Lesson 3  Where are you?  Genesis 3

One of the most familiar parts of the Book of Genesis is the third chapter, where Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit. Chapter 2 showed us man, as he was created and intended by God to live his life. This chapter shows us sin — as it was then, and as it is today. It shows Adam and Eve facing the same decision we all face many times every day: Are we going to have it God's way or are we going to have it our way? God made us creatures of choice. Because of this, we can do God's will, or we can do our own will.

The third chapter of Genesis is describing that crisis the first time it happened. It is describing the battle of the wills as it was so we can understand that battle as it is in our lives today. The setting was described for us a little earlier, in chapter 2:8-9: "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

Somewhere along the way people have gotten the idea that the forbidden tree was an apple tree, but there is no mention of apples, either here or in chapter three. Instead, we read about the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now before we go on, we need to talk about the kind of language that is being used here. This story is historical, but it is also allegorical. An allegory is a story in which people, places and things have a meaning in addition to the historical or obvious meaning, and it is usually morally instructive.

In the description of the Garden of Eden, the types of trees we read about indicate that God was going to meet the needs of man in this place. Notice the priority: first of all, these trees were to meet the need of man's eye; then they were to meet his need for food, and then they were to give him life. But there was also a tree of knowledge, and that tree was declared by God to be off limits.

In chapter three, where the story of the first sin takes place, notice that the order of priority is changed. Instead of putting the eye first, the food second, life third, and knowledge never, they put food first, then the eye, then knowledge — and they never got to life. Instead, they got spiritual death. Deuteronomy 8:3 reads that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” We do not really live when we go out and look for ways to get our needs met or our desires gratified. According to this verse, true life comes from obeying every Word that comes from the mouth of God.
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When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, He provided everything they would ever need. He knew their needs because He had made them. And because He made us, He knows our needs as well; and He has every intention of providing for them.

Now, you might wonder why the eye came first in the list of priorities. When the Scripture mentions the eye, it often does not mean the literal eye. For instance, in Matthew 6:22-23, Jesus said, “The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.” Jesus was not talking about physical vision. He was talking about the way we look at things, our mindset, our outlook on life. And when God placed such a high priority on what is pleasant to the sight in the Garden of Eden, He was really saying that they needed to look to Him to meet one of their greatest needs. The greatest need they had and the greatest need we have is to let God show us how we should see things.

There is another picture in this chapter as well, though. After Adam and Eve gave in to temptation, we read that they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” (8-9)

It is interesting that God begins His dialogue with Adam and Eve by asking questions: “Where are you? Who told you that you were naked?” (Genesis 3: 9-11) God already knew the answers, of course; He is everywhere at once, seeing everything. God asked these questions because of things Adam and Eve did not know. The questions were designed to get them to think. You see, when God asked, “Where are you?” He was really asking, “Why are you hiding from me?”

God’s second question, following Adam’s confession that he was hiding because he was naked, is a favorite of mine: “Who told you that you were naked?” (11a). In the Hebrew, the question literally reads, “Who made you know that?” The real answer, of course, is that God was the source of that information, just as He is the source of all information. There is some information He wants us to have, and some He chooses to keep from us, but there is no information that He does not have Himself. Anytime we know where we are spiritually, if we will think about it, God is the One Who is making us know where we are and where we should be.

Next God asks, “Have you eaten from the wrong tree?” (11b). Adam and Eve had disobeyed God, and now they were hiding in the woods, clutching fig leaves to their bodies, suffering the consequences. If you are banqueting on consequences you find distasteful, ask yourself this question: Have you been eating from the wrong tree? Have you been disregarding or disobeying the Word of God? Are you ignoring His direction in your life?
God’s fourth question, “What have you done?” is directed toward Eve, and it produces a confession, albeit on the heels of an excuse. The word “confess” comes from two words which mean, “to say” and “sameness”—in other words, “to speak sameness.” Literally, confession is merely agreeing with God about what you have done. God wanted Eve to put all the facts on the table between them, so they could deal together with what had really happened. And that is what He wants of us as well. He wants us to realize what we have done and confront it honestly.

Genesis 3 is a picture of two people who sinned and how God dealt with them, but it is also the picture of all of us, who have sinned, and it shows us how God deals with us when we hide from God when we sin. It is the picture of sin and its consequences. And it is the picture of God pursuing the sinner and opening the lines of communication.