

Gen. 2:15–17; 3:1–7

Ps. 32

Rom. 5:12–19

Matt. 4:1–11

Knowledge Wanted

Goal for the Session

After hearing the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve, children will examine their own lives for temptations.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7

WHAT is important to know?

—From “*Exegetical Perspective*” by Judy Fentress-Williams

The serpent’s question is an invitation to question the command of God. The serpent responds with authority, first denying the consequences for trespassing the boundaries established by God and then redirecting Eve by offering an intriguing possibility. Eating of the tree will result in their eyes being “opened.” Then they will be “like God, knowing good and evil” (3:5). The opening of the eyes connotes a kind of seeing that is beyond the physical ability they already possess. It connotes perception and understanding, as does the word for knowing. The promise of the serpent could mean they will understand the difference between good and bad and/or they will have a broad range of experiences, both good and bad.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “*Theological Perspective*” by William Joseph Danaher Jr.

The Genesis narrative offers a stark depiction of the advent of a sin-sick humanity looking for love in all the wrong places, helplessly yearning for health and wholeness. Augustine uses this perspective to emphasize the utter gratuity of God’s forgiveness and grace. Precisely because the decision to disobey God began in the will, it is the will that must be healed, and this healing can happen only through love. The will is not only the seat of all obedience, but the root of all love, and love alone can heal us—first, God’s transformative love working conversion in us, and then, our love returning to God, which is the end of all human striving and the source of true fulfillment.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “*Pastoral Perspective*” by Allen C. McSweeney Jr.

Read from a pastoral perspective, the story lends itself to an exploration of the role of human freedom within limits set by the wisdom and grace of God. The limits God sets to our freedom are not a matter of enforcing conformity to arbitrary rules. The *torah* of God is intended for the well-being of the “image-bearing creature” to whom God has entrusted the stewardship of creation. The flourishing of human life in a good and bountiful, but limited, creation requires both freedom and appropriate constraints on the exercise of that freedom.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “*Homiletical Perspective*” by Jon L. Berquist

Even our nakedness becomes distracting, and we know wardrobes to cover our nakedness can also distract us. Human excuses for avoiding our mission may start in the garden, but we experience a full range of such excuses today that distract us from our mission. For people of faith, distraction may prove more frequently troublesome than temptation. We think of ourselves for a while, or we focus more on other humans than on God’s mission. With just a glance away, we start to wander from God’s mission. God’s mission has not changed, and in the aftermath of our stumbling, God still calls us back to the right path. God calls us back every day, and every Lent.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 2:15–17;
3:1–7**

Focus on Your Teaching

For children, the season of Lent has little attraction, unlike Advent with Christmas at the end. Introspection is not something most children do on a regular basis, unless encouraged. Nevertheless, by the time they reach their fifth birthday, few children have not experienced punishment of some kind for breaking a rule or disobeying an adult in authority. The story of the temptation of Adam and Eve provides an opportunity for them to ponder consequences and their relationships with God.

Merciful God, as I examine my life in preparation for teaching the children, may I discover anew your forgiveness. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- tall candle
- matches
- offering basket
- Bible
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3
- Resource Sheet 1
- Resource Sheet 3 and supplies listed there
- piece of artificial fruit

For Responding

- option 1: copies of congregational worship bulletins or copies of the Lord's Prayer, newsprint, marker
- option 2: Color Pack 34; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- option 3: colored card stock, scissors, broken eggshells, Easter egg dye, white glue (not glue sticks)
- option 4: Resource Sheet 2, Bible, egg cartons, scissors, markers, scrap paper

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place a marker at Genesis in the worship table Bible. For option 3 in Responding, cut 3" hearts from colored card stock, one per child. Also dye broken eggshells with Easter egg dyes, following package directions. Break into smaller pieces. For Closing, see Resource Sheet 3 (Lenten Table). For the Lenten Table, print Genesis 3:2–3 on a paper plate.

As the children arrive, have them help you prepare the worship table with the purple cloth, tall candle, Bible, and offering basket. When you are ready to begin, invite the children to be seated. Light the tall candle.

Play "Do Lord, O Do Lord" (*Singing the Feast*), and invite the group to listen to it. Ask:

✠ What mood or feelings does the song suggest?

Welcome the children to the season of Lent. Show Color Pack 1, and ask volunteers to read the information on it. It is not necessary to discuss the questions on the sheet. Have everyone stand in a circle. Lead the children in this opening prayer, asking them to echo each phrase:

Thank you, God, / for bringing us together today. / During this season of Lent, / help us learn to follow Jesus more closely. / Amen.

If you take an offering, receive it now. Extinguish the candle.

Show the group the piece of artificial fruit that will be the symbol for the Bible story. Ask:

✠ What is your favorite fruit?

✠ When do you like to eat it?

Explain that a piece of fruit is an important part of today's Bible story.

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and open it to the bookmark. Ask that child to read the name of the book or to request another child to do so. Ask the children to tell you what they know about Genesis. Some will know it is the first book in the Bible, and some may know some stories in it.

Show Color Pack 2. Ask:

- ✠ Who might these people be?
- ✠ What do you think is happening?

Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Sudden Knowledge). Review the story by looking first at Color Pack 3. Note that the story the children heard begins with creation. Ask:

- ✠ How does creation take place in the story?
- ✠ What did God create first?
- ✠ What was created second?

Remind the children that the story of Jesus is found in four Gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Children familiar with the account of creation in Genesis 1 may interject it into what they heard in the story on Resource Sheet 1, which is based on Genesis 2 and 3. Ask:

- ✠ Who are the people in the story?
- ✠ What rule did God give the human?
- ✠ When was the woman created? Why?
- ✠ How did the woman and the human, her husband, break the rule?

Show Color Pack 2 again. Explain that this illustration is what happened when the Lord God discovered that the humans had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Ask:

- ✠ What do you think God did to the woman and the human?

For the children, it is sufficient to know that God made clothes from animal skins for the woman and the human, but God also sent them out of the garden of Eden. Ask:

- ✠ How do you think the woman and her husband felt?
- ✠ Have you ever felt that way when you did something wrong or broke a rule?

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so the children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest children who can work on their own.

1. **Prayer of Confession** Children will be assured that everyone, young and old, makes mistakes. However, we can confess our errors to God in prayer. The whole church does so in the prayer of confession in worship. Distribute copies of worship bulletins used by your congregation. Ask the children to find the prayer of confession, and read it aloud together. Point out that the prayer of confession is followed by a forgiveness or pardon. God is always ready to forgive us. If your congregation does not use a printed prayer of confession, distribute copies of the Lord's Prayer and have the children look for words of confession. Working in pairs, have the children think of ways to tell God they are

EASY
PREP

Do Lord, O Do Lord

Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do remember me.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do remember me.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do remember me,
Way beyond the blue.

Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,
I know I need to pray.
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,
I know I need to pray.
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,
I know I need to pray,
Way beyond the blue.

Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do help me to pray.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do help me to pray.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do help me to pray,
Way beyond the blue.

sorry about something they did. Then help the group compose a prayer of confession that can be given to the worship leaders.

2. **Song** Children will sing to seek God's forgiveness and help. Listen to "Do Lord, O Do Lord" or read aloud the words (Color Pack 34, *Singing the Feast*). Recall that they heard this song at the beginning of the session. Ask:

- ✪ To whom are you singing in this song?
- ✪ What might "Way beyond the blue" mean?
- ✪ When might you sing this song?

Sing the song together.

3. **Eggshell Mosaic** A mosaic of broken eggshells provides a visual representation of making something good from something broken, as God helped the woman and the human after they broke the rule in the garden of Eden. Show the group the broken eggshells. Ask the children if they can put them back together to make eggs. Explain that this would be an impossible task, but the broken shells can be used to create lovely art. Give each child a card-stock heart. Set out white glue. Demonstrate how to put a dot of glue on the heart and place a piece of eggshell on it, pressing down lightly. Suggest that the children display their eggshell mosaic hearts at home where they will be reminded of God's love.
4. **Serpent's Head Prayers** Children will turn the snake in the story into a reminder that God's love is with them. Follow the directions for this activity on Resource Sheet 2 (Serpent's Head Prayer). The serpent is an ancient Christian interpretation of Genesis 3:15. This activity can take the horror of the snake or serpent out of the story for the children. It may be so much fun that children will want to make more serpent's heads to stomp.

CLOSING

Gather at the worship table. Listen to "Do Lord, O Do Lord" (*Singing the Feast*). Suggest that the children think about how God remembered and cared for the woman and her husband.

During Lent, an object will be added to the Lenten Table each week to remind the children of the stories explored during this season. Read Genesis 3:2-3 on the paper plate for the first Sunday in Lent. The object for today's session is a piece of artificial fruit.

Say to each child:

(Name), *go out and love your neighbor.*

Thank the children for coming, and encourage them to return next week.

Sudden Knowledge



After the Lord God created the heavens and the earth but before the plants and animals were created, the Lord God formed a human from the soil. After the trees, plants, and all the animals were created by the Lord God, the human was placed in the garden of Eden to farm the land. But the fruit of one tree was off-limits to the human; it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Lord God said to the human, “You can eat all you want of everything in the garden, but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat the fruit from it, you will die.”

After the Lord God created the animals, the human was still lonely, so the Lord God created a woman for the human.

Of all the animals in the garden of Eden, the snake was the smartest. The snake said to the woman, “Is it true that there is a tree in the garden that the Lord God told you not to eat its fruit?”

“We can eat as much as we want of any tree in the garden, but we are not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden,” the woman said. “If we eat from it, we will die.”

“Ha! You won’t die,” said the snake. “If you eat from that tree, you will know the difference between good and evil. You will be like the Lord God.”

The woman looked at the tree. The fruit hanging from it looked delicious, and wouldn’t it be good to be wise like God? So she took fruit from the tree and gave some to the human, her husband.

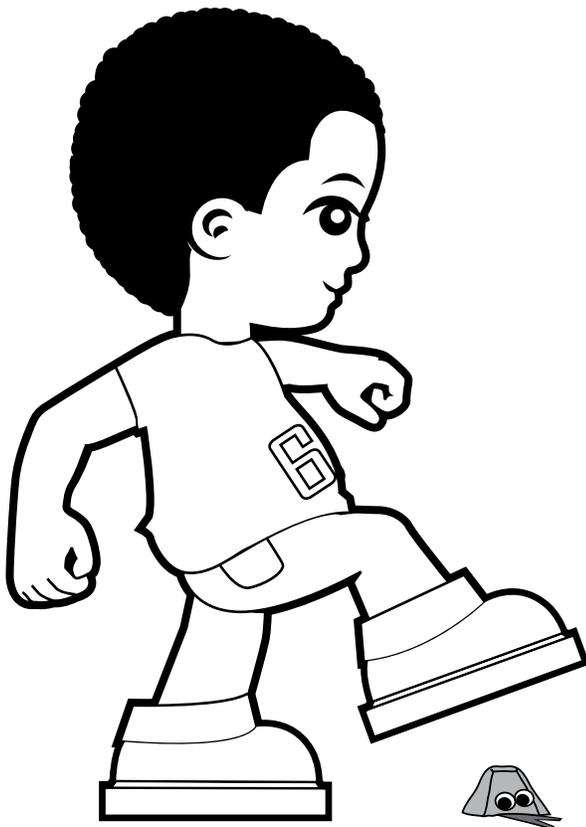
As soon as they tasted the fruit, the woman and her husband looked at each other and recognized that they had no clothes on. They were suddenly embarrassed and sewed fig leaves together to make clothes for themselves.

I wonder what the Lord God thought about the woman and the human now.



Serpent's Head Prayer

1. Read Genesis 3:14–15. How do you understand the actions of the woman's offspring?
2. Decorate a section of an egg carton to look like a serpent's head.
3. On a scrap of paper, write or draw about a time you chose to break God's boundaries and caused damage to your relationship with another person, with the natural world, or with God. No one will see this paper but you.
4. Crumple the paper into a ball, and put it inside the serpent's head.
5. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for sending Jesus Christ to be your Savior from sin and death.
6. As you say "Amen," stomp on the serpent's head to symbolize your trust in Jesus' victory over sin!



Lenten Table

Setup

- table or box large enough to hold six plates
- purple cloth
- six paper plates without plastic coating
- marker

Cover the table or large box with a purple cloth. Arrange the six paper plates on the cloth.

For the six Sundays in Lent, create a Lenten Table to be the focus for Closing.

For each Sunday, write these Bible verses from the Common English Bible on paper plates:

First Sunday in Lent: The woman said to the snake, “We may eat the fruit of the garden’s trees but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘Don’t eat from it, and don’t touch it, or you will die.’”(Genesis 3:2–3)

Second Sunday in Lent: “I will make of you a great nation and will bless you.” (Genesis 12:2a)

Third Sunday in Lent: “Hit the rock. Water will come out of it, and the people will be able to drink.” (Exodus 17:6b)

Fourth Sunday in Lent: “Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7b)

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Jesus shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” (John 11:43)

Palm Sunday: The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9)

For each session, bring the following objects, adding one each week:

- First Sunday in Lent: piece of artificial fruit
- Second Sunday in Lent: packing list
- Third Sunday in Lent: small glass of water
- Fourth Sunday in Lent: eyeglasses (real or costume)
- Fifth Sunday in Lent: paper tear drop
- Palm Sunday: piece of palm frond

