

**Conversations on
 Gen. 2:15–17; 3:1–7**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Show the following clips from *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001; PG-13): bit.ly/BoromirRing and bit.ly/BoromirConfession. Discuss how Boromir's motivations, actions, and consequences compare with Adam and Eve's.

WHAT is important to know?

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. (*Judy Fentress-Williams*)

- ✧ How do you understand what it means to have your eyes "opened" in this story?
- ✧ What are the consequences of being able to distinguish good from evil?

WHERE is God in these words?

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. (*William Joseph Danaher Jr.*)

- ✧ How do you understand God's command to eat from any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- ✧ What is the character of God that emerges from this story?
- ✧ What was the original relationship between God and the man and woman? How did it change?

God, 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.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

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. (*Allen C. McSweeney Jr.*)

- ✧ What are the implications of having our eyes opened to the knowledge of good and evil?
- ✧ How does the conversation with the serpent mirror your own internal conversations when faced with temptation?
- ✧ Could the man and woman have resisted this temptation? Why or why not?
- ✧ After their disobedience, why does the focus immediately switch to their nakedness?

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

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. (*Jon L. Berquist*)

- ✧ What are some steps you might take to focus on what God calls you to do?
- ✧ Since our eyes are opened, where should your focus be?