Human Rebellion

SESSION 3

Summary and Goal

In this session, we will look at humanity’s “fall into sin.” We will see that our rebellion against God begins by distrusting the goodness of His Word. Sin ruptures our relationship with God and with others and then leads to devastating consequences in the world around us. Only God can save us from our sin and its consequences and empower us to battle sin as we live in His kingdom.

Main Passage
Genesis 3:1-24

Session Outline
1. Human rebellion leads us to distrust the goodness of God’s Word (Gen. 3:1-7).
2. Human rebellion ruptures our relationships with God and others (Gen. 3:8-16).

Theological Theme
Sin ruptures our relationships with God, others, and the world.

Christ Connection
Jesus is the Son of Eve who will crush the head of the serpent.

Missional Application
God calls us to trust His Word and fight against sin in all its forms and effects as we live on mission for His kingdom.
Introduction
Recap the previous sessions on God’s creative work (leader p. 34). Then recall God’s one prohibition not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this, God demonstrated His desire for human beings to trust His heart and obey His Word (leader p. 34; personal study guide [PSG] p. 26).

When was the last time you wrestled with obeying a certain rule at work, school, or in the community, and why?

What motivated your final obedience or disobedience?

Summarize this session on humanity’s “fall into sin” (leader p. 34; PSG p. 27).

1. Human rebellion leads us to distrust the goodness of God’s Word (Gen. 3:1-7).
Identify the heart of human sinfulness—distrust of the goodness of God and His Word; then ask a volunteer to read Genesis 3:1-7. Show how the serpent introduced doubt about and twisted God’s word, thus magnifying the one prohibition and ignoring all the freedom (leader p. 35; PSG p. 27).

Have you ever heard a whining child say to a parent, “You never give me anything!”? In what ways might this statement reflect the serpent’s line of attack in the garden of Eden?

What happens when we see God more in light of His prohibitions than the freedom He offers?

Illustrate from the passage, with the serpent’s outright lie, how sin begins with doubting God’s goodness and ends up with denying God’s Word (leader p. 36; PSG p. 28). Share some examples of what this might look like in our hearts; invite group members to share some of their own examples (leader p. 36). Identify Adam and Eve’s sin as a rebellion against their infinitely wise and loving Creator (leader p. 36; PSG p. 28).

Are you more likely to see your sin as a mistake and a failure or as an act of rebellion? What is the difference and how does it impact our perspective?
2. Human rebellion ruptures our relationships with God and others (Gen. 3:8-16).

Read Genesis 3:8-16. Distinguish between the no-shame vs. ruptured relationship Adam and Eve had with God before and after their sin. Explain why we now hide from God and each other as a result of sin (leader pp. 36-37; PSG pp. 29-30).

- What are signs that our relationship with God has been broken?
- What are some ways we hide from God, things we invent to cover our sense of shame?

Use Adam’s two statements about Eve (before and after sin) to show how our relationships with others are also shattered by sin. Emphasize the glimmer of hope in God’s judgment of this sin—the protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15). A Son of Eve—Jesus—will one day crush the serpent’s head and eradicate all evil (leader p. 38; PSG p. 30). **Draw attention to Pack Item 2: Jesus in Genesis to help group members begin looking for ways that God is already foreshadowing the coming of Christ to defeat sin.**


Read Genesis 3:17-24. Show how the curse of the fall impacts our original calling in the world and leads to death, but God still shows mercy in providing animal skins to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness (leader pp. 39-40; PSG pp. 31-32).

- When have you felt like the world was in some sense “against you”? What makes work particularly toilsome for you?

Show how Romans 1:21-23 illustrates the reversal of God’s intention as a result of our sin (leader p. 40). Provide group members with the following to fill in the chart in the PSG: God ruling over Man ruling over Creation; Creation ruling over Man ruling over God (leader p. 40; PSG p. 32).

Explain that sin dehumanizes us and mocks the glory of our God, but Jesus frees us from the bondage of sin to fight against it and to witness to this One who will restore this broken world (leader pp. 40-41; PSG p. 33).

- How has sin affected the different spheres of society: family, government, church, the environment?
- How can we as Christians battle the effects of sin in these spheres?

**Conclusion**

Clarify how Jesus is the answer to humanity’s fall into sin (leader p. 41; PSG p. 33). **Apply the truths of this session with “His Mission, Your Mission” (PSG p. 34).**

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**Point 2 Option**

Ask group members, for one minute, to list in their PSG as many ways as possible that we can see the rupture of human relationships in our world (leader p. 38; PSG p. 31). Then ask them in groups of 2-3 to share their responses and to answer the following question: How does the gospel provide an answer for these realities? Conclude with a moment for groups to share their responses.

If you don’t use this option in the group meeting, encourage group members to think through the activity on their own time.

**Christ Connection:** Jesus is the Son of Eve who will crush the head of the serpent.

**Misional Application:** God calls us to trust His Word and fight against sin in all its forms and effects as we live on mission for His kingdom.
Introduction

In the previous sessions, we learned that God created the world, and He created human beings, both male and female, in His image. As a Father providing good things for His children, God gave Adam and Eve a good world to take care of and to enjoy. Everything He made—sun, moon, stars, trees and their fruit, sea creatures and birds and land animals—all of it was good and all of it was for them. More importantly, God gave Himself to the first people in relationship and fellowship. In the garden of Eden, God gave only one prohibition: “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” There’s no further explanation, just a brief warning of the personal consequences of disobeying.

God could have said: “You will lead yourselves and the entire human race into banishment from Me and into death. There will be suffering, chaos, oppression, and wars. Your children will murder each other and watch their parents die of disease.” Had God given them this amount of detail, perhaps they would have chosen differently. But would they have been obeying from a heart of trust toward God? Perhaps God was teaching Adam and Eve something by not going into great detail. He wanted their obedience to be rooted not in weighing risks or in their wisdom and logic but in childlike faith in His fatherly love toward them.

The same is true for us today. God wants us to trust His heart. He wants us to trust the goodness of His Word.

When was the last time you wrestled with obeying a certain rule at work, school, or in the community, and why?

What motivated your final obedience or disobedience?

Session Summary

In this session, we will look at humanity’s “fall into sin.” We will see that our rebellion against God begins by distrusting the goodness of His Word. Sin ruptures our relationship with God and with others and then leads to devastating consequences in the world around us. Only God can save us from our sin and its consequences and empower us to battle sin as we live in His kingdom.
1. Human rebellion leads us to distrust the goodness of God’s Word (Gen. 3:1-7).

Distrust of the goodness of God and His Word—this is at the heart of human sinfulness, so it’s no surprise that Satan (disguised as a serpent) chose this line of temptation in the garden of Eden. Let’s read:

1 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden’?”

2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. 3 But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’”

4 “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

The passage begins with a comment about the serpent’s cunning nature and craftiness. When you encounter a crafty person, you don’t merely consider what the person is saying; you also consider the intentions.

The serpent began by introducing doubt: “Did God really say…?” He was not denying what God had said, of course, but he was making God’s word up for debate. “Are you serious? Did He really, truly say that to you?”

Notice also how the serpent twisted God’s word. God told Adam and Eve that they could eat from any tree in the garden except one, but the serpent changed the prohibition: “So God told you not to eat from any tree?” In other words, “If God is withholding anything from you, He must be withholding everything from you.” The serpent magnified the one prohibition and ignored all the freedom.

Have you ever heard a whining child say to a parent, “You never give me anything!”? In what ways might this statement reflect the serpent’s line of attack in the garden of Eden?

What happens when we see God more in light of His prohibitions than the freedom He offers?

Further Commentary

“Sin lives in a costume; that’s why it’s so hard to recognize. The fact that sin looks so good is one of the things that make it so bad. In order for it to do its evil work, it must present itself as something that is anything but evil. Life in a fallen world is like attending the ultimate masquerade party. Impatient yelling wears the costume of a zeal for truth. Lust can masquerade as a love for beauty. Gossip does its evil work by living in the costume of concern and prayer. Craving for power and control wears the mask of biblical leadership. Fear of man gets dressed up as a servant heart. The pride of always being right masquerades as a love for biblical wisdom. Evil simply doesn’t present itself as evil, which is part of its draw. You’ll never understand sin’s sleight of hand until you acknowledge that the DNA of sin is deception. Now, what this means personally is that as sinners we are all very committed and gifted self-swindlers…We’re all too skilled at looking at our own wrong and seeing good.”

–Paul David Tripp
The serpent didn’t attack first with a statement but with a question. His goal was to lead Adam and Eve to doubt God’s goodness. Next, however, he followed up with an outright lie: “You will not surely die.” Sin begins with doubting God’s goodness and ends with denying God’s Word.

This distrust and denial of God’s Word is the same lie that slithers into our hearts today. It’s what leads us to dismiss the prohibitions of and commands of God’s Word as if they were optional, as if they were from a tyrannical deity, as if they were impossible.

• “I know the Bible says I should fight for my marriage and not get a divorce, but did God really say…?”
• “I know the Bible says I should forgive and not seek revenge, but did God really mean…?”
• “I know the Bible says I should be generous and give cheerfully, but surely God wouldn’t want me to go without…”

At the heart of temptation is the lie that we cannot trust the goodness of God or the reliability of His Word. The serpent wanted Adam and Eve to think they were missing out, that God was withholding happiness from them. And so Eve took the fruit, and Adam followed.

This was a simple act of disobedience that carried with it unimaginable consequences. What happened in the garden was not merely a mistake. It was a rebellion. It was deception that led to defiance as human beings looked at their infinitely wise and loving Creator and said, “You are not good.”

Are you more likely to see your sin as a mistake and a failure or as an act of rebellion? What is the difference and how does it impact our perspective?

2. Human rebellion ruptures our relationships with God and others (Gen. 3:8-16).

The fallout from Adam and Eve’s sin began immediately. Their eyes were opened. Their rebellion caused them to have a new consciousness of their nakedness. Shame entered God’s good world. The first couple realized that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. Let’s read on to see how their relationship with God and each other was affected:

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”
10 And he said, “I heard You in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”
11 Then He asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

Voices from Church History
“Let me never forget that the heinousness of sin lies not so much in the nature of the sin committed, as in the greatness of the person sinned against.”
–A Puritan prayer

99 Essential Christian Doctrines
37. Sin as Rebellion
Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings, expected to respond in faith and obedience to God’s revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describe sin in terms of rebellion against God: “I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me.” Seen in this light, sin is personal and willful disobedience, the raising of a clinched fist toward the One who made us.
Then the man replied, “The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

So the Lord God asked the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “It was the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate.”

Then the Lord God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than any livestock
and more than any wild animal.
You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life.
I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.

He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.

He said to the woman:
I will intensify your labor pains;
you will bear children in anguish.
Your desire will be for your husband,
yet he will rule over you.

Before they exchanged the goodness of God’s Word for lies, even though they were naked, Adam and Eve felt clothed. They were clothed with God’s favor; they were unashamed, secure, and provided for. But when they questioned and doubted the goodness of God, they lost their covering of glory. And with this covering gone, they felt naked.

Before their sin, Adam and Eve felt no shame, there was nothing to hide, and they could be completely vulnerable before God and with each other in complete safety. They were fully known and fully loved. But now, the face-to-face relationship between humanity and God, the intimate relationship of walking together in the garden, had been ruptured through their rebellious deed.

Even now, we long to be known and loved. But shame has infected all of our relationships, so we wonder: What if someone I deeply care for learned who I really am deep down inside? What if they knew the secret thoughts running through my mind every day? Would they still love me or would they abandon me?

God created us to be fully known and fully loved. But in our fallen state, we’ve convinced ourselves that the only way we can be loved is if we’re not fully known. We believe it would be impossible for anyone to know the depths of who we are and still love us. That’s why we hide.

Hiding from God and hiding from each other is the everyday exercise of humanity. It is the sign that our relationship with God has been ruptured, that we are at war with the Creator. And whenever that pang in our hearts gives us a sense of loss and shame, a sense that something is deeply wrong and that we need to hide, we are mourning the glory, greatness, and paradise we lost long ago.

Further Commentary

“Why did the man fear God because of nakedness?
Public nakedness in the ancient Near East and in the Bible was a terrible disgrace (see...Noah, Gen. 9:22-25). Here that shame is explained as the consequence of the guilt of sin. Before human disobedience there was no shame (2:25), but with sin the man’s self-consciousness had changed. His sense of humiliation impacts his covering up before the woman as well as before God. By this Adam admits his sense of shame, which has been motivated by his guilt. Two follow-up questions sharpen the fact of the crime (v. 11). Both questions are rhetorical. The first shows that no one is required to tell the man of his shame because he experiences guilt for his crime. This was not the consequence of false guilt imposed by parent or social convention; it was true guilt arising from a violated conscience. By the second question Adam’s nakedness is linked to his transgression concerning the tree. Here ‘tree’ is no longer identified as the tree of knowledge but the tree ‘that I commanded you not to eat from’.

Together these questions explain to the man that his sense of shame arose from his defiance of God’s command.”

–Kenneth A. Mathews

Voices from the Church

“Sin is a revolt against God.”

–Billy Graham
What are signs that our relationship with God has been broken?

What are some ways we hide from God, things we invent to cover our sense of shame?

It’s not just our relationship with God that has been ruptured. Our relationship with others has been shattered as well. The expression of sheer joy and excitement we saw in the previous chapter when Adam first saw Eve (“This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh”) has been transformed into blame and enmity (“This woman You gave me made me sin”). The raised fist toward God becomes a clenched fist toward others. Our relationship with each other and the communal image of God that we bore has now become marred and distorted.

This passage reveals the degradation of the community that God created for us, particularly in the husband and wife relationship. In Genesis 1, the husband and wife were charged to rule over creation together, but now as a result of sin, abuse of authority will take place as the humans try to rule over each other. Enmity between male and female will be the norm. God’s good design of how we are to be in relationship with Him and with others has been broken by human rebellion.

This passage is stark in its presentation of our broken relationships with God and with each other. But there is a glimmer of hope even as God issued His righteous judgment on our sin. Some have called this glimmer the *protoevangelium*—the first presentation of the gospel.

In Genesis 3:15, God told the serpent that the day was coming when a Son would be born through Eve, and even though the serpent would strike His heel, this Son of Eve will crush the serpent’s head. A Savior will come, and the serpent will be defeated. The evil unleashed in the garden will be eradicated through the “seed” of the woman.

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**Further Commentary**

“God took the initiative in reaching out to sinful humanity. This pattern—humanity sinning, then God seeking out sinners—becomes the primary theme of the rest of the Bible. Its ultimate expression is found in Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save people alienated from God because of their sin (Luke 19:10); in Him God once again walked on the earth in search of sinners. The all-knowing God asked Adam, ‘Where are you?’ for Adam’s benefit, to encourage Adam to face his sin...When Adam heard God, he was afraid. Rather than walking with God as righteous men of later generations would do (Enoch, 5:22; Noah, 6:9), Adam hid from Him.”

—Robert D. Bergen, *HCSB Study Bible*

**Voices from Church History**

“Because human beings did not remain in this original state of creation and lost the image of God through their disobedience, human beings had to be recreated by God through Jesus Christ. That is why the son of God was promised to Adam. This son appeared to all people and destroyed the work of the devil.”

—Dirk Philips (1504-1568)

In order for us to feel the preciousness of the gospel, we must come to grips with the utter destruction that our sin brought into the world. Our rebelling against God not only destroyed our relationship with God and each other, but it also shattered the perfect peace of God’s good world.

17 And He said to Adam, “Because you listened to your wife’s voice and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’:

The ground is cursed because of you.  
You will eat from it by means of painful labor  
all the days of your life.
18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.
19 You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow  
until you return to the ground,  
since you were taken from it.
For you are dust,  
and you will return to dust.”

20 Adam named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living. 21 The LORD God made clothing out of skins for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.

22 The LORD God said, “Since man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.” 23 So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

God called humanity to fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). But now this task will come through a woman’s pain and anguish (3:16). God called us to subdue the earth. But now this task will come through toilsome work, fighting thorns and thistles. Only by the sweat of our brow will we be able to eat bread (3:17-19). The work God gave us has been invaded by toil, and the beauty of childbirth has been wracked with pain.

Choosing to separate ourselves from God—the source of life—is the choice of death. God created us out of the dust of the ground, but now to dust we will return. Death is the punishment for rebelling against our life-giving Creator.

This passage ends with the reality of exile. God’s good world has been marred by human sin, and we are now separated from the perfection of the garden. The angel with his flaming and whirling sword stands between us and what once was.
But even in this sad scene of judgment, there is a thread of mercy. Before casting Adam and Eve out of paradise, God clothed them with animal skins. God provided the covering for Adam and Eve’s nakedness. God’s initiative here points forward to His Son’s atoning work, when through His own sacrifice, Jesus will take away the guilt of our sin and cover our shame with His righteousness.

For now, however, we see the lasting and destructive results of sin. We were once authentically human, with an astoundingly pure, joyful, naked-and-unashamed kind of relationship with God the Father, with other people, and with creation, but sin has marred and distorted all these relationships. And even creation groans because of the fallout from the fall (Rom. 8:22).

When have you felt like the world was in some sense “against you”? What makes work particularly toilsome for you?

At the heart of sin is a great exchange. In Romans 1:21-23, the apostle Paul summed up the way sin manifests itself: “For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.” In this passage, Paul used language to create a great distance between God’s intention and the result of our fall. Watch the descent:

- We exchanged the glory of the immortal God…
- …for images in the form of…
- …mortal man…
- …and birds…
- …and animals…
- …and reptiles.

The fact that Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation from the lowest of all creatures (the serpent) shows how we have flipped upside down the created order. Instead of God ruling over humanity, who reflects Him by ruling over creation, we have reversed the order. Now it’s creation rebelling against humans, who are rebelling against God. We subjected ourselves to creation and sought to establish our authority over God’s authority.
Sin dehumanized everything authentically human about us and made a mockery of the glory of our immortal God.

When I think of dehumanization, the images of Jewish people held in concentration camps come to mind. When I was in Israel, I went to the Holocaust museum and could hardly stomach the horrifying pictures of what took place. I left with a renewed gratitude for how the Allied forces marched into Germany and freed these prisoners and restored their dignity once again.

In a similar way, the story of God’s salvation is that He sent the Son of Eve to liberate us along with all of creation from the bondage of sin. Everything that dehumanizes us will be destroyed, and God promises us to make us into the image of His Son.

The reason we fight sin is because we have redemption through God’s Son. Whenever we as Christians return to our sin, it is as if we are a freed prisoner returning to our concentration camp. This is why, having been freed from the bondage of sin by the Son of Eve, we are called to trust in the goodness of God’s Word and fight against sin in all its forms. Our mission is to witness to the One who will restore this broken world.

How has sin affected the different spheres of society: family, government, church, the environment?

How can we as Christians battle the effects of sin in these spheres?

Conclusion

Because of sin, Adam and Eve were banished from paradise. Their sin separated them, and us, from God’s presence with no way back except through the angel’s sword. But the day would come when the sword would fall on the Son of Eve on the cross. The Son would be banished by the Father so that we might be reunited with Him. Jesus would face the sword so that we could return from our exile.

When God’s own Son was born into this world, He undid everything that went wrong in Genesis 3. He answered the questions that Satan has put in our hearts: “Is God good? Does He intend good for us? Can we trust Him?” He answered those questions with the nails in His hands and a spear through His side, with His becoming sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus is the Son of Eve who will crush the head of the serpent.

Voices from the Church

“The fallout from the fall is as intensive as it is extensive. The cancer of sin not only ripples out until it ruins the entire world—proceeding from individuals through society to the rest of creation—but it also wreaks near total devastation on each level.”

–Michael Wittmer
For helps on how to get started using The Gospel Project, ideas on how to better lead groups, or additional ideas for leading a specific session, visit: www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

Study Material
- “Humans Reject God’s Plan”—Episode 1, Act 2 from Telling God’s Story by Preben Vang and Terry G. Carter
- “How to Overcome Temptation”—Article by Adrian Rogers; find a link to this article at gospelproject.com/additionalresources
- Previous Biblical Illustrator articles, including “Curses and Blessings in the Old Testament,” can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

Sermon Podcast
John Onwuchekwa: “EPIC: Beauty from Chaos”
Find a link to this at gospelproject.com/additionalresources

Tip of the Week
Patterns of Adult Learning
Adults follow a consistent pattern when it comes to needs that facilitate learning. It is wise for the adult Bible teacher to keep these patterns in mind:
• Desire for a safe environment. Maximize the freedom to explore.
• Desire to be emotionally engaged. The learning experience must engage their affections.
• Desire to meet a challenge.
• Desire for a reflective opportunity. Learners need time to take what is being taught and apply it to their lives.
• Desire to feel like they are being stretched. Learning must challenge old patterns and perspectives in order to make way for new ones.
• Desire for a learning community. Small groups provide support for learners and a sense of belonging the encourages learning.