

THE STORY

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

Chapter 1: Creation: The Beginning of Life as We Know It

Key Question: What was lost in the Garden of Eden, and why? Is there hope of getting it back?

Creation

Pages 1–4

“In the beginning.” That’s where our story begins: the beginning—genesis—of creation.

1. (a) Who created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)? (b) What rights do creators have over their creations?
2. For what purpose were humans created (Genesis 1:26)?
3. What was the status of all creation when God finished creating (Genesis 1:31)?

God made Adam¹ from the dust of the earth and placed him in the Garden of Eden. There God formed woman from man. Initially Adam called her *woman*; later he would name her Eve.

4. (a) What command did God give (Genesis 2:16–17)? (b) What would happen if Adam disobeyed? (c) Why do you think God gave Adam free will?

¹ *Adam* is Hebrew for *man*.

5. (a) What two things did Adam and Eve not have (Genesis 2:25)? (b) Why did they feel no shame?

Adam and Eve

Pages 4–5

Satan in the form of a serpent² spoke to Eve.

6. (a) How did the serpent's representation of God's command differ from God's actual command (compare Genesis 2:16–17 with Genesis 3:1)? (b) How does emphasizing what is denied rather than what is freely given affect contentment and gratefulness? (c) How can such an emphasis affect our relationship with God? (d) What can we do to combat this?
7. (a) In what way did the serpent say God had lied (Genesis 3:4)? (b) What did the serpent say was God's true motivation for denying the fruit (3:5)? (c) Why is it important to remember God's intentions for us are good when we're tempted to disobey his commands?

Eve had a choice: she could believe God or she could believe the serpent. God had never given her reason to doubt his character or his word, but now the serpent told her God was keeping something good from her. The desire to be like God, to be his equal even, enticed her, and she chose to believe the serpent.

8. How was Eve's rebellion against God similar to teenage rebellion against parents?

² Revelation 12:9.

She reached out her hand, took of the fruit, and gave some to her husband. Their eyes opened and those who had never known shame felt its deathly pall and knew Eve had chosen wrongly. They knew too that they were naked, for the ashamed dread nakedness.

9. (a) Adam and Eve tried to cover up their shame with fig leaves.³ What are ways we try to cover up shame? (b) When they heard God coming, they hid behind trees.⁴ What are ways people hide from God when they feel ashamed? (c) When God asked Adam where he was, what did Adam reply (Genesis 3:10)?

God had seen Adam naked before. Adam's great fear was that God would find out about the fruit, not his nakedness.

God asked Adam if he had eaten the forbidden fruit. God knew the answer, but gave Adam a chance to confess.

10. (a) What two beings did Adam blame for his transgression (Genesis 3:12)? (b) Whom did Eve blame (Genesis 3:13)? (c) Does blaming others remove guilt? Why or why not? (d) Eve's response was an appeal to pity: "I'm a victim, so it's not really my fault." What are other ways people appeal to pity to escape responsibility for wrongdoing?

The Judgment

Pages 5–7

God judged the three beings, but in the judgment gave hope to the man and woman.

11. (a) What would the serpent do to a descendant of Eve's (Genesis 3:15)? (b) What would Eve's descendant do to the serpent (3:15)?

³ Genesis 3:7.

⁴ Genesis 3:8.

God cursed the serpent, but not the man and woman.⁵ Instead, God promised a Serpent Crusher would one day come. The serpent would bruise his heel, but Eve’s offspring—her “seed”⁶—would deal him a mortal blow.

Within Eve’s judgment of painful childbirth lived the hope of bearing children. Within Adam’s judgment of painful toil remained the hope of producing life-sustaining food. Though they would die, the human race would continue.

God cursed the ground too: it would bear thorns and thistles and was bound to decay.⁷ The earth would pass away.⁸

12. Are there any natural evils—mold, cancer, tsunamis, etc.—that could not have resulted from God cursing the ground?⁹

Hearing God’s judgment combined with hope, Adam with faith now “named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all living.”¹⁰ In compassion, God clothed Adam and Eve, covering their shame and protecting them from the elements.

13. (a) What would humans now know (Genesis 3:22)? (b) Why did God banish them from the Garden of Eden (3:22–24)? (c) Why wouldn’t God want creatures that had chosen to rebel to be able to live forever? (d) What hope did God give in letting us know a tree of life exists?

⁵ Not all divine penalties are curses. Adam and Eve did not lose God’s entire blessing, and their penalty contained hope of future blessing.

⁶ The Hebrew word translated *offspring* means “seed.” In the Bible, offspring are often called seeds.

⁷ Genesis 3:17–19; Romans 8:21.

⁸ Luke 21:33; 1 John 2:17.

⁹ See also Isaiah 24:4–6.

¹⁰ Genesis 3:20. *Eve* sounds like the Hebrew word for *living*.

By taking of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam plunged humankind into knowing evil, but also into knowing good.

14. (a) Give an example from history in which great good became known in the face of great evil.
(b) Without naming names, give an example in which an experience with a person who lacked a virtue caused you to better understand the virtue and appreciate it in others. (c) How does knowing evil enhance our knowledge and appreciation of good?

In the face of evil, such goods as self-sacrifice, courage, grace, and mercy are made evident. None of these are humanly possible without the risk of personal loss or harm. The greater the loss or harm, the more heroic is the virtue that counters it.

Eve's Offspring

Pages 7–9

Eve bore children, and the earth bore food. Her first children, Cain and Abel, brought offerings to the Lord. The Lord accepted Abel's offering, but not Cain's.¹¹

15. (a) How did Cain respond to God's disapproval (Genesis 4:5)? (b) How do God's three questions indicate Cain knew what was right to do and therefore had no valid reason for anger (4:6–7)?
(c) What did God warn Cain he must do (4:7)? (d) List some temptations that accompany jealousy. (e) What are things we can do to help us master sin?

¹¹ We're not told what was wrong with Cain's offering. That Abel brought "some of the firstborn" while Cain brought "some of the fruits"—not some of the firstfruits—suggests Cain may have brought leftovers. The heart attitude counts most in offerings. Hebrews 11:4 tells us Abel gave his offering in faith, unlike Cain. (See Exodus 23:19a on the later firstfruits offerings.)

Cain didn't heed the Lord's warning. Instead, he gave in to sin and killed his brother. God cursed Cain and drove him from his presence,¹² and Adam and Eve knew evil.

Time passed. Adam and Eve bore more children and eventually died. In those days, people lived nearly 1,000 years. As people increased, so did violence.

16. (a) What did the Lord see when he looked into people's hearts (Genesis 6:5)? (b) With what did this heart condition fill the earth (6:11)? (c) Was creation's status still "very good"? Why or why not? (d) Think of a violent, corrupt ruler from history. What would be different if that person could live 1,000 years? (e) What do you think it was like to live during that time?

Among all the evil people of the time, a righteous man stood out: Noah. God told Noah to build an ark to save himself, his family, and animals from coming floodwaters.

The Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years."¹³ Though this passage may mean that God gave Noah 120 years to build the ark, there's another meaning: after the flood, God shortened people's lives, thus limiting the evil any one person could commit, as well as limiting the evil any one person had to endure.

The Flood

Pages 9–12

Rain fell for forty days. Only those in the ark survived. They stayed in the ark until the waters receded, just over a year.¹⁴

The Lord brought Noah's family out of the ark and warned them not to return to violence, for he would demand an accounting for bloodshed.¹⁵

¹² Genesis 4:11–16.

¹³ Genesis 6:3.

¹⁴ Compare Genesis 7:11 with 8:13.

¹⁵ Genesis 9:5–6.

17. (a) What covenant did God make with earth's creatures (Genesis 9:12–16)? (b) What was the sign of the covenant? (c) How was the flood meant for humankind's ultimate good? (d) How did the rainbow reflect God's good intentions for humankind?

God blessed Noah's family and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."¹⁶ The blessing was similar to that which God gave to their first parents, Adam and Eve, but it left out something: ruling the earth. For when Adam and Eve obeyed Satan rather than God, they lost their reign to him.¹⁷

And yet there remained elements of hope. The rainbow gave hope of life and told of God's love and his desire for people to live kindly together. That God did not destroy the tree of life, but merely barred the way to it, gave hope that one day the way to it might be opened. The promise of a Serpent Crusher gave hope that the serpent's rule would end. That Adam and Eve through pain could bear and sustain life gave hope that the Serpent Crusher's bruised heel might be life-giving too.

The story has just begun. Next week we meet the family through which the seed of the Serpent Crusher will be traced.

¹⁶ Genesis 9:1.

¹⁷ Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world (John 14:30). See also Ephesians 2:22.

Bible Outline

Old Testament

Five Books of Moses

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Histories

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

Books of Wisdom

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs

Prophetic

Major Prophets
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

Twelve Minor Prophets

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

New Testament

Four Gospels

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

History

Acts

Letters

Letters of Paul
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

General Letters

Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude

Prophetic

Revelation