

September 30

Lesson 5 (NIV)

GOD CONFRONTS SIN

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Psalm 51:1–12](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Genesis 3](#)

[GENESIS 3:8–17, 20–24](#)

⁸ 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. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.”

¹⁶To 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.”

¹⁷To 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.”

²⁰Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²²And 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.” ²³So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴After 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.

KEY VERSE

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.—[Genesis 3:23](#)

GOD’S WORLD AND GOD’S PEOPLE

Unit 1: God Creates the World

LESSONS [1–5](#)

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Relate the sequence of events that led to Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

2. Identify elements of the story of sin's origins similar to his or her own experiences with temptation and sin.

3. State an action that will be a step toward repairing a personal relationship damaged by sin.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

A. The Perfect Marriage

B. Lesson Context

I. Confrontation (GENESIS 3:8–13)

A. Avoiding God (vv. 8–10)

B. Shifting Blame (vv. 11–13)

Deflecting Responsibility

II. Judgment (GENESIS 3:14–17)

A. On the Serpent (vv. 14, 15)

B. On Humanity (vv. 16, 17)

III. Banishment (GENESIS 3:20–24)

A. Provision (vv. 20, 21)

B. Expulsion (vv. 22–24)

Self-Deception

Conclusion

A. The Pattern Then as Now

B. The Solution Now as Then

C. Prayer

D. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Augustine **Aw**-gus-teen or Aw-*gus*-tin.

archetypal *ahr*-kih-**tie**-pull.

cherubim *chair-uh-bim*.

Euphrates *You-fray-teez*.

Mesopotamia *Mes-uh-puh-tay-me-uh*.

protevangeliu *proat-ee-van-jel-ee-uhm*.

Tamar *Tay-mer*.

Tigris *Tie-griss*.

Introduction

A. The Perfect Marriage

When we think of the Garden of Eden, we have visions of perfection. We imagine perfect weather. We think of friendly animals. We envision pristine water and air. *Oh, to return to the garden*, we think! Plenty of space. No crowds. Direct access to God. How could it be any better?

Yet in Genesis the garden is both a place and a story, and the story has a tough ending. Any good story has the tension of a crisis that must be resolved, and Genesis is no exception. In chapter [3](#) we read of a series of deepening crises that end with Adam and Eve losing paradise. It is a drama that shakes the foundations of God's created order and changes the trajectory of human relationships with the Creator, a change we still cope with today.

This story of the first couple and the first sins is archetypal, a pattern repeated many times in the Bible. First, an opportunity to violate God's commands (temptation) seems a good thing. Then the violation occurs (sin) with short-term pleasure. The consequences of breaking God's laws (punishment) that follow bring regret (repentance). But people don't seem to learn!

B. Lesson Context

[Genesis 3](#) begins a different style of presentation. Up until this point, the book has been largely narrative in format (a story told by a narrator). But in [Genesis 3](#) we encounter a drama (a story told through the dialogue of the characters). By the time we arrive at today's lesson text, two characters have already spoken: the serpent and the woman.

Earlier in [Genesis 3](#), the serpent used the fruit to entice the woman by its visual appeal and the promise of wisdom. She ate and then shared her sin with her husband. So he ended up being a willing accomplice. Immediately they were overcome with shame and attempted to cover their nakedness with makeshift fig-leaf garments. Covering their nakedness was not enough, though, so when their regular time with the Lord God arrived, they attempted to hide.

I. Confrontation

([GENESIS 3:8-13](#))

A. Avoiding God (vv. [8-10](#))

8. 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.

Our picture of what the garden looks like is far from complete. But we get a small insight here when we learn that *the man and his wife* in their shame (contrast [Genesis 2:25](#)) attempt to hide *from the Lord God among the trees of the garden*. Some think this implies a dense, lush forest with areas open enough to permit walking for pleasure. That's a nice mental image, but ultimately it is speculation. It is reasonable to infer, however, that the two humans find what they think is enough foliage to block the Lord's view, while still being close enough to a path to be able to hear God (next verse).

9. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

The Lord arrives at the customary meeting place, but his two human creations are not present. The Lord's question *Where are you?* does not indicate a lack of knowledge on his part; he is not fooled by the clumsy attempt to hide. His question, rather, is an invitation to meet. It's been said that God's search for people is a unique feature of Christianity, inherited from Judaism. In other religions, man searches for God.

Our "sanctified imaginations" tell us that the Lord's *Where are you?* pierces the hearts of the couple as it has the effect of asking "Why are you hiding?" or, even more so, "What have you done?" The Lord's question implies an accusation of guilt, a conviction of sin.

God does not hesitate to show us our sins. He shatters delusions that ungodly behavior is acceptable or inevitable. As the Lord's question pierces the hearts of Adam and Eve, so it pierces ours as well. Centuries later, David will acknowledge the impossibility of hiding from God ([Psalm 139:7-12](#)). Whether Adam fully realizes this truth in his day, we are obligated to realize that fact fully.

But what we hold as truth in terms of "head knowledge," we do not always model in practice. We cannot hide from God, yet we do try. For example, we may have sins we are afraid to share with God in our prayers of confession, when in our minds we understand that God knows these sins already.

What Do You Think?

What guardrails can you (and have you) put in place to help ensure that you don't try to hide from God?

Digging Deeper

What guardrails might work for you but not for others? How about the reverse? Why?

10. He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

Adam, within earshot of the Lord’s summons, does not simply come forth and say, “Here I am” (contrast [Genesis 22:1, 11](#); [46:2](#); [Exodus 3:4](#); [Isaiah 6:8](#)). Instead, he explains his hiding in an attempt to excuse it.

The explanation is true but misleading. Yes, Adam had been *naked* ([Genesis 2:25](#)), and his fear is self-evident in the fact that he has attempted to hide. He offers an explanation of the latter as being due to the former, but the explanation doesn’t hold water as we realize that his nakedness hasn’t resulted in hiding before now. He is afraid because of his disobedience.

The audacity and stupidity of the sin is amazing. As far as we know, there was only one rule in the Garden of Eden: don’t eat the fruit of one special tree ([Genesis 2:15–17](#)). Adam and Eve, given spectacular freedom from rules and laws, managed to break this one command.

B. Shifting Blame (vv. [11–13](#))

11. And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

Again, the questioning by the Lord does not indicate a lack of knowledge on his part. He knows what has happened. But he gives Adam a chance to confess his sin. He does this in a way that confronts Adam with the obvious as God says, in effect, “Let’s talk about your discomfort with being naked. You didn’t feel this way yesterday when we met. What changed? Did you eat the forbidden fruit? That would do it.”

12. The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

When confronted, Adam seems to realize there is no hiding his sin. Yet he does not say, “Yes, Lord, I ate the forbidden fruit, but I regret it deeply. Please forgive me.” Instead, Adam attempts to dodge his guilt by redirecting the blame.

In one of the saddest moments of all Bible accounts, Adam points the finger of guilt in two directions. First he points that finger toward his beloved wife. Then in the same breath Adam indicts the Lord as well with the phrase *the woman you put here with me*. Adam’s admission *I ate it* comes with no acceptance of personal responsibility.

13. Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Following the model just set by her husband, *the woman* admits *I ate*, but attempts to shift full blame elsewhere: to *the serpent*. There is no repentance, no asking for forgiveness.

What Do You Think?

Which have you found more useful: to fixate on Satan's role in tempting you or to ignore his role altogether? Or does the key lie somewhere between those extremes? Why?

Digging Deeper

Consider contexts of occurrences of the word Satan in the New Testament.

DEFLECTING RESPONSIBILITY

Bill would never cheat on his wife. But he maintains a “just friends” texting relationship with a woman from work. Bill would never hit his wife. But the way he belittles her appearance has a similar humiliating effect. Of course, Bill would never move out. But he refuses to connect on any emotional level with his wife.

Bill may think that any resulting divorce that his wife initiates will allow him to blame her for it, since he himself will not have created a biblical basis for divorce. But as our text establishes, attempts to shift blame are nothing new. God knows! Although the one through whom temptation comes is not let off the hook ([Luke 17:1](#)), the bottom line is that each person is held responsible for his or her sin ([Ezekiel 18:4](#)).

There are no victimless sins. Willful disobedience always affects relationships with God and others, even those sins committed in private or in the dark sanctuary of our minds. When looking for the promised way of escape from temptation ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)), look first at how your decisions may damage someone else's soul—then go in the other direction.

—D. C. S.

What Do You Think?

What responsibility will you accept in helping others in your church to be free of blame?

Digging Deeper

Consider [1 Timothy 3:2](#); [5:7](#); [6:14](#); [Titus 1:6–8](#) in their contexts as you form your reply.

II. Judgment

([GENESIS 3:14–17](#))

A. On the Serpent (vv. [14](#), [15](#))

[14](#). 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.

God, knowing precisely what has taken place earlier at the tree, does not question *the serpent*. If the questioning of the two humans indicates opportunities to repent, we see no such opportunity being offered to the tempter. The Lord merely passes judgment and declares the penalty. The penalty reflects

the categories of land creatures from [Genesis 1:24, 25](#): *livestock* and *wild animals* and crawling-on-the-ground animals.

The apostle John identifies “that ancient serpent” as being “the devil, or Satan” himself ([Revelation 12:9](#); [20:2](#)). Because of his ability to speak and his intelligence ([Genesis 3:1–5](#)), he is more like the man and the woman than any other creature in the garden.

Whatever his form before God’s sentencing, the serpent is now to be included among the lowest and most despised of the land animals: the ground-crawlers. The description gives us the picture of a snake as we are familiar with today, that of a slithering, dust-eating belly-dragger. We assume this also includes the loss of speech and cunning intelligence.

15a. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers;

This verse, sometimes called the *protevangelium* (meaning “first gospel”), is the first prophecy in the Bible about a future Savior. Until this story there has been no need for a Savior because there has been no sin. But now there is.

The pronouncement in this verse, given directly to the serpent, has three parts. First, there is a promise of *enmity*—fear and loathing—between *the woman* and her offspring (descendants) and the serpent and his *offspring*. This reflects a coming battle related to the serpent and his agenda to undermine God’s authority and entice humans to sin (compare [John 8:44](#); [Acts 13:10](#); [1 John 3:8](#); [Revelation 12:17](#)). This is spiritual warfare, the struggle for the hearts and souls of men and women ([Ephesians 6:10–12](#)).

15b. “he will crush your head,

The coming Savior will strike some kind of blow to the serpent and his power. From this side of the cross, we realize that Jesus accomplished this when he rose from the dead and thereby defeated the power of death (compare [Romans 16:20](#); [1 Corinthians 15:54–57](#); [Hebrews 2:14](#); [Revelation 1:18](#)).

15c. “and you will strike his heel.”

The coming Messiah will be wounded by Satan’s efforts, but not defeated. He will experience death, but not remain dead ([Revelation 1:18](#); [5:6](#)).

What Do You Think?

What Scriptures do you turn to when wrestling with temptation?

Digging Deeper

How has the answer to the question above changed over the years for you? Why?

B. On Humanity (vv. [16](#), [17](#))

16a. To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children.

God’s pronouncements continue, now with regard to difficulties that lie in the future of *the woman* in particular and that of women in general. *Childbearing* and childbirth will become unpleasant and painful, something all mothers today can verify.

16b. “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

Furthermore, the woman will also be tied to her *husband* in ways that are not always joyful. She will fulfill her *desire* by marriage, but will also have a new master who will *rule over* her (compare [1 Corinthians 11:3](#); [Ephesians 5:22](#)). This dependency has not yet existed in the case of the first man and woman, but it will haunt humankind in the future. The Hebrew behind the translation *rule over* is translated “govern” in [Genesis 1:18](#).

17. 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.”

The pronouncement *to Adam* is the strongest and longest of all. First, God states the basis for his judgment. Yes, the temptation had come through his *wife*, but he still bears responsibility for his sin. As a consequence, the man will no longer have access to the blessed, perfect fertility of the garden. He will now have to scratch out a living from *ground* that is in some way *cursed*. Life will be difficult and tenuous.



Visual for Lesson [5](#). Use this visual to explore emotional responses to the two scenarios suggested; this can be a small-group exercise.

The unpredictable nature of farming is still with us. Despite great advances in technology and methodology, we still have drought and famine. People die every day from malnutrition and hunger. There is no end in sight for this until we enter the New Jerusalem, where there no longer will be any curse ([Revelation 22:3](#)). This will be paradise restored, with direct access to both the Lord and the tree of life, access lost because of the sin in the garden.

III. Banishment

([GENESIS 3:20–24](#))

A. Provision (vv. [20](#), [21](#))

20. Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

The story ends with some final arrangements. The woman needs a name, and *Adam* served as the namer-in-chief earlier ([Genesis 2:19, 20](#)). He gives her a hopeful name, one based on the word for *living*. Adam understands that *Eve* will produce babies and multiply the number of humans ([1:28](#)).

21. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

The *garments of skin* provided by *God* replace the flimsy and temporary fig-leaf apparel ([Genesis 3:7](#)). The author presents this as a gracious and loving act by God. He knows that Adam and Eve will need more than mere coverings for their nakedness, once outside the garden.

B. Expulsion (vv. [22–24](#))

22. 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.”

The author gives a divine detail at this juncture: the gist of God’s rationale for expelling the two from the garden. Things have changed, and sin has caused a loss of innocence for *the man* and his companion. God foresees that Adam has *become like one of us*. The “us” is not specified. Some see this as God’s addressing his heavenly council of angels (compare [Job 1:6](#)). Others see it as conversation between the three persons of the Trinity. Still others see it as the “plural of majesty” (see the commentary on [Genesis 1:26](#) in lesson [3](#) on page [27](#)).

To lose access to *the tree of life* signs the death warrant of Adam and Eve. Instead of living forever, they will age and eventually die. Another future feature of the New Jerusalem is year-round access to the tree of life, planted in or straddling the river of life ([Revelation 22:2](#)).

23, 24. 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.

The Lord takes extraordinary measures to prevent contact with the precious *tree of life*, posting a guard of heavenly beings known as *cherubim* (compare [Ezekiel 10:20](#)). Although stated as guarding *the east side of the Garden of Eden*, the implication is that the cherubim prevent any approach to the special tree. This raises a question: Why didn’t God just destroy the garden and its location?

The Bible does not address this issue specifically. Given that *the Garden of Eden* is not to be found anywhere today, God either did destroy it eventually or allowed forces of nature to overtake it. Traditionally, the garden is located in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. We search in vain, though, to find this exact spot. We will only see it restored as the New Jerusalem of [Revelation 21](#) and [22](#).

SELF-DECEPTION

In his *Confessions*, the early-church theologian Augustine told a story from his younger years. He and a group of friends snuck into an orchard to steal some pears—not to eat them, but for the mere pleasure of doing something forbidden.

Centuries later, a young friend of mine felt a similar urge. So he wandered into a convenience store, took a ball of string, and put it into the back of his jacket. He didn't need the string, but that wasn't the point. As he walked out of the store, he half expected to be tackled by the owner and held down while the police arrived. But nothing happened. All he could think was, *I got away with it!*

But his conscience began to weigh on him as he rode home on his bike. The thrill was gone; all that remained was guilt. The next day, he snuck the ball of string back into the store and determined that he would never do something like that again.

Did Adam and Eve wrestle with dark desires before they made the first sinful decision in history? We don't know. But we know all too well that we do. We would do well to question our assumptions and run our expectations by trusted people who will tell us the truth. Otherwise, like Adam and Eve, we can get caught up in a type of self-deception and blame-shifting that have lifelong consequences.

—D. C. S.

What Do You Think?

What steps can you take to help keep sin out of your church?

Digging Deeper

Under what circumstances, if any, would “more Bible study” not be the best way to keep sin from infecting your church? Why?

Conclusion

A. The Pattern Then as Now

Think about the pattern: First, one partner allows sin to enter the marriage. Second, the person involves the other partner. Third, the realization of the presence of sin causes shame. Fourth, the couple withdraws and tries to hide from God. Fifth, the shame becomes blame. Finally, God resolves these crises by expelling the couple from the garden. They lose their home. This is not the way we want this story to end.

The actions of the first couple is archetypical, a pattern repeated many times in the Bible. An opportunity to violate God's commands seems a good thing (temptation), the violation occurs with short-term pleasure (sin), then the consequences of breaking God's laws (punishment) bring regret (repentance). We see this several times in Genesis alone. Think of Cain and Abel, Judah and Tamar, and Joseph and his brothers.

B. The Solution Now as Then

The ideal is, of course, not to sin in the first place. But we do sin. And when we do, we have a choice to make: let shame lead to repentance, or let shame become blame.

We might reasonably infer that Adam and Eve would have been expelled from the garden even with immediate repentance, without having tried to shift blame. But we might also reasonably infer that the

fact that they tried to shift blame caused tensions in their marriage down the road. Even so, they endured together and established a family. When tragedy struck again with Cain's murder of Abel, they stayed together and had a third son, Seth ([Genesis 4:25](#)). Will we learn from the first family's defeats and triumphs?

C. Prayer

Lord God, help us see our own weaknesses in the story of the first sin. We pray deliverance from daily temptations through the one who crushed the head of the serpent: Jesus your Son. Amen.

D. Thought to Remember

Shifting blame delays repentance.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student

Into the Lesson

Pose this question for whole-class response: "What is your perfect earthly place in terms of people, weather, scenery, food, etc.?" Jot responses on the board. Then ask, "What would disturb or disrupt such a place?"

After responses, make a transition by saying, "When God created the world, everything was perfect. Within this perfect world, God placed the blissful Garden of Eden, which we imagine to have been complete with friendly animals, pristine water, etc. But sin disturbed this perfection. The result was the breaking of relationship between God and people. Let's explore the enduring consequences."

Into the Word

Prior to class, print four copies of [Genesis 3:8–17, 20–24](#). Highlight on one copy the part of narrator, on another the part of Adam, on another that of Eve, and on the one remaining the part of God. Distribute these to four volunteers, one each, to give a dramatic reading of the account.

Say, "In [Genesis 3](#), the perfect place is the scene of a crisis. In this story of the first sin, a pattern is established that is repeated many times in the Bible: an opportunity to violate God's commands (temptation) seems like a good thing, the violation (sin) occurs with short-term pleasure, then the consequences of breaking God's laws (punishment) bring regret (repentance)."

Write the following four words on the board as headings of columns: *Temptation / Sin / Punishment / Repentance*. Ask students to identify how Adam and Eve were tempted to violate God's command. Jot

answers below that column heading. Continue similarly in turn with the remaining three column designations as you identify what the sin was, the punishment for it, and the demonstrations of repentance, if any. This can be either a whole-class or small-group exercise. If you choose the latter, create handouts with the four words as column headers; include written instructions.

Either during the whole-class discussion or after small groups wrap up, make sure also to discuss how both Adam and Eve attempted to dodge guilt by redirecting blame. Explore how that finger-pointing may have affected their marriage. Jot responses on the board to affirm participation.

Option. Begin the Into the Word segment by distributing copies of the “A Tree and a Temptation” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. This will provide the background to today’s text. Assign small groups to complete as indicated.

Into Life

Say, “We too can tell our own stories of temptation, sin, punishment, and repentance.” Divide the class into small groups of four or five. Give each group handouts (you create) with the following questions about the pattern of temptation, sin, punishment, repentance. 1–How does wanting something you should not have heighten your desire for it? 2–What strategies help you resist temptation? 3–What or whom do people blame for their sin? 4–What are some common consequences for sin? 5–How can we demonstrate repentance?

Say, “Sin destroys relationships. It destroyed the perfect relationship between God, Adam, and Eve.” Discuss as a class the following questions: 1–How do our sins affect other people? 2–How do our sins affect our relationship with God?

Give each student a piece of paper and pencil. Ask them to write down how they will repent and seek to restore a relationship this week. Close by praying for the restoration of relationships.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Confession and Repentance” activity from the reproducible page to be completed as indicated in quiet reflection. Read [Psalm 51:1–14](#) to close.