

Week 1

EVE: “AND BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD”

“And behold, it was very good.” With these simple words God repeated and summarized His feelings of complete satisfaction about the products of His creation. God was happy with what He had brought into being.

You are probably familiar with the biblical account of creation as told in Genesis 1. (If not, please read it.) God had created life and everything that was needed to sustain life; then He created man to be the master of all living things.

In Plato’s *Symposium* is found an interesting myth that tells of original humans who were round, with four arms, four legs, and two heads. They disobeyed their gods, and in punishment, the gods divided them, leaving frustrated, doomed people who spent their lives in search of their other halves, content only when complete.

The biblical account of creation also points out that man was incomplete without woman, but also includes that God forethought the potential beauty of the “one-flesh” union of mind, spirit, and body (Gen. 2:24), to be unsurpassed by any other earthly relationship. The second chapter of Genesis vividly describes the initial beginnings of that sacred union.

In chapter 3 we discover the concept of authority, and that God has intended it as a protective covering in our lives.¹ When we disregard the warnings of authorities, we lose out: “The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves” (Rom. 13:1-2, NIV). And that’s exactly what happened in the story of Adam and Eve, the “couple who had everything.”

O. T. PASSAGE THIS WEEK: Genesis 2:8—3:7

SPECIAL PRAYER NEEDS THIS WEEK:

ANSWERS TO PRAYER THIS WEEK:

1—Monday

IT ISN'T GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE

I have created him for my glory (Isa. 43:7, KJV). I will make him an helpmeet for him (a helper suitable for him, NIV)(Gen. 2:18, KJV). Read Genesis 2:18-25.

*"Wow!" Adam yelled when he woke up.
"If this is Woman, she's worth waiting for!"
My eyes met his, and we both knew
That You had made us 'specially for each other.
You had shaped me from his rib,
Breathed life within,
Then placed me by his side.
How good the fresh air felt!
I looked about me gratefully—
God's world was good!
And Adam needed me. . .Adam, my love.*

—Eve

Woman—taken from an inner sanctum right next to man's heart, designed by her Creator to fill the spot left empty by the missing rib. Adam enjoyed the presence of God Himself, but still something was missing from his life—woman!

Someone has said that "woman was taken not from man's head to rule over him, nor from his feet to be trampled upon, but from his side, under his arm, to be protected, and closest to his heart, to be loved." It follows that since woman was formed from man's side, she was planned to be a help to him; he, in turn, owes her "the full protection and devoted shielding of his arm. The two beings make up the completed whole, the crown of creation."²

Father, I want to learn about Your plans for my life. I want what *You* want for me, whatever it is, whatever it takes. Thank You, Father, for the special place in life You have given me.

BLOOM WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED!

1—Tuesday

YOU MUST NOT EAT FROM ONE TREE

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. . . (1 John 5:3, NIV). Read Genesis 2:8-17.

*The Garden You had given us to live in, love, explore,
Provided constant pleasure.
Such perfect beauty—and at our command!
We shared it with the animals, our delightful friends;
How we enjoyed them!
Each night of restful sleep prepared us for another day
Of further sampling Your provision for our needs.
In all the Garden there was only one tree banned.

Obedience to You was our protection from the evil one.
As long as I obeyed Your rules
Your love umbrella sheltered me.
There was no fear of harm;
Your love casts out all fear.
Obedience and trust go hand in hand.*

—Eve

Imagine yourself as a child going out into a heavy rain-storm—but you aren't getting wet because your father is beside you, holding a large umbrella directly over your head. You feel safe and warm and protected. But what happens if you dart out from under the umbrella to investigate the intensity of the storm? You get wet, drenched, soaked to the bone—and the next morning you wake up with a sore throat. Your father had told you to stay under the umbrella. Was his command unreasonable? But did you realize that at the time?

Father, thank You for Your love. Help me to learn from Eve's story that Your laws are not restrictions on my freedom, but safeguards for my protection. Help me to search out Your rules of life for me in Your Word, and please help me to obey the ones I already know, especially this one: _____ .

AN UMBRELLA CAN PROTECT YOU ONLY IF YOU STAY UNDER IT!

1—Wednesday

IS THAT REALLY WHAT GOD SAID?

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man (1 Cor. 10:13, NIV). Read Genesis 3:1-3, 6.

*“Did God really say that?
You must not eat from any tree?
Perhaps you heard Him wrong,
Misunderstood His meaning.”
The serpent’s words penetrated,
Confused my mind, beguiled my thoughts.
What had God really said?
Surely His rules were flexible.
This situation is different.
God will understand.*

—Eve

Wait a minute! What’s happening here? God had told Adam very definitely, “You *must not* eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17, NIV). Obviously Eve was aware of the rules—yet here she is, questioning the meaning of God’s words. Why? Because she had listened to the serpent, and now she wanted that luscious-looking piece of fruit, wanted it more than anything in the world. Why? Because it was the one thing in the world she couldn’t have!

“The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” isn’t true only for cows! Isn’t it just as true of us women? Had Eve realized the extent of the serpent’s persuasive powers, she might not have been silly enough to discuss God’s rules with him. Once he had drawn her into a discussion, her resistance crumbled and she could think only of how delicious that forbidden fruit would taste.

Father, thank You for this lesson on the danger of listening to Satan’s arguments. I realize that he’s too powerful for me to fight on my own. Thank you that You have promised that You will not allow me to be tempted beyond what I can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

HOLDING A CONFERENCE WITH THE DEVIL IS ALWAYS DANGEROUS!

WHEN YOU EAT YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED

You said in your heart. . . 'I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the grave (Isa. 14:13-15, NIV). Read Genesis 3:4-6.

*"Like gods," he said, "You'll be like gods!"
And suddenly a strange desire
Became an overpowering urge.
I'd never felt this way before in my young life.
It frightened me, this strange new urge,
Yet fascinated, drew me on.
I wanted to be powerful, to be like God.
I wanted to control my life—and Adam's too.*

—Eve

It's so easy to succumb to that contagious desire for importance, for power, for significance in life. Lawrence Crabb points out that "true significance depends upon understanding who I am in Christ. I will come to feel significant as I have an eternal impact on people around me by ministering to them."³ What does it mean to minister to people? Isn't that the pastor's job?

Jesus said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45, NIV).

Father, if I'm honest, I don't like to serve others, at least not some people. I don't have a servant's spirit—but I'm beginning to realize that You want me to have one, just as You did when You were here on Planet Earth. My spirit is proud, Father, but I'm willing to be humbled. Help me especially in this area: _____

and with this person: _____ .

"TRUE SIGNIFICANCE DEPENDS UPON UNDERSTANDING WHO I AM IN CHRIST!"

1—*Friday*

THE POWER OF A WOMAN!

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her. . . . She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life (Prov. 31:10-12, NIV). Read Genesis 3:6-7.

*I couldn't be content to disobey alone.
My guilt cried out in panic
To share its burden.
And so, my Adam, I spoke softly, sweetly,
Of how delicious was the taste
Of the forbidden fruit.
Sly Satan couldn't have won without my help.
Debate or logic couldn't have changed your mind,
But so persuasive was my touch
You yielded quietly, without a fight.*

—*Eve*

“The woman saw. . .took. . .ate. . .gave” (Gen. 3:6, NIV). The action verbs tell the story vividly to us, the understanding readers. We can understand Eve because we too experience self-deception when we rationalize that what we want is good for us.

And there's something else to consider. Make a mental list of the men in your life: husband, father, brothers, nephews, friends, men you work with, neighbors. Now try to visualize what effect *your* life has on them. (You might be surprised at how closely they watch you!) When they spend time with you, are they aware that you're a Christian? Does your influence make them want to draw closer to the Lord? Or do you “turn them off” on spiritual things? What do they think when they look at you?

Father, help me to be concerned more about inner beauty than outward beauty. Help me to have a positive influence on the men and other women around me, as I encourage them to think about things that are true and pure (Phil. 4:8).

HOW DO YOU INFLUENCE OTHER PEOPLE—FOR RIGHT OR FOR WRONG?

1—Saturday

FREEDOM OF CHOICE!

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve (Josh. 24:15, NIV). Read Psalm 119:105-112.

*The choice was ours!
Adam and I did not hang from strings,
Manipulated by a giant hand.
We had a choice!
And when we chose to disobey,
Reject love's kind umbrella,
You let us walk away from You
Into the storms of life,
Although Your heart was sorely grieved.
You knew our future well—
If only we had known!*

—Eve

If you've experienced the hurt that results when your child or a friend rejects your love and concern and goes stubbornly on his way, a path that will lead to certain problems—drugs, immorality, a clash with the law—then you understand a little of what God must have felt when Adam and Eve disobeyed His clear command, then hid from Him in guilt and shame. And how we must grieve Him when we disobey His guidelines for our lives and ignore His presence!

Am I able to say, along with the psalmist, "I have chosen your precepts. . . your law is my delight" (Ps. 119:173-174, NIV)? David says further that he is sustained or given support by God's laws. God's "love letter" to us is designed for our nourishment and protection!

Father, thank You for the guidelines You have provided in Your Word. Help me to spend time in Your Word on a regular, daily basis, so that it becomes alive in my life. Help me, too, to share it with others, especially _____

GOD GIVES YOU FREEDOM OF CHOICE!

Week 2

EVE: OUT FROM UNDER THE UMBRELLA

Nancy Tischler writes: “Perhaps. . . adventuresomeness of the mind is simply a natural part of woman’s equipment. While man may venture physically across the sea or engage in battle, woman’s biology usually traps her into a more limited physical sphere with less vigorous activity. Therefore, she may well compensate by being mentally adventurous, seeking her excitement in danger and in change, even though she may thereby jeopardize her safety and peace of mind. . . . We will gamble Eden for excitement.”¹

Disobedience to God’s rules can look *so* exciting! It certainly did to Eve. The choice she—and later, Adam—made is the prime example of the paradoxical nature of human freedom. Our freedom to choose our own way leads to enslavement by our own desires and a loss of the greater freedom to follow God’s will.

Until we learn to give our will back to God, we can never know the joy of true freedom. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36, KJV).

The story of the Fall also points out that sin can never be a completely independent act. “Sin is like a spiderweb; touch it and watch with wonder as the sticky threads lead outward in all directions.”² Yet sin is also lonely; even a sin shared with someone else eventually drives a wedge between the partners, as we see in Adam and Eve’s relationship.

God is good—but He is also just. His divine system of judgment required punishment: dual punishment for dual sins. Man was given a kind of “travail” just as woman was; what each had formerly enjoyed now became painful. Adam’s new enmity with nature made his work a curse

O. T. PASSAGE THIS WEEK: Genesis 3:8—4:1

SPECIAL PRAYER NEEDS THIS WEEK:

ANSWERS TO PRAYER THIS WEEK:

2 — *Monday*

HIDING IN THE TREES

*After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin (James 1:15, NIV).
Read Genesis 3:8-13.*

*How terrible—the sudden realization of our wrong!
“Who told you you were naked?” God had asked,
When fig leaves failed to cover guilt and shame.
He knew, of course, that we had disobeyed.*

*My Adam failed to take responsibility
For what we had done—
He blamed it all on me.
I passed the buck and blamed the serpent.
“The devil made me do it!”
I begged for leniency.
I could not face the blame for sin.*

—*Eve*

Almost as soon as a child learns to talk he learns to blame others for the problems in his life. “I didn’t do it, Mommy—it’s all his fault!” or “He made me do it!” are familiar words in any home with children.

Bill Gothard says: “It is our natural inclination to find other people or circumstances which are to blame for what we have done in order to justify or excuse our offenses. The greater our guilt, the more we must blame. The resulting bitterness and guilt are devastating to our mental and emotional balance.”³

Father, I need to learn to take full responsibility for my actions. Help me to realize the effect my environment has on me in the sense that I learn to run from temptation, but correct me when I blame people or things other than myself for my sin.

“THE GREATER OUR GUILT, THE MORE WE MUST BLAME!”

2—*Tuesday*

YOU'LL EAT DUST ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE

He [Jesus] replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven' (Luke 10:18, NIV). The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet (Rom. 16:20, NIV). Read Genesis 3:14-15.

*Then God turned to the snake in wrath.
"This is your punishment," God said:
"From all inhabitants of the earth
You are singled out!
You sly and crafty one, you are cursed!
You will crawl upon your belly evermore
And be the enemy of the one you tricked.
And as you grovel daily in the dust,
Remember that the future brings a day
When a descendant of the woman Eve
Will bruise your head,
And you will bruise His heel."*

—*Eve*

Since Satan fell, he's been super-busy. His major goal? To build his kingdom. In order for his kingdom to grow, he needs to include as many people as possible. That means you and I are prime candidates for what, on the surface, appear to be very attractive, top-notch positions. What "apple" is he dangling in front of your nose right now? Beware of the lures Satan uses—in a short time apples rot.

Father, help me to be aware of the way in which Satan strikes for my weakest spot, my "Achilles heel." Help me to remember that he is too powerful for me to argue with on my own. Help me to turn my back on him and walk away after I have rebuked him in Your name. Thank You for the assurance You have given us that You will crush Satan under Your feet.
EVEN BEAUTIFUL APPLES ROT IN A SHORT TIME!

2 — *Wednesday*

YOUR LIFE WILL CHANGE

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21, NIV).
Read Genesis 3:16.

*Then God spoke softly, sadness in His eyes:
“Dear Eve, my child, why didn’t you obey?
Your needs were met, but greedy hands
Reached out for more—yes, always more!
So now all is changed, and pain invades your life.
Your children will be born in labor so intense
Your body will be wracked with pain,
And pain will follow them, and strife.
Yet even so, you’ll welcome Adam’s touch,
No longer as a child with some new toy
But as a wife who knows her husband’s call.
You couldn’t be held accountable for equal power,
So now, my child, submit to Adam’s leadership.”*

—Eve

Howard Hendricks writes: “Submission is not the exclusive responsibility of the woman. Submission is the life style of the Christian. . . . The question is, are you willing to submit yourself. . . to the Lord’s plan for your functioning in marital relationship?”⁴

Father, teach me the true meaning of submission. Thank You for Your patience with me—submission is a difficult lesson to learn. I need the “unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4, NIV), and it’s so hard to achieve that in today’s world. I can’t achieve it on my own, Father—it must be a gift from You. But thank You for the knowledge that You’re in control just as much today as You were yesterday. Please help me today in this area of submission: _____ .
“SUBMISSION IS THE LIFE STYLE OF THE CHRISTIAN.”

TO DUST YOU WILL RETURN

He . . . must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need (Eph. 4:28, NIV). Read Genesis 3:17-19.

*I cringed as God stared Adam down.
My husband seemed to shrink as God's voice spoke:
"I have cursed the ground because you disobeyed.
What once was fertile must be coaxed to bear
The fruit that yesterday fell thickly to the ground,
But thorns and thistles are in great supply.
You will eat your food while trying to relax
From each day's tiring, sweaty work.
O, Adam, my creation, from the ground you came
And to the same ground you will return."*

—Eve

Work must have seemed unbearable those first few days to Adam and Eve, compared with their former schedule of pleasure and fellowship with God. The cruel thistles must have torn their uncalloused hands and feet, and their bodies must have ached by the end of each day.

But as those bodies toughened and responded to their new responsibilities, I believe their souls responded in a new way to their Creator. Just as we begin to appreciate how much our parents have done for us when we ourselves become parents, so Adam and Eve began to realize more and more what they had originally taken for granted—God's untiring love and concern for His children.

Thank You, Lord, that because You love me, You chasten me. Thank You for the lessons I have learned through chastening. Help me not to repeat the same mistakes, but to profit by them. Looking back over the past, I can remember a chastening experience, and I thank You for it now: _____ .
THE LORD DISCIPLINES THOSE HE LOVES!

BANISHED FROM THE GARDEN!

*For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. . .
Cast me not away from thy presence. . . (Ps. 51:3, 11, KJV). Read Genesis
3:21-24.*

*Then in great kindness our God covered us
With garments that we didn't know how to make,
And though He banished us, His love
Reached out anew in His great plan
To draw two sinning humans to Himself—
And many more who would follow through the years.
He could not take a chance that we who sinned
Might disobey His laws a second time,
And having eaten of the Tree of Life,
Live on eternally in pain and strife.
As always, He was thinking of our good.*

—Eve

If you have ever been separated for an extended time from someone you loved, you can verify the truth of the old saying: "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." You may take someone's presence for granted before a separation, but how you recognize that person's importance to you while he or she is gone!

And so Adam and Eve, who had been created with a void that could be filled only through fellowship with their Creator, must have realized in a new way their need of Him as they left the warm shelter of their garden home.

Father, I thank You so much for the security of Your love—a love from which nothing can separate me (Rom. 8:38-39). I am so totally dependent on You for life and everything that is important in it. I have been holding back this one little portion of my life, Lord, just one little corner, but here it is today: _____ .

**WE ARE CREATED WITH A VOID THAT CAN BE FILLED
ONLY BY FELLOWSHIP WITH OUR CREATOR.**

2—*Saturday*

TO WORK THE GROUND FROM WHICH HE HAD BEEN TAKEN

Man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening (Ps. 104:23, NIV). Read Genesis 3:20; 4:1.

*How life changed! My lust for power
Produced a servant's life instead.
God's words were true, and life was hard—
And yet our work had its rewards;
To see the earth responding to our care,
To see it bringing forth increase at last.*

*My body was responding, too, to life within.
Our first child was already on its way—
A first for mankind!
I had no one to tell me what to do, how to prepare,
What to expect in this child's birth,
Except the words of God: "There will be pain."
What did He mean? What kind of pain?*

—*Eve*

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be Eve at this point in her life? No doctors, no hospitals—not even a midwife or another woman! Every day of her pregnancy was a brand-new experience. During these months of new discoveries Eve must have realized anew her dependence on the Creator who had breathed life into the bodies of her husband and herself—and now into their child.

Father, I thank You for the miracle of new life. Thank You for the children in my life—my own, my nieces and nephews, my neighbors. Children were precious to You, Lord, when You were here on earth. Help me to realize their potential and to be patient with them, especially in these formative years. Help me especially, Father, to show love to this child: _____

CHILDREN ARE THE RAW MATERIALS OF THE FUTURE!