

On a regular basis we find ourselves asking the question, “Why is our world so broken?” Whether it’s the news of the last few weeks, like the murder of Iryna Zarutskaya, the murder of Charlie Kirk, school shootings, police officers killed, or whether it’s ongoing issues such as wars that won’t end, poverty, a broken political system, a broken judicial system, physical ailments that don’t get better, again and again we find ourselves asking the question, “Why is our world so broken?” There are many different answers given today to that question:

- Lack of education: If we could just get more information, we could learn our way out of it.
- Environmental factors: Bad family systems and structural inequality cause brokenness, so we need reform and social justice.
- Economic inequality: If people had their basic needs met and easier access to resources, things would be better.
- Psychological pain: Trauma and mental illness are the source of brokenness, so we need therapy, medication, and emotional healing.

These are the ways our culture has tried to explain the problem we find ourselves in. Interestingly, all the resources directed toward those problems with our “modern solutions” have basically not accomplished anything to make the world better. The Bible has a very different answer to the question, “Why is our world so broken?” It can be summed up in one word: sin. We don’t like that word today. We’d rather avoid the topic altogether. But ignoring sin doesn’t do anything to address the problem of sin. Not talking about sin is as effective at dealing with sin as not going to the doctor and not having an MRI or CAT scan is at dealing with cancer. If you have the disease, ignoring it or downplaying it may help you feel better, but really understanding it and knowing the right way to respond to it is what’s needed. That’s what God’s Word gives us when it comes to sin.

Let’s dive into Genesis 3, where we read about the first sin and the impact it’s had on humanity and the world. We’re going to read the entire chapter and then circle back through it to see what we can learn.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from

the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:1-24)

This is the Bible's answer to the question of why the world is so broken: humanity sinned by violating God's instructions and invited pain, disorder, and death into God's good creation. We'll focus on four aspects of sin in Genesis 3.

Sin: The Disorienting Whisper

Satan takes the form of a serpent and begins to ask questions that disorient Eve, that confuse her and incite her to question and doubt things that she should have known for sure. Satan didn't roar like a lion and yell, "God doesn't exist! God is a liar! Break his commands!" No! Satan whispered narratives that painted God in a negative light.

- Satan tries to get Eve to *doubt God's commands*. "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
- Then he tries to get her to *deny God's consequences*. "You will not certainly die."
- His final step is to *demean God's character*. "God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God."

Satan is still doing this to us today! We have the Bible. It's black and white. It's written down, as clear as night and day, yet Satan still tries to lead us into sin and ruin our lives. He still tries to get us to doubt God's commands! He says things like: Did God really say sex is reserved for marriage? Did

Did God really say marriage is between a man and a woman? Did God really say that he gives life to humans in the womb? Did God really say we are to put him first with your money? Did God really say that gossip is slander against people made in his image? Did God really say _____?" It's all in here in black and white, it's written down for us to read! But still Satan tries to disorient us so he can lead us into sin, away from God.

And then he says, if you break that supposed command, nothing bad will happen. Satan denies God's consequences. "You won't die! Don't live in fear. There won't be any negative consequences to sin. Sure, alcohol has ruined the lives and relationships of everyone in your family in the last three generations, but it won't harm you; it'll be good for you! Sure, you've seen how affairs have ruined other families you know, but it won't hurt your family; it'll make things better and you deserve it." Satan always wants to tell us we can go against God's commands and not suffer consequences. Step off that cliff, gravity won't apply to you. You'll be able to fly! But gravity is real. There are always consequences.

Perhaps the most sinister of Satan's whispers is his demeaning of God's character. He tells Eve, "God can't be trusted. God doesn't want what's good for you. He's holding out on you. He knows if you eat the fruit, you'll be like him." If Satan can convince you that God is not good, that God is not benevolent, that God is not wise and trustworthy and does not have your best interest at heart, it's like a tree that has been uprooted and is one light gust from falling over.

Here's another way to look at the disorienting whisper of sin.

- Sin adds to God's Word. "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
- Sin takes away from God's Word. "You will not certainly die."
- Sin distorts the heart of God's Word. "God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God."

Satan tries to convince us that God's word is more restrictive than it really is by adding to his word. "Did God say you can't eat from ANY tree. Is that what God said? Is God a joy-stealer who is trying to starve you? No! God said they could eat from and enjoy every tree in the garden, except one. That would be like a wealthy friend saying to you, "I have abundant resources and I want to share them with you and allow you to see the world. You can travel anywhere you want with all expenses paid by me. Go to Greece and enjoy the coastline. Go to Africa and enjoy a safari. Go to Australia and enjoy the Great Barrier Reef. Go to South American and take to Patagonia. Anywhere, anytime you want. On me. You just can't go to Colima, Mexico. It's the most dangerous city in the world, with the highest homicide rate on the planet. It's dominated by cartels, filled with drugs and trafficking. You can go anywhere in the world you want to, on my dime, just not there." Imagine the generosity of that offer. Then you have another person in your life who gets in your ear and says, "I can't believe you have a friend who is so wealthy, who has so much, and he won't pay for you to go anywhere. He's so stingy and selfish." No! What a lie! Your friend is so good! So generous. So kind. He's given so much.

Satan always wants to add to God's word. He also takes away from God's word. "You won't die. Nothing bad will happen. Pull the trigger, there is no bullet."

Then he distorts the heart of God's Word. Rather than viewing God's commands as guardrails for our protection and good, he portrays them as prison doors to keep us locked up and confined. These deceitful whispers are so disorienting. Before Eve ever sunk her teeth into the forbidden fruit, the poisonous lies had already entered her bloodstream.

We must be aware of Satan's strategy, so we can respond to it! The NFL season kicked off last week. Every NFL team has full time staff whose only job is to scout the opposing team. ChatGPT tells me that the average team has 15-25 people who spend hours and hours every week watching the film and studying the calls so they can best respond to their opponent's strategies. We need to do the same! Consider Tamer Elnoury. He worked for the FBI, and after 9/11 he went undercover, posing as a would-be terrorist and infiltrating sleeper-cells in the USA. He learned the way they worked, learned of their upcoming plots, and, knowing their intended strategy, would report it to the FBI. He thwarted several tragedies, including a bombing of Times Square on New Year's Eve. He is credited with saving *thousands* of lives. What did he do? He learned the way the enemy worked so a defense could be mounted.

Sin: The Powerful Draw

Once we are disoriented, no longer thinking straight, no longer holding God in high esteem and trusting him, focusing on the lack rather than the abundance, and our eyes focus on that thing, whatever it is, the draw toward that forbidden fruit is *powerful*. This happened to Eve: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

Did you notice the draw, how sin catches our gaze, and then we focus, even fixate on it? Eve "Saw the fruit...that it was good, pleasing, and desirable." Once she was disoriented by the whisper, she became like a moth to the light, hypnotized and spellbound by the allure of sin and its promise to satisfy. Then once she was overcome by her desire, she *took* and she *ate*, reaching out and grabbing, and then ingesting into her body. It was personal and visceral. But it wasn't enough for it to be only her to partake on her own; she drew her husband Adam in as well. She *gave* some to him, and he joined her. Like misery, sin loves company. Sin loves to pull others into its sphere. It's validating and rewarding when others join in. You feel like you are early on in a multi-level marketing scheme; you want to recruit others and get them on your team! This isn't only Eve's story. This is our story. The only difference is the name of the fruit. For some it's lust. For some it's greed. For some it's pride. For some it's deceit. For some it's envy. We see something, we want something, we get captivated by how wonderful it can be, then we reach out, take it, and participate in it—only to find that every promise made by the forbidden fruit was a lie. Sin promises to make you a millionaire, but it leaves you broke and bankrupt. Sin defrauds, disfigures and devastates.

Sin: The Encompassing Brokenness.

Genesis shows us the ways sin shatters our world. The first is *shame*. "Their eyes were opened...they realized they were naked...they made coverings for themselves...they hid from the Lord." This is what sin does to us. Once we've sinned, we know we've sinned. We become conscious of ourselves and we want to cover up, to conceal. We want to hide. Adam and Eve hid from the Lord. Instead of living openly and honestly, they are embarrassed and choose to retreat.

They don't want to be caught. I saw a video this week of twins who were up playing in the middle of the night. When they heard mom coming their way, what did they do? Not me! [View the online sermon to see the video.] We've been peacefully sleeping this entire time. We hide, too.

After shame is *blame*. When God asks Adam what happened, how does he respond? "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree." So then God asks Eve what happened. How does she respond? "The serpent deceived me." No accountability, no ownership; only blame-shifting and finger-pointing. It wasn't my fault; it was their fault; they are the reason I sinned. How many times have we done the same thing? We have sinned and we blame our parents, our spouse, our boss, our friends, our church. We look everywhere else besides in the mirror for the cause of our sin.

Finally, sin shatters the world with pain. Sin has real consequences.

- *Painful birth*. After the fall, childbearing became exceedingly painful for women.
- *Painful relationships*. God tells the woman from now on her desire will be for her husband, meaning she will not only desire a husband for a sense of identity, but she will desire to rule over her husband and control him, but he will have more power, which will be a source of perpetual frustration.
- *Painful relationship with God*. They are kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Where there was once intimacy between God and man, there is now distance.
- *Painful work*. God tells Adam, the ground is cursed because of his sins. It will produce thorns and thistles, and he will have to toil and labor his entire life to eat from it.

Sin brings brokenness. The original sin in Genesis 3 is like the first crack in the windshield. This is where it started, and it's been splintering and spreading ever since. Sin breaks things at a macro level and leads to war, human trafficking, genocide, and racism. It breaks things at a personal level, leading to abuse in your family, addiction in your body, constant struggle against pride, lust, anger and greed.

Reinhold Niebuhr said, "The doctrine of original sin is the only empirically verifiable doctrine of the Christian faith." Just look at the world around you. Look inside you. No one can deny what the Scriptures teach about the depth and breadth of sin. It contaminates God's good world to our own detriment. Tim Keller said, "Every one of our sinful actions has a suicidal power." What does he mean by that? When you sin with your mind, it shrivels the ability of your mind. When you sin against people, it shrivels the relationship. When you sin sexually, it shrivels your ability to enjoy the good gift of intimacy the way God designed it. Sin brings holistic brokenness. That's why Theologian Cornelius Plantinga said, "Sin is the vandalism of shalom...it breaks peace, distorts relationships, shatters wholeness." This is a horrible place to be. But fortunately for us, God doesn't leave us there!

Sin: The Divine Response

Genesis 3 doesn't end with the encompassing brokenness of sin, but the divine response to sin. Our sin tarnished God's perfect world, but let's look at how he responds.

God pursues us despite our sin. God knew exactly what Adam and Eve had done, but he didn't send fire from heaven to destroy them! He approached them. "The Lord God walked in the garden...The

Lord God called to the man” (Genesis 3:8-9). We assume that our sin, our mistakes, our rejection of God and rebellion towards God is going to lead to his abandoning us. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our sin doesn’t change God’s character. He loves us. He wants a relationship with us. Despite everything God knows about us, he pursues us still.

God provides a temporary remedy for sin. Adam and Eve became conscious of their nakedness. They were ashamed, and they tried to sew together fig leaves for their covering, but those coverings were fragile, inadequate, temporary. Leaves shrivel quickly. So “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.” God meets them right where they are. He doesn’t abandon them in their shame and say, “You made the bed, now you lie in it.” With love, grace, and compassion, he helps them cover over their shame. He does the same for us in our sin. He doesn’t sentence us to a lifetime of guilt and punishment for every transgression; he provides a path for us to be forgiven and restored.

God not only makes these garments out of skin as a temporary remedy, but he also takes the third and most important step; *God promises a permanent solution for sin.* The moment sin entered the world through Satan, God declared that he would do something about it once and for all. Speaking to Satan he said. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” This is what theologians refer to as the *protoevangelium*, the first promise of the gospel. God is looking to Satan and saying through the offspring of a woman, one will come who will crush Satan’s head, while Satan strikes his heel. This is the promise that God himself one day, being born from the virgin Mary, will enter humanity, and Satan will strike his heel. Satan will have Jesus the Son of God nailed to a cross. Jesus will take the serpent’s venom into his own body so that he can crush the Satan’s head and deal a death blow to the enemy and the forces of evil and sin in the world.

Sin is a reality. We know it. It comes by doubting what God said, denying consequences, questioning God’s character. It has power to seduce us and pull us in; it brings pain and corrupts our lives. But God does not leave us on our own. He pursues us. He meets us where we are. He loves us. He provides not only temporary ways for our sins to be covered, but through Jesus, he promises an ultimate way for sin to be removed and conquered once and for all!