

Gen. 2:15–17; 3:1–7

Ps. 32

Rom. 5:12–19

Matt. 4:1–11

The Garden of Eden

**Goal for
the Session**

Youth will examine their lives in light of Adam and Eve's disobedience and consider ways to respond faithfully.

■ 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

The teenage years are a time for testing, and occasionally exceeding, the limits of freedom established by parents, schools, and the church. Whether from intentional disobedience or simple distraction, youth sometimes find themselves in trouble; we hope that they also find a healthy mix of meaningful consequences and grace. The elements that lead to trouble for teenagers today are found in Adam and Eve's troubles in the garden of Eden: temptation, distraction, carelessness, and disobedience. In such situations, we do well to reassure today's young people that the consequences they face do not include abandonment by God!

God of grace, be with me as I seek to guide your youth into deeper relationship with you and with their sisters and brothers in Christ. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1 and 2
- ☐ pens
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ piece of artificial fruit

For Responding

- ☐ option 1: Bibles, white construction paper, paints in a variety of colors, paintbrushes, sponges
- ☐ option 2: hymnals with "When We Are Tempted to Deny Your Son" or another hymn of confession
- ☐ option 3: copies of worship bulletins and/or sample prayers of confession, Bibles, pens, paper, newsprint, markers

For Film Connection

- ☐ *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (PG-13)
- ☐ Internet-connected device

■ LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

As participants arrive, give each of them a copy of Resource Sheet 1 (Grounded!) and a pen. Ask them to follow the directions there.

When all are finished, invite participants to offer their responses to the group. This activity may generate laughter, but be alert to instances in which the laughter may lead to embarrassment (and be ready to redirect the conversation).

Remind participants that everyone gets into trouble from time to time, even the first humans in the Bible. Pray:

We give you thanks, loving God, for your grace-filled presence. Be with us this day as we study, learn, and seek to follow in your way. Amen.

EXPLORING

Explain that today is the first Sunday in Lent. During the season of Lent, the church has traditionally focused on preparing new believers for baptism and baptismal renewal at Easter. Themes of the season include confession, repentance, and renewal. The account of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7) is assigned to the first Sunday in Lent because it is the Bible's first recorded instance of human sin.

Distribute Bibles. Give everyone a couple of minutes to silently read Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7. Select volunteers for the following parts: narrator, God, Adam, serpent, and Eve. Give each one a copy of Resource Sheet 2 (Drama in the Garden Script). Give the artificial fruit to the person portraying Eve. To preserve the spontaneity of the drama, have the performance begin immediately and encourage the actors to ham it up. If your group is sufficiently large and time permits, consider allowing another group of five actors to present its own interpretation of the story.



FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

The Garden of Eden

For Gathering in Lent, plan to sing or listen to “Step by Step” (words and music by David “Beaker” Strasser, © 1991 BMG Songs, Inc.). Or choose a song that your church sings during worship in Lent.

After the dramatic reading(s) of Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7, thank the actors and then discuss:

- ✧ In the story, how is God like and unlike a parent, teacher, or other authority figure?
- ✧ Why do you think God doesn’t want Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- ✧ In response to the serpent’s question (Genesis 3:1), Eve says something different from what God told Adam about what they could and could not eat. Why do you think she does this?
- ✧ Adam doesn’t have anything to say in this passage. What do you think he does or mutters “behind the scenes”?
- ✧ What does the serpent mean when it says, “God knows that when you eat of it . . . you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (v. 5)?

Read Genesis 3:6–7 in unison. Discuss:

- ✧ Today’s Scripture passage ends before God’s response to Adam and Eve’s disobedience.
- ✧ What do you think Adam and Eve are thinking, expecting, hoping, or dreading while they’re waiting for God to discover what they’ve done?
- ✧ How might Eve and Adam move on from their actions and the consequences?
- ✧ How are Eve’s actions like and unlike your experiences of temptation, disobedience, and consequences?
- ✧ How are Adam’s actions like and unlike your experiences of temptation, disobedience, and consequences?
- ✧ How do you, as a person of faith, move on when you’ve done wrong and faced the consequences?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

1. Abstract Art Youth will examine their lives in light of Adam and Eve’s disobedience by painting a prayer of confession. Have participants reread Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7 while putting themselves in the place of Adam or Eve and thinking about a personal situation. Ask what images might represent their feelings at the time. Distribute white construction paper and supplies, and invite each person to paint a prayer of confession. When all are done, invite participants to explain their designs. Finally, ask the youth to describe how they believe God responds to their prayers. Encourage the youth to post their painted prayers in their homes as a reminder to pray during Lent.

2. Lenten Musical Connection Participants will examine their lives by reflecting on a hymn text. Distribute hymnals with the Lenten hymn “When We Are Tempted to Deny Your Son.” Allow time for everyone to read the words. Discuss:

- ✧ What specific sins does the hymn list? What sins of your own might you add?
- ✧ How might “disobedience” describe the sins you have named?
- ✧ What does it mean to pray for God’s will to be done?
- ✧ Where in this hymn do you find God’s judgment, forgiveness, and love?
- ✧ What words or images from the hymn will you carry with you this week?
- ✧ How might these words or images remind you to keep a holy Lent?

Ask a musician to teach the hymn to the group.



FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

The Garden of Eden

EASY
PREP

3. **A Prayer for the Church** Participants will consider their experiences that reflect Adam and Eve's disobedience and create a prayer of confession for the congregation. Remind the group that Lent is observed by the church as a whole as well as by individuals. Have participants work together to write a corporate prayer using images and themes—for example, temptation and disobedience—from Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7 on newsprint. Have copies of worship bulletins and/or sample prayers of confession available, in case the participants need help getting started on their corporate prayer. When the prayer is complete, ask:

- ✠ How does confessing our sins together strengthen our individual relationships with God?
- ✠ In what ways might we encourage our church to observe a holy Lent through acknowledging temptation and making confession of our collective sin?

CLOSING

Gather the group in a circle. Invite a youth to hold up the piece of artificial fruit. Ask the group to listen as you read Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7 aloud and to think about what temptation the fruit represents for them. Then invite the group to join in prayer with eyes open. Say: “When the fruit comes to you, hold it briefly, silently lifting up to God your confession.” Pass the fruit around the circle.

If the group wrote a prayer of confession in Responding, pray it together now.

Close by praying:

As we embark on this holy season of Lent, O God, we pray that you would walk with us. Hear our prayers of confession, forgive us, and grant us the confidence to live as forgiven people. In gratitude for your grace, your mercy, and your never-failing love, we pray in the name of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

■ ENHANCEMENT

FILM CONNECTION

Show the following clips from *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (PG-13): bit.ly/BoromirRing and bit.ly/BoromirConfession. In the first clip, Boromir tries to take the ring from Frodo; in the second, Boromir, now mortally wounded, confesses to Aragorn. Discuss:

- ✠ How do Boromir's motivations and actions compare with Eve's?
- ✠ Do you think Boromir would have confessed if he had not been mortally wounded? Why or why not?
- ✠ How do the consequences Boromir faces compare with Adam and Eve's?
- ✠ At the end, Aragorn blesses Boromir, saying, “Be at peace . . .” Describe a time when you found peace through confession.

Grounded!



Directions: Reflect on and answer the following questions. If possible, think of a situation that you'd be willing to tell the rest of the group.

Describe a time when you disobeyed a parent, teacher, or other authority figure.

What were the consequences of your actions (for others as well as for you)?

Do you feel that the consequences were deserved?
Why or why not?

What *unexpected* lesson did you learn from this situation? How has this event changed your life?

Drama in the Garden Script

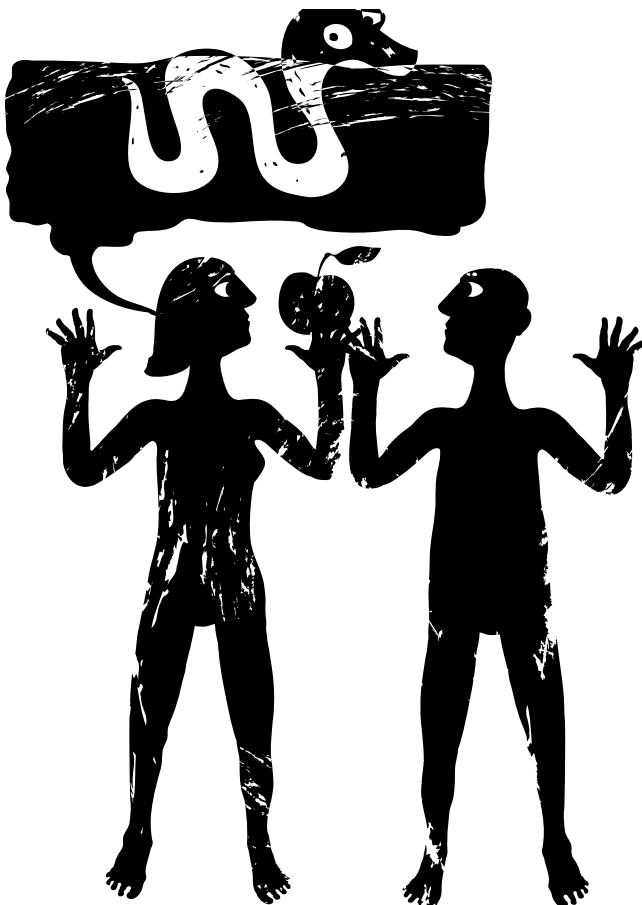
Narrator: The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man:

God: You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.

Narrator: Now the serpent was craftier than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made.

Serpent: (to Eve) Did God say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden”?

Eve: We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.”



Serpent: You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Narrator: So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

—based on Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7