

Lesson One

GENESIS 2:4–3:24

Eve: The First Woman, the First Loss, the First Promise

Before there was a daughter, a wife, a mother, or a widow, before there was a woman who looked in the mirror and wondered whether she was enough, there was Eve. She is the woman behind every woman. Her story is the headwaters from which the long river of every other woman in Scripture flows, and it begins not with sin or shame, but with a quiet, careful, deliberate act of love: God making her with His own hands.

We meet her in a garden, in a marriage, in a creation that God Himself has called "very good." Within a few short verses we will watch her trust a voice she should not have trusted, eat a fruit she should not have eaten, and hide from the One she had no need to hide from. And yet even in the wreckage of those choices, we will hear God speak the first promise of a Rescuer, and we will hear Adam, of all people, call his wife "the mother of all the living." The hope of the world will be born from her line.

As you read Genesis 2 and 3 this week, read them slowly. These chapters are not just the story of Eve. They are the story of every woman who has ever wondered who she is, why she was made, what went wrong, and whether anything can be done about it.

First impressions

Genesis 1 gives us the wide-angle view of creation, six days and a sabbath rest. Genesis 2, beginning at verse 4, zooms in on the sixth day, on the making of human beings in particular. The two accounts are not in competition; they are companion paintings. Genesis 1 tells us what God did. Genesis 2 tells us how He did it, and why.

Study Skill, Observation, Interpretation, Application: Good Bible study moves through three steps in order. First, observation: what does the passage actually say? Read carefully, noting words, repetition, contrasts, and surprises before you ask anything else. Second, interpretation: what did the passage mean to the original audience, and what does it mean in the context of the whole Bible? Third, application: what does it call me to believe, do, or change? Many of the questions in this study are designed to walk you through these three steps. Resist the temptation to jump straight to application; the application will be deeper if you let the observation and interpretation steps do their work first.

1. a. Read all of Genesis 2:4 to 3:24 in one sitting before working through the questions. After your first reading, what stands out to you?

b. What words would you use to describe Eve before sin enters the story? What words would you use to describe her afterward?

c. What surprises you in the text, something you had forgotten was there or something you have never noticed before?

For Further Study: Genesis 1:26 to 28 gives us the wider view of the creation of humanity. How does Genesis 2 zoom in on that moment? What does each account contribute that the other does not?

Made on purpose (2:4–25)

There is a deliberate wordplay in Hebrew that does not survive in English translation: the man (adam) is formed from the ground (adamah). Humanity is, from the very first verse about us, an earthy creature. We are made from dust (2:7). And yet we are made by the personal, hands-on work of God Himself, who "formed" us (the same verb a potter uses for shaping clay, Jeremiah 18:6) and who breathed into our nostrils the breath of life. The first man does not begin to live until God has shared His own breath with him. Every human being you will ever meet shares that same dignity.

2. Re-read Genesis 2:7. How does God create the man? What is striking about the way the text describes it?

Up to this point in the creation account, seven times God has called what He has made "good" or "very good." Now, suddenly, one thing is "not good" (2:18): the man's aloneness. This is the first time in Scripture that a need is named, and it is a relational one. Whatever marriage and family will become for us, they begin in the heart of God as His own answer to a need He Himself identified.

3. a. Read 2:18 carefully. What does God say is not good?

b. Why is this significant? What does it tell us about how God designed human beings to live?

The Hebrew word translated "helper" in 2:18 is ezer. In English, the word may sound like an assistant or a subordinate, but ezer carries no such overtones in Hebrew. It is used most often in the Old Testament of God Himself as the helper of His people (see, for example, Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29;

Psalms 33:20; 121:1 to 2). When God calls the woman an ezer "fit for" or "corresponding to" the man, He is naming her as a strong and indispensable counterpart, not as a lesser servant.

4. Verses 19 to 20 record Adam naming the animals before God brings the woman to him. What do you think Adam was learning during that process?
5.
 - a. Look at 2:21 to 23. How does God create the woman? Why do you think He uses this particular method rather than forming her from the dust as He did with Adam?
 - b. Adam's first recorded speech in Scripture is a poem (2:23). "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" is the language of covenant kinship throughout the Old Testament. (See Genesis 29:14; 2 Samuel 5:1; 19:12 to 13, where relatives identify each other this way.) What does Adam recognize about her?

For Thought and Discussion: Matthew Henry famously observed that the woman was "not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." Whether or not this captures all of the meaning, what truth do you see in it?

6.
 - a. Genesis 2:24 to 25 introduces marriage and intimacy without shame. What picture of marriage do these verses paint?
 - b. How is that picture different from what our culture tends to assume about marriage and sexuality? How is it different from what your own experience or expectation has taught you?

Optional Application: Take five minutes this week to write down what you believe God thinks of you as a woman, not what your husband thinks, or your father thought, or what culture says, but what Genesis 1 and 2 actually teach about His design and delight. Read it aloud. Keep it where you can find it again.

The unraveling (3:1–7)

The serpent in Genesis 3 is identified later in Scripture as Satan, "that ancient serpent" (Revelation 12:9; 20:2; see also John 8:44 and 2 Corinthians 11:3). Genesis itself simply calls him "the serpent," and

presents him as a creature God Himself had made (3:1). The Bible never indulges in speculation about the origin of evil. It names the tempter, exposes his strategy, and tells us how to resist him (James 4:7).

Study Skill, Reading in Context: Every verse of the Bible has three contexts. The first is its immediate context, the surrounding sentences and chapters. The second is its book context, the whole document the writer is composing. The third is its biblical context, the unified message of the whole of Scripture. Many false ideas are built by taking a single verse out of context, while ignoring what comes just before it, just after it, or elsewhere in God's word. As you study Eve, watch how the serpent himself is willing to quote Scripture (3:1), but only after he has bent it out of its context.

7. In 3:1, the serpent's opening question is, "Did God actually say..." What is he trying to accomplish with that question? Why begin there?

8. a. Compare God's actual command in 2:16 to 17 with Eve's quotation of it in 3:2 to 3. What does she add? What does she leave out?

b. Why does it matter that we get God's word right, neither subtracting from it nor adding to it (see Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18 to 19)?

For Further Study: Compare the serpent's strategy in Genesis 3 with Satan's strategy against Jesus in Matthew 4:1 to 11. What is similar? What is different? How did Jesus succeed where Eve did not?

9. The serpent's claim in 3:4 to 5 is essentially: God is holding out on you. Where in your own life are you most tempted to believe that?

The threefold appeal of the forbidden fruit in 3:6 ("good for food, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise") sets a pattern that runs through the rest of the Bible. The apostle John, writing nearly four thousand years later, will describe the world's temptation in nearly identical terms: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). Every temptation we will face this week comes through one of those three doors.

10. a. Look closely at 3:6. List the three things that draw Eve to the fruit.

b. Where is Adam in 3:6 (look at the second half of the verse carefully)? What does his silence and passivity contribute to what unfolds?

For Thought and Discussion: Eve was deceived; Adam was not (1 Timothy 2:14). Both ate. Why does Scripture distinguish between the two, and what does that distinction teach us about how sin tends to work on us as women and as men?

11. Verse 7 says their eyes were opened, but what they see first is their own nakedness. What does this say about what sin does to us? What is the difference between the knowledge they were promised and the knowledge they actually received?

Hiding, blaming, and the first promise (3:8-24)

Even God's first question in 3:9 ("Where are you?") is more an act of pursuit than an act of accusation. God is not informationally uncertain about Adam's location; He is calling Adam out of the bushes. This will be the way God deals with His wandering people for the rest of the Bible. He does not come to condemn but to seek (Ezekiel 34:11 to 16; Luke 19:10).

12. In 3:8 to 10, God comes walking in the garden. What do Adam and Eve do? Why does sin make us hide, even from the One who already knows?

13. a. Notice the pattern in 3:11 to 13. When confronted, Adam blames Eve (and God: "the woman you gave me"). Eve blames the serpent. What does this tell us about the human heart after the Fall?

b. Whom are you most prone to blame when you have sinned, God, a spouse, a parent, your circumstances, the church, or the past?

Optional Application: Is there a sin in your life right now that you have been managing by hiding and blaming rather than by confession? Take a few minutes this week to speak it honestly to God, exactly as it is. He is not surprised by it (1 John 1:8 to 9; James 5:16).

Genesis 3:15 has been called the first promise of the gospel. Inside the very same conversation in which God names the consequences of sin, He also promises a Rescuer, an offspring of the woman who will crush the serpent's head, though He Himself will be wounded in the process. Galatians 4:4 to 5 will eventually identify this offspring as the Christ, "born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law." The whole long story of redemption that the rest of the Bible tells, from the call of Abraham to the founding of the church, hangs on the promise given here, on the worst day in

human history, in a garden between three frightened sinners and the God who would not leave them in their sin.

14. a. Read Genesis 3:15. Whose offspring will crush the serpent's head?
- b. What does this verse tell us about the very first sentence God speaks after the Fall?

For Further Study: Trace the line of "the seed" through Scripture: Genesis 12:1 to 3; 22:18; 2 Samuel 7:12 to 16; Isaiah 7:14; Galatians 3:16; Galatians 4:4 to 5. How does Genesis 3:15 begin a story that ends only at the cross of Christ and the empty tomb?

15. a. Look at the consequences in 3:16 to 19. What is broken in the woman's world? What is broken in the man's? What is broken between them?
 - b. Where do you see the residue of these specific consequences in your own life or in the lives of the women around you?
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16. In 3:20, Adam, facing exile and death, names his wife "Eve, because she was the mother of all the living." That is an extraordinary act of hope in a very dark moment. What does it tell you about Adam's faith? About God's promise?

The first sacrifice in the Bible is not made by a sinner; it is made by God Himself, for sinners. The garments of skin in 3:21 require an animal's death, the very first death recorded in Scripture, in order to cover Adam and Eve's exposed shame. The pattern is sober and consistent through the rest of the Bible: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). The Old Testament sacrificial system was God's school, teaching His people for centuries that sin is serious, that it costs life, and that He Himself would one day provide the Lamb (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18 to 20). Today, the blood of Christ, shed once for all (Hebrews 10:10), covers our shame when we obey the gospel (Romans 6:3 to 4; Acts 22:16).

17. Read Genesis 3:21 and Hebrews 9:22. What does the small, tender act of clothing Adam and Eve with garments of skin foreshadow?

Optional Application: If you have never put on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27), the very story of Eve is calling to you. The first sinners were covered by God Himself, at the cost of an

innocent life. Today, the blood of Christ does the same work for those who, hearing the gospel, believe it, repent of sin, confess Christ, and are immersed into Him (Acts 2:36 to 41; Romans 6:3 to 4; 1 Peter 3:21). If you have questions, speak this week with one of the elders or the preacher.

Eve in the New Testament

The New Testament refers back to Eve in several important passages. Paul writes about her by name in 1 Timothy 2:13 to 14, grounding his instruction about the conduct of men and women in the assembly in the order and events of Genesis 2 and 3. He writes about her again in 2 Corinthians 11:3, warning the church not to be deceived as she was. Romans 5:12 to 21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21 to 22 also assume the historical reality of Adam and Eve and the fall they began, and they put alongside that first Adam the second Adam, Christ, whose obedience undoes the disobedience of the first.

Study Skill, Letting Scripture Interpret Scripture: One of the most important habits in serious Bible study is letting the clearer passages help us understand the less clear, and letting the New Testament unfold what the Old Testament begins. Genesis tells us what happened in the garden. Paul, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Timothy 3:16 to 17), tells us what that history means for the life of God's people today. When we want to know what an Old Testament passage finally teaches, the safest interpreter is always another passage of Scripture itself.

18.
 - a. Read 1 Timothy 2:8 to 15 carefully. What two reasons does Paul give for his instruction in 2:13 to 14?
 - b. Notice that Paul does not appeal to first-century culture but to the events of Genesis. What does this tell us about how the creation account continues to shape the practice of the Lord's church?
 - c. How would you respectfully explain this passage to someone who thinks it is merely a cultural rule that no longer applies?
19.
 - a. Read 2 Corinthians 11:3. How does Paul use Eve's experience to warn the Corinthian church?
 - b. What forms of "another gospel" (2 Corinthians 11:4) do we need to be on guard against today?

20. a. Read Romans 5:12 to 21 slowly. How does Paul connect Adam's sin to the human condition?
- b. How does he connect Christ's obedience to the human rescue?
- c. Why does it matter that the Bible treats Adam and Eve as real historical persons rather than as symbols?

Your response

21. Eve's story raises the question every woman eventually has to answer: Who am I, really? Will you let God define that for you, or will you let another voice (a serpent, a culture, a wound from your past) do it instead? What is one specific way you sense God inviting you to let His voice define you this week?
22. What is the single most important thing you want to take away from this lesson? Write it as one sentence. Then write one concrete step (a prayer, a decision, a conversation, a change in routine) that you will take in light of it before next week's gathering.

For the group

Warm-up. Begin this first lesson by inviting each woman to share her name and one thing she hopes to receive from these next twelve weeks together. Do not rush this. This is the moment your group becomes a group.

Discussion. Many of these questions are personal, so move slowly and gently. Pay special attention to questions 3, 10, 13, and 21. Do not try to cover every question; trust the Spirit, working through His word, to draw the group to the ones you most need to talk about. Make sure questions 14 (the first promise of the gospel) and 17 (the garments of skin) get discussed. They are the seeds of the whole story we will be tracing through these twelve weeks.

Wrap-up. Close by thanking God for making each woman in His image, for not abandoning Eve in the garden, and for the promise of the Rescuer that begins to be whispered in Genesis 3:15 and fulfilled in

the obedience and resurrection of Christ. Ask Him to use these weeks together to make each of you a little more like the Son who came to crush the serpent's head and to lift His daughters up.