

Chapter One

Eve

➤➤ “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.”



God of Surprises

- Grace
- Hope
- Faith
- Life

Pregnant With Promise

A study of the character of God—Who cherishes human life!

Background

The Book of Genesis

The Book of Genesis is a telling of events that pre-date written historical records. It has a literary rhythm (narrative, poetry, epilogue) that divides it into sections like chapters within a book. The accounts of events are sometimes terse and without detail. We are left with unanswered questions. It is important to remember that Genesis covers a huge span of time. The stories and events recorded here are chosen specifically for a purpose. It is helpful as you read Genesis to consider, “What is God’s intent in preserving this particular story for future generations?”

Genesis has a remarkable unity in its themes about God. His character is revealed through His relationship with His people. This is the message we seek to understand. What is God telling us about Himself in these narratives? How can we better relate to God as his people? What message is God attempting to communicate through the stories of the pregnant women told in the Book of Genesis and throughout the Bible?

The Backdrop: A perfect creation

As you prepare for this first lesson on the pregnancy of Eve, you may find it helpful to read chapters 1-4 of Genesis as background. In the first pages of chapter one we read the account of the creation of the world in six days. From darkness and void God brings light, from chaos he brings order, and where there is nothing he creates beauty and life. He creates plants, animals, fish, and birds to fill the earth. On the sixth day He creates man in His own image.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

God gives man and woman dominion over all other creatures. God blesses them together with the command to “be fruitful and multiply.”

In the stories that follow we will come to know this God who brings fruitfulness out of barrenness and who provides promise where punishment is deserved.

In Chapter two of Genesis we find another account of creation which adds some detail about the garden in Eden—a garden meant to be a home for humanity. God plants a garden where there is no rain or system of irrigation; everything is watered by a ‘cloud’ coming up from the land. Every tree in this garden is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Two trees are mentioned specifically: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:17 records one single prohibition: Adam and Eve are given permission to eat of any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Identity & community

Read Genesis 2:18-24

God has given Adam work to do: tending the garden and naming the animals. This account of creation adds new information. God perceives that it is not good for Adam to be “alone.” It becomes clear that the other creatures were not suitable to meet Adam’s needs for community. So the Lord God made “a helper fit for (or ‘corresponding to’) him.”¹ God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. Taking one of Adam’s ribs, God fashioned ‘Woman’—so named because she was “taken out of Man.”²

Verse 24 indicates that this is a special relationship, unique among all creation. The two “shall become one flesh.” There is mutuality, intimacy, and shared responsibility. They are both “naked and unashamed.”

¹ Scriptures such as I Chronicles 12:18, Psalm 54:4 & 118:7 speak of God as ‘helper’ and in John 14:26 the Holy Spirit is referred to as Helper. The woman is not less than the man because she was taken from him. Instead the focus is on their oneness.

² ESV Study Bible 2:23 “The Hebrew words for *woman* (*ishshah*) and *man* (*ish*) sound alike.”

Disobedience, a trial, & an altered future

Read Genesis 3:1-15

Chapter Three gives the account, often described as “The Fall,” of the man and woman’s disobedience in eating the fruit of the one tree prohibited by God. A serpent leads the woman to question God’s command, “Did God actually say...” (3:1). Then he casts doubt on God’s motive. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Vs. 5). Eve looked at the tree, desired the fruit, ate some of the fruit and gave some to her husband, Adam, who also ate it.

Immediately, their relationship with one another is changed. The intimacy of nakedness without shame that they had previously enjoyed is destroyed and they cover themselves with fig leaves. The open trust in their relationship with God is gone; they are afraid in His presence and they hide from him.

God confronts them with a question, “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” They do not deny eating the fruit. The man blames the woman. The woman blames the serpent. God pronounces punishments for all three. The result is an altered future. Mutuality, intimacy, and equality are no longer natural. But there are surprises of grace revealed in God’s pronouncement of punishments.

Additional Recommended Resources on Genesis:

Rev. Justin Marple, PPL Board Member, has a teaching blog on Genesis at <http://revmarple.com/teaching/>. Read the Kingdom Prologue and Book One.

Genesis, God’s Grace from the beginning, is a 9 week Bible Study by Debbie Schmidt of the Network of Presbyterian Women in Leadership. The first chapter can be downloaded free at the NPWL web site at <http://www.npwl.org/genesis>.

A Closer Look

Read Genesis 3:14-19

*“To the woman he said,
‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
Your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.’” (vs. 16, ESV)*

A Sentence & A Surprise

Adam and Eve expected to die that day. They had cause to fear God’s punishment. God had warned them specifically not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil saying, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Q Imagine yourself in Adam or Eve’s situation. What would you feel? What would you say to God? How would you act in His presence? Why would you hide?

The serpent hears his punishment first—condemned to crawl forever on his belly. He is demoted from his position in Genesis 3:1. No longer “more crafty than any other beast of the field,” he is now “cursed ...above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.” The one who sought status above God is reduced to eating dust. The one who sought to put the woman at enmity with God is now himself at war with her and the serpent’s offspring is at war with her offspring.

Adam, whose vocation was to tend a well-watered garden where every tree was beautiful and bore good fruit, is now condemned to battle thorns and thistles for his very food. The one who was given the fruit of many good trees but still ate of the one prohibited tree, is now doomed to painful toil in order to feed himself. Worse, the death, of which God had warned Adam, would come and he would return to the dust from which he had been made.

But it is Eve who is our focus in this Bible Study. How interesting it is that her punishment centers around her relationships: her children and her husband.

Think back to Genesis 1:26-28, & 2:18—What was God’s purpose for the woman? What was her intended relationship with Adam?

Adam & Eve have been given dominion over creation. They are God’s caretakers, tending and caring for the plants and animals of creation.

In the light of that responsibility how might Eve interpret God’s words, “Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you”?

God intended mutuality, shared responsibility, & intimacy for Adam & Eve’s relationship. How is that affected by verse 16? Is it destroyed? Is it made more difficult?

Where only oneness existed in the relationship between Adam and Eve, now shame, selfishness, conflict, and competition have been introduced. Life and relationship will be more difficult. Eve most likely anticipated she would die as a result of her disobedience. Instead, God has provided for her care and protection through her husband. Even more amazing is that God extends hope in the promise of children.

Q What hope might Eve have found in the words “in pain you shall bring forth children?” How would those words have caused her to realize that she was not going to die today?

Read Genesis 3:20

Adam re-names his wife in this verse. Remember in 2:23 he first declares she is “Woman” because she is taken out of Man. Her name describes her origins. John Calvin commented on this Scripture by saying,

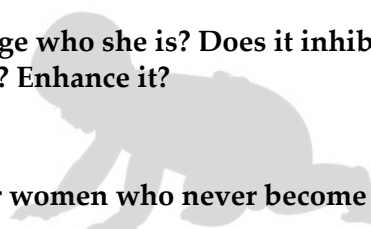
“Nevertheless, I do not doubt that, when he heard the declaration of God concerning the prolongation of life, he began again to breathe and to take courage; and then, as one revived, he gave his wife a name derived from life; ...he celebrated that divine benefit which, beyond all expectations, he had received in the name he gave his wife.”

A New Name & A New Hope

Adam gives his wife a new name, ‘Eve,’ meaning ‘living,’ because she “was the mother of all living” (3:20). Eve’s name defines not her origins but her destiny. Humanity will not end because Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s word. Instead, embedded in Eve’s punishment is God’s promise of a future for humankind, salvation, and the restoration of eternal life.

Q Does becoming a mother change who she is? Does it inhibit her function as Adam’s helper? Enhance it?

What role does God intend for women who never become mothers?



Birth

Genesis 4:1-2

“Now Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.’ And again, she bore his brother Abel.”

Expecting Death, Surprised by Life

For any woman who has conceived a child, lived through 9 months of pregnancy, and endured hard, painful labor bringing that child to birth, this terse description is totally inadequate. Undoubtedly Eve first told the story with passion and vivid detail. Yet, here we have all that is needed for us to see God’s grace.

When Eve disobeyed God’s prohibition against eating from the tree of knowledge, she should have died. Eve has suffered consequences for her disobedience—childbirth is now painful; harmony, unashamed intimacy, and mutuality are difficult in her marriage. Looking into the face of her child, Eve must have understood the great grace of God. Not only has her life been extended, but through her “seed” God has promised to bruise the head of the serpent who is now warring against her offspring. Eve does not know all that is to come. Her firstborn, Cain, will murder his brother, Abel, (Abel means ‘vapor’). God will give her a third son, Seth, (Seth means ‘restitution’) and it is through him that the Savior, Jesus Christ, the very Son of God will eventually be born. When He comes, the broken relationship between humanity and God will be restored. Eve does not know all of this, but she does know that God has granted life where death was deserved.

Can you imagine how Eve was feeling at the moment of Cain’s birth? What might she have meant by the words, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD”?

Commentators disagree about how to interpret this phrase. It seems clear that Eve understood Cain's birth as a gift from the Lord.

Q What is Eve's part in Cain's birth? What is the role that God expects of her in pregnancy?

Do you think Eve saw the pain of childbirth as a curse or did she understand Cain's birth as a symbol of hope? Of grace?

Genesis 3:15 contains the first promise of the coming Savior, Jesus Christ. Do you think Eve understood that God would bring salvation through her?

Note: Some commentaries suggest that Cain and Abel may have been twins. This is not clear in the Scripture text, but the announcement of Abel's birth does follow closely after Cain's with no mention of Eve having conceived a second time.



Discussion

Applying the Lesson

If you had been in Eve's place on the day the serpent tempted her to disobey God, what would you have done? Most of us would like to think we would have resisted the serpent and obeyed God. But we have the advantage of knowing the serious consequences of Eve's decision for all humankind.

Like Eve, in our daily decisions about right and wrong we rarely think about the impact our actions will have on the generations to follow. We also see, taste, desire, and let our own reason and senses lead us into disobedience. Ask yourself the following questions. If you are comfortable in doing so, share your answers with the group. Or, if you prefer, take these questions to the Lord in prayer and ask him to search your heart.

Can you think of a time you rationalized a behavior or attitude you knew was wrong by saying, "Surely God didn't mean that?"

Have you ever "adjusted" your interpretation of the meaning of Scripture in order to accommodate your actions? Have you observed others doing that in the culture or in the church?

Has your behavior been changed in a significant way by your relationship with Jesus Christ?

Thinking about relationships

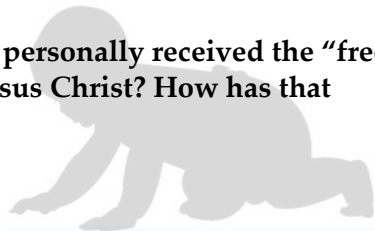
We live in a society that views power and control in relationships as something to be achieved. We are taught to ‘take stage,’ ‘dress for success,’ have ‘power lunches,’ ‘work the room,’ and do ‘Power’ Point presentations—all to make ourselves appear better than the other and in control. It is no wonder women rebel against the part of God’s word to Eve that says, “and he shall rule over you.” It is a challenge to set aside our cultural concept of what that means and see God’s promise in the “punishment.” Yet, all we know of God leads us to believe that He intends this for Eve’s care, provision, and protection.

Q What is God doing by placing Adam in a position of rule over Eve?

If time permits you may want to read and discuss the New Testament pattern for marriage in Ephesians 5:21-32. How does Christ’s love for the church provide a model for us in our marriage relationship?

How has this lesson increased your faith in God’s good intentions for you?

Read Romans 5:5-16 Have you personally received the “free gift” of God’s grace through Jesus Christ? How has that changed you?



Notes