

## Lesson 6: The advent of fear and selfishness

Memory Verse: There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)

At the serpent's suggestion, Eve ate the fruit, demonstrating that she believed Satan's lies and had begun to doubt God's goodness. Eve then asked Adam to eat the fruit too. Some say Adam wasn't deceived into thinking it was a good thing to eat the fruit, but he ate it anyway. The Bible doesn't tell us this, however, so we don't know. Whatever reason Adam might have had for eating the fruit, the act still demonstrated that he doubted God's goodness. So he at least partially fell for Satan's lies.

Now it's time for God to show up and deal with what has happened. We can imagine the whole universe watching to see how God will deal with such a major upset to his plans. Has Satan won part of his argument? Will God punish the disobedient?

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."  
(Genesis 3:8-10)

What did they have to be afraid of? Verse seven tells us that Adam and Eve "realized" they were naked. They didn't become that way, they only realized it. Why would they feel the need for protection? It's because they believed Satan when he said God wasn't really unselfish and didn't really love them. They couldn't count on God to protect them because he was focused on getting what he wanted. This was, of course, a lie.

But if you believe a lie it WILL make a difference in your relationships with people. In this case the lies introduced fear and selfishness. When Adam and Eve believed what Satan had insinuated they no longer trusted God to provide what they needed. They began to feel they would have to look out for themselves. Hence the fear. They were afraid of what might happen because they no longer trusted that God was good.

Fear and selfishness defeat love. They are the opposite of love so that where they set up camp love is forced to leave. Which is why our memory verse says perfect love casts out fear. In order for love to return, fear has to leave. But fear can only leave after trust has been established. This is a very important understanding for later when we begin to study God's plan for restoring humanity.

Let's read on in the story of Adam and Eve to see the results of the fear and selfishness that now filled their hearts (characters).

And he [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:11-13)

See how quickly each one acted to deflect responsibility from themselves to someone else. Adam blamed the woman, who blamed the serpent. Adam explicitly brings God into his field of blame by saying that God put the woman in the garden with him. People try to avoid blame so they can avoid punishment. Again, as our verse says, fear has to do with punishment.

Of course, if Adam and Eve had done nothing wrong they wouldn't have had to worry about punishment. But once they believed Satan's lies about God they believed that he would punish them for their misdeed. So now they were afraid, which led them to further violate God's law of love. Thus sin became a vicious cycle which perpetuated itself to their harm.

Some Bible scholars think what God says in response to this is a list of punishments he imposed because they had violated his rules. But that would have made the situation even worse. What we're about to read is a warning about the kind of world that would result from their choices.

So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,  
Cursed are you above all livestock  
and all the wild animals!  
You will crawl on your belly  
and you will eat dust  
all the days of your life.  
And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
He will crush your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

To the woman he said,  
“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;  
with pain you will give birth to children.  
Your desire will be for your husband,  
and he will rule over you.”

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'  
Cursed is the ground because of you;  
through painful toil you will eat of it  
all the days of your life.  
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.  
By the sweat of your brow  
you will eat your food  
until you return to the ground,  
since from it you were taken;  
for dust you are  
and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3:14-19)

The new humans would not be the only ones infected with fear and selfishness. All living things on the planet would be affected. They would begin to look out for themselves. They would develop characteristics to protect themselves. Plants would develop thorns. Weeds would develop strength and

resistance to the things humans would use to get rid of them, while the food plants they cultivated would not need such strength.

Animals, too, would start to fight for resources. They would develop destructive capabilities and some would eventually kill and eat other animals. The entire world would become a less pleasant place. In order for a human child to survive in this rougher environment it would have to become larger in the womb. Thus it would be too big to pass out easily, making childbirth a very painful ordeal.

Ultimately, the world Adam and Eve had “created” for themselves would be a world where the strong survived and the weak perished. Because the man was larger and physically stronger he would rule over the woman.

None of these outcomes were what God wanted. But they were the natural result of the choice the humans had made to believe Satan's lies and get caught in fear and selfishness. So out of love for them he warned them what was about to happen.

Possible thought papers:

1. Genesis 3:1 does not say the serpent was more crafty than any of the OTHER wild animals the LORD God had made. Discuss what this might mean.
2. Were you ever tempted to lie to avoid punishment? Might your response have been different if there were no threat of punishment? Why or why not?
3. In order to recover from fear and selfishness the humans would need to trust. Who could they trust? How could that person earn their trust?