and care. Doctrinally, it teaches the origin of sin and death through Adam's free disobedience, the deceptive nature of temptation, the devastating effects of sin on our relationship with God and others, and the far-reaching consequences that sin unleashed on the world. It also contains, in verse 15, the first promise of a Redeemer, the thread of gospel hope that runs from this garden all the way to the empty tomb.

This lesson also requires a clear doctrinal boundary. Scripture teaches that sin and death entered the world through Adam and that we live in a fallen, broken world under the shadow of physical death. But the Bible does not teach that infants are born guilty of Adam's sin, or that human beings are so totally depraved that they cannot respond to God. Each person becomes guilty before God when he or she personally sins (Ezekiel 18:20), children are held up by Jesus as the very picture of those who belong to the kingdom (Matthew 18:3; 19:14), and the gospel call is genuinely able to be answered. Teach the consequences of the fall and personal accountability for sin, not inherited guilt. Help students hold this clearly so they neither minimize sin nor adopt a Calvinistic doctrine of inherited guilt and total depravity.

Formationally, this chapter is a mirror. Every student in the room knows the experience of doubting God's word, of being drawn by something that looked good, of hiding and blaming. The aim is not to leave them in shame but to lead them through honest confession to the hope of the promised Seed. Send students home both more honest about their sin and more confident in the Redeemer who came to undo it.

Question 1

Student Question:

The serpent opens with, "Did God actually say..." (3:1) and then flatly contradicts God's warning (3:4). How does this reveal the way temptation typically works, by casting doubt on God's word and on His goodness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The serpent's opening move is a masterclass in temptation, and it has not changed in thousands of years. He does not begin by denying God; he begins by questioning Him. "Did God actually say..." The first target is always God's word: is it really clear, is it really true, did He really mean it?

Then he distorts what God said. God had given the run of the whole garden and withheld one tree; the serpent makes it sound as though God were stingy and restrictive: "Did God say you shall not eat of any tree?" The exaggeration is designed to make God look mean. Once we believe God is withholding good from us, disobedience starts to feel reasonable.

Finally he attacks God's goodness directly: "You will not surely die... God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God." The lie is that God is threatened by our flourishing and is keeping us down. This is the heart of every temptation: the suggestion that God cannot be trusted to want our good, and that we would be better off deciding for ourselves.

Help students see the strategy so they can recognize it. Temptation rarely announces itself as rebellion. It comes as a reasonable question, a small distortion, and a flattering promise. The defense is to know and trust God's word and to refuse the lie that He is holding out on us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Temptation's strategy: question God's word, distort it, then deny His goodness.
- The lie at the root of sin: that God cannot be trusted to want our good.
- The importance of knowing Scripture accurately, since the serpent twists it.
- Spiritual warfare: a real adversary who deceives (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the serpent attack God's word and goodness before anything else?
- How does believing God is 'holding out' on us make sin feel reasonable?
- What is our best defense against this kind of subtle temptation?

Question 2

Student Question:

Where in your own life do you hear a version of "Did God really say...?", a place where you are tempted to doubt that God's word is true, or that His commands are for your good? Be specific.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question brings the serpent's whisper into the present tense. The doubt "Did God really say...?" still circulates, sometimes from the culture, sometimes from our own hearts. It shows up wherever we are tempted to treat a clear teaching of Scripture as outdated, unclear, or unkind.

Encourage specific honesty. For one person the doubt may concern sexual boundaries, for another honesty in business, for another forgiveness, generosity, or the call to gather with God's people. The doubt usually sounds like, "Surely God doesn't really mind," or "Times have changed," or "God wants me to be happy."

Lead students to name the underlying question and answer it with trust. Behind every “Did God really say?” is the deeper question, “Is God really good?” The cure is not merely willpower but a settled confidence, proved at the cross, that the God who gave His Son can be trusted with our obedience.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Recognizing modern forms of “Did God really say?” in culture and in our own hearts.
- Treating Scripture as trustworthy even when it is countercultural or costly.
- The link between doubting God’s word and doubting His goodness.
- The cross as the proof that God can be trusted with our obedience.

Discussion Prompts

- What command of God are you most tempted to treat as outdated or unkind?
- What lie sits underneath that temptation?
- How does the cross answer the question, ‘Is God really good?’

Question 3

Student Question:

Eve saw that the tree was “good for food,” “a delight to the eyes,” and “to be desired to make one wise” (3:6). Compare this to 1 John 2:16. What does this teach us about how sin presents itself and how it gains a foothold?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 6 is a careful x-ray of how desire turns into sin. Eve saw that the tree was “good for food” (the appetite of the body), “a delight to the eyes” (the pull of what looks attractive), and “to be desired to make one wise” (the craving for status and self-determination). Nothing about the fruit had changed; her way of seeing it had.

John echoes this exactly: “the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life” (1 John 2:16). The same three hooks appear again when the serpent tempts Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4), and Jesus refuses all three. The pattern is built into temptation: it appeals to legitimate desires, but directs them toward an illegitimate end.

Help students see that the things tempting us are usually not evil in themselves. Food, beauty, and wisdom are good. Sin is not desiring good things; it is grasping for a good thing in a forbidden way, outside the boundary God has set, on our own terms rather than His.

This is why mere rule-keeping is not enough. We need our desires reshaped, so that we want God and His ways more than the forbidden fruit. That reshaping is the slow work of walking with Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The anatomy of temptation: appetite, attraction, and pride (Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:16).
- Sin as good desires pursued in forbidden ways, not merely desire itself.
- Jesus facing and defeating the same three temptations (Matthew 4:1–11).
- The need for transformed desires, not only stronger willpower.

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the three appeals (appetite, eyes, pride) most often hooks you?
- How can a good thing become a sinful thing in the way we pursue it?
- What helps reshape our desires so we want God more than the forbidden?

Question 4

Student Question:

*What good, pleasant, or desirable things most tempt you to step over a boundary God has set?
How does sin disguise itself as something harmless or even beneficial in your life?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question asks students to name their own “tree.” Sin rarely tempts us with something obviously ugly; it dresses up as something good, reasonable, even beneficial. The promotion worth a small compromise, the relationship that feels right but crosses a line, the purchase, the comfort, the secret.

Invite honesty without prying. The goal is for each person to identify, privately if needed, the specific good-looking thing that most often draws them past God’s boundary. Naming it robs it of some of its power.

Then point to the way of escape. God always provides one (1 Corinthians 10:13). Often it is as simple as remembering, in the moment, that the fruit cannot deliver what it promises. Eve was promised wisdom and likeness to God; she received shame and exile. Sin never keeps its promises.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin disguising itself as good, reasonable, or beneficial.
- Naming our specific temptations rather than speaking in generalities.
- God’s faithfulness to provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- The emptiness of sin’s promises compared to its actual cost.

Discussion Prompts

- What good-looking thing most often tempts you past a boundary God has set?

- What does that temptation promise, and what does it actually deliver?
- What is one practical way of escape you can prepare in advance?

Question 5

Student Question:

As soon as they ate, they felt shame, hid from God, and began to blame others (3:7–13). What does this reveal about what sin does to our relationship with God and with one another?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The instant they ate, everything changed inside them. Their eyes were opened, but what they saw was their own nakedness and shame. The first effect of sin is broken fellowship: shame replaces innocence, and they sew fig leaves to cover themselves and hide.

Then comes broken fellowship with God. They hide among the trees from the One who used to walk with them. This is the great tragedy of sin: it does not make us bolder toward God; it makes us run from Him, even though He is our only hope. Note that God comes seeking them, calling “Where are you?”, not because He cannot find them but because He will not abandon them.

Then comes broken fellowship with each other. Asked what happened, the man blames the woman and implicates God who gave her; the woman blames the serpent. Sin fractures relationships and turns partners into accusers. The unity and delight of chapter two is shattered in a single conversation.

Help students feel the full reach of this. Sin is not merely breaking a rule; it ruptures every relationship we have, with God, with others, and even within ourselves. And yet the chapter shows a God who keeps coming, keeps calling, keeps seeking the very people who hid from Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin’s immediate effects: shame, hiding, and broken fellowship with God and others.
- God seeking the sinner (“Where are you?”) rather than abandoning him.
- Blame-shifting as a universal human reflex after sin.
- Sin as relational rupture, not merely rule-breaking.

Discussion Prompts

- What are the different relationships that sin damaged in this chapter?
- Why does sin make us hide from God rather than run to Him?
- What does it mean that God came seeking them even after they sinned?

Question 6

Student Question:

When you have done wrong, do you tend to cover it up, minimize it, or shift the blame? What would it look like this week to stop hiding and bring your sin honestly to God in confession?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the mirror toward the student's own habits with sin. We are all natural hiders and blamers. We cover, we minimize ("it wasn't that bad"), we explain ("anyone would have done the same"), we point at others ("if they hadn't..."). Adam and Eve are not strange to us; they are us.

Contrast hiding with confession. To confess is to do the opposite of what they did: to come into the light, name the sin as our own, and stop making excuses. Scripture promises that this is the path to mercy, not condemnation: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us" (1 John 1:9); "whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

Reassure students that confession is safe because of who God is. The God of Genesis 3 is already seeking and already planning rescue. We do not confess to an angry tyrant but to a Father who came looking for His hiding children. Encourage one concrete step: an honest prayer, a hard conversation, a sin brought out of the dark this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The human reflex to hide, minimize, excuse, and blame.
- Confession as coming into the light and owning sin as our own (1 John 1:9).
- The safety of confession given the seeking, merciful character of God.
- Repentance as forsaking, not merely admitting, sin (Proverbs 28:13).

Discussion Prompts

- Which is your default: hiding, minimizing, excusing, or blaming?
- What makes confession feel risky, and why is it actually safe with God?
- What is one sin you need to bring out of the dark this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

In the middle of judgment, God promises that the offspring of the woman will crush the serpent's head (3:15). Why is this called the first promise of the gospel, and how is it fulfilled in Jesus Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 15 is rightly treasured as the protoevangelium, the first preaching of the gospel. In the very act of judging the serpent, God announces a coming conflict and a coming victory: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall

bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” An offspring of the woman will one day crush the serpent.

Trace the fulfillment. The promise narrows through the whole Old Testament: through Abraham’s seed, through Judah, through David, until it lands on Jesus, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). At the cross the serpent bruised His heel, a real wound, a real death; but in His resurrection Christ crushed the serpent’s head, defeating sin, death, and the devil (Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 2:15).

Note the timing and the grace. God makes this promise before He pronounces the consequences on the man and the woman. Mercy runs ahead of judgment. Even in humanity’s darkest hour, God’s first word is a promise of rescue. That tells us something permanent about His heart.

Help students see that the whole Bible is, in a sense, the unfolding of this one verse. Every page after Genesis 3 is moving toward the offspring who will set things right. And Paul tells the church that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under their feet (Romans 16:20), so the victory of the Seed becomes the inheritance of His people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genesis 3:15 as the first promise of the gospel (the protoevangelium).
- The offspring of the woman fulfilled in Christ, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4).
- The cross and resurrection as the bruised heel and the crushed head (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14).
- Grace running ahead of judgment: the promise spoken before the curses.
- The whole Bible as the unfolding of this promise toward Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is verse 15 called the first promise of the gospel?
- How do the cross and resurrection fulfill the bruised heel and crushed head?
- What does it mean that God promised rescue before He pronounced the consequences?

Question 8

Student Question:

We all live in a world still marked by the fall, with its pain, broken relationships, and death. Where are you most feeling the weight of living in a fallen world right now, and how does God’s promise of a Redeemer give you hope in it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question lets students locate themselves honestly in a fallen world. We do not live in the garden; we live east of Eden, where thorns grow, relationships fracture, bodies fail, and death comes to all. The brokenness around us and within us is real, and Genesis 3 explains why.

Allow space for lament. Some in the room are carrying grief, illness, broken relationships, or the consequences of others' sins against them. The Bible never asks us to pretend the fall does not hurt. It does, deeply.

But anchor that lament in the promise of verse 15. We grieve, but not as those without hope. The same chapter that names the brokenness also names the Deliverer. The story is not over; the Seed has come, the head of the serpent is crushed, and a day is coming when the curse itself will be undone and there will be no more death or mourning or pain (Revelation 21:4).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Living honestly in a fallen world marked by pain, brokenness, and death.
- Lament as a faithful response, held together with hope.
- The promise of the Redeemer as the ground of hope in suffering.
- The future undoing of the curse in the new creation (Revelation 21:4).

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most feeling the weight of a fallen world right now?
- How can lament and hope live together in the believer?
- How does the promise of a Redeemer change the way you carry your burdens?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul says that through one man, Adam, sin and death entered the world (Romans 5:12). What did the fall actually bring upon the human race, and what does Scripture teach about when a person becomes guilty before God? In other words, what do we inherit from Adam, and what do we not?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, and it requires careful, confident teaching. Begin with what Scripture plainly affirms: through Adam's disobedience, sin and death entered the world (Romans 5:12). Adam's sin was not a private event; it changed the world we are born into. We enter a creation under the curse, a world of broken relationships and spiritual separation, and every human being now dies physically as a result. There is also a real and powerful pull toward sin at work in us and around us, so that, as Paul says, all have sinned (Romans 3:23).

Now state clearly what the fall did not do, because this is where careful teaching matters. Scripture does not teach that we are born guilty of Adam's sin, nor that we are so totally depraved that we are unable to respond to God. The Calvinistic and Augustinian doctrine of inherited guilt and total depravity goes beyond, and against, what the Bible says. Ezekiel is explicit: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20). Guilt is personal. We become guilty before God when we ourselves choose to sin, not at the moment of our conception or birth.

Point to the witness of Jesus about children. Far from treating little ones as guilty, He says, "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven," and "to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3; 19:14). Children are held up as the picture of those who belong to God, not as objects of condemnation. This is impossible to square with the idea that infants are born already guilty and condemned.

So draw the distinction clearly for the class. From Adam we inherit the consequences of sin: a fallen world, separation, physical death, and an environment in which we will all be tempted and will all eventually sin. What we do not inherit is Adam's guilt. We become guilty, and spiritually separated from God, when we knowingly transgress His will (compare Romans 9:11, where children not yet born had done neither good nor evil). This protects two truths at once: sin is deadly serious and universal, and yet God is perfectly just, holding each person accountable only for his own sin.

Finally, keep the gospel in view. The reason this matters is not merely to win an argument but to preach good news rightly. Because guilt is personal, the call to repent and be saved is genuinely addressed to every accountable person, and it can truly be answered. Christ, the last Adam, brings life to all who are in Him (Romans 5:18–19; 1 Corinthians 15:22). We are not trapped by Adam's guilt; we are invited, freely and really, into Christ's righteousness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin and physical death entering the world through Adam (Romans 5:12).
- What we inherit from Adam: a fallen world, separation, physical death, and a real pull toward sin.
- What we do not inherit: Adam's personal guilt (rejecting inherited guilt and total depravity).
- Personal accountability: each person becomes guilty when he or she sins (Ezekiel 18:20).
- The innocence of children, held up by Jesus as belonging to the kingdom (Matthew 18:3; 19:14).
- The genuine, answerable gospel call grounded in personal (not inherited) guilt.
- Christ as the last Adam who brings righteousness and life (Romans 5:18–19; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

Discussion Prompts

- What does Scripture say we receive from Adam, and what does it say we do not?

- How do Ezekiel 18:20 and Jesus' words about children shape our view of guilt?
- Why does personal accountability make the gospel call good news for everyone?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole chapter, from the first question of the serpent to the promise of the coming Deliverer. Name one specific way God is using this passage to form you, to make you more honest about sin and more hopeful in Christ.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this capstone to move students from diagnosis to hope. Genesis 3 has held up an unflinching mirror: we doubt God's word, we are drawn by what looks good, we hide and blame, and we live in a broken world. But the chapter does not end in despair; it ends with a promise and with God Himself clothing His guilty children in garments of skin, the first hint that covering our shame will cost a life.

Ask for the specific. Perhaps the lesson is calling a student to greater honesty about a hidden sin, or to trust God's word at the exact point of doubt, or to grieve a fallen-world loss while holding to hope. Press for one concrete way God is forming them.

Lift their eyes one more time to Christ, the promised Seed. Where Adam doubted God's goodness and grasped, Jesus trusted His Father and obeyed even to death. Where the first humans hid, Jesus stepped into the open and bore our shame. To be formed by this chapter is to stop hiding, to bring our sin into the light, and to put our hope in the One who crushed the serpent's head for us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from honest diagnosis of sin to hope in Christ.
- God covering shame at the cost of a life, foreshadowing the cross.
- Christ as the obedient Seed who reverses Adam's failure.
- Personal, concrete response: honesty, trust, and hope.

Discussion Prompts

- What specific thing is this passage calling you to be honest about?
- How does Christ, the promised Seed, give you hope where you feel the fall most?
- What is one way you will stop hiding and walk in the light this week?