

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 4: Session 2 – NOT Putting God First

Class 4: Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:1-23 – Adam and Eve’s Choice

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Clarify what “choice” is
- Introduce idea of creation containing God’s design and how things don’t work well when we use them outside of their intended design
- Share traditional/dogmatic understandings of the story
- Share idea of how precedent and momentum makes the God way of life so much harder

Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *The World’s Fastest Indian*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. Tasty healthy snacks and tasty unhealthy snacks
4. *Optional:* Sliding puzzle game online (will need internet connection) – go to the link and then click the row with a “1” in it that says “With Digits 3x3:” <https://www.helpfulgames.com/subjects/brain-training/sliding-puzzle.html>

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What is something that you are responsible for or what is a responsibility that you have? (homework, pets, and chores will probably be the main answers, here)

SNACK “Activity”

- Presented here are two types of snacks
- A tasty healthy snack

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- And a tasty unhealthy snack
- You can, of course, have both.
- But before you actually take today's snack, please share with the class which snack you think you'll choose if you could only have one snack -- and why you'd choose it.

DO SNACK "ACTIVITY" (discuss snack decisions, eat snack, ask students if they thought they made the right choice)

TELL

- Last session we talked about characters who put God first.
- Today we start a new session about characters who do NOT put God first in the stories we're going to read
- And our first story of the session is a biggie – Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil
- There's all SORTS of things we need to talk about for this story to make any sense
- The first thing we need to talk about we've already started talking about: Choice.
- For there to truly be choice, the options that we are choosing from need to be **equally** desirable/want-able
- For instance, if today's two snack options had been donuts and a pile of rocks – would that REALLY be a choice?
- And, what we also saw in our snack choices today is that there can be different reasons for why one option is want-able and why another option is want-able.
 - So the tasty snack is tasty and the healthy snack might also be tasty, but it's ALSO healthy. Those are different reasons for why we'd want to choose each snack, then, right?
- So that's the first thing to keep in mind about today's scripture story
- The second thing to keep in mind is that we live in a creation that has design. Meaning, there are dependable, repeatable results that occur in certain circumstances.
- Or put another way within today's context, choices have results.
- For example, if someone regularly eats healthy food, then there are usually healthy results
- And, if someone regularly eats not-healthy food, then there are usually unhealthy results
- Let's keep those things (choices, design, results) in mind as we read today's Bible story

READ Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:1-23 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

2:16And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 17but 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."

3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" 2The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 3but 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.'" 4But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; 5for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6So 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. 7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. 8They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

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

12The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” 13Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

14The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

16To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

17And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

20The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

22Then the Lord God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” — 23therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.

ASK

- Is there anything you find interesting or weird about this story? [*to teachers: You don't necessarily need to answer what they notice or have questions about – sometimes just agree with a, “yep, that's interesting” or a, “Yeah, I find that to be weird, too” works*]
- Verse 2:17 – What are Adam and Eve not supposed to do? (Eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil)
- Verse 3:3 – What does Eve tell the serpent that they may not do? (Eat OR touch the tree)
- Verse 3:5 – How does the serpent make the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil an attractive / want-able choice? (says the fruit of the tree will make Adam and Eve be *like God* – that they'll know Good and Evil)
- Verse 3:6 – What do Adam and Eve do, then? (they eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil)
- In verse 3:5 the serpent says their eyes will be opened. In verse 3:7, what are Adam and Eve's eyes opened to? (that they are naked and that it is shameful)
- Verse 3:8 – what do Adam and Eve do when they hear God? (They hide)
- Verse 3:11 – what is the question God asks Adam? (did you eat of the tree?)
- Verse 3:12 – Do you think Adam answered the question? (No – not really. Instead he blames someone else)
- Verse 3:13 – Does Eve answer the question? (No – she does the same thing as Adam – blames someone/something else)
- Verse 3:14-19 – What are the unhealthy results of Adam and Eve's choices? (serpent loses legs, women will experience childbirth pangs and troublesome relationships with men, men will have to work much harder, and everyone will now die)
- Verse 3:23 – what's the last result that Adam and Eve experience? (They are kicked out of the Garden of Eden)
- So...do you have any responses / overall thoughts you'd like to share about this story at this point?
- Some specific questions to ask if the students don't have much to share at first after asking the previous question:

- Going back to the idea of a choice involving two or more desirable / want-able options – what do you think are the two desirable options that Adam and Eve are choosing between in this story? (a good summary of the two available choices: Being like God or being with God. Can't be with God if you're busy thinking you are God – no room for two gods in one person's life)
- Do you think Adam and Eve are treated fairly by God? Why / why not?
- Do you think the serpent was wrong in its understanding of what would happen if Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Why / why not?

TELL

- First, let's quickly summarize the two main theological ideas that are used to describe this story.
- The **generally accepted Jewish interpretation** of this story is that this is a story about maturity. That Adam and Eve have finally grown up and no longer need God as a parent. They lose their childhood innocence, so to speak, leave Mom and Dad's house and choose to go live in the real, adult world of hardship and responsibility
- The **generally accepted Christian interpretation** of this story is that this is the story of sin entering in the world – also known as "The Fall." The idea here is that God's creation was perfect, but had this one loophole where, if Adam and Eve made one wrong decision, then it was the equivalent of someone spitting into your beautiful, delicious milkshake. In so doing, that one choice ruined everyone else's milkshake / creation for ... eternity.
- Feel free to accept either one of these understandings. Both understandings have been around for a very long time and you'll be in good company if you accept either understanding.
- But there's another option to consider, one that we're going to talk about for the rest of today's class and it starts with this idea: That God is really smart, really powerful, and knows *exactly* what s/he is doing.
- And because God is so smart and powerful, God created Creation with a design that took into account all sorts of choices that we might make – and that the options available for us to choose would be equally want-able

TRANSITION to MOVIE CLIP

- Before we talk any more, let's watch a video clip from the movie, "The World's Fastest Indian."
- The movie is about this cranky old man from Australia who built the fastest Indian (that's a brand name: *Indian*) motorcycle --- all by himself
- This particular movie clip is while he's still testing the bike and he's been made fun of by the local motorcycle gang. So they're all going to have a race to settle things.
- Let's see what happens

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK

- How fast was the bike? (once it got started, pretty speedy!)
- But did the bike win the race? (nope)
- Why not? (couldn't make the turn)
- What do you think – was the bike designed to make a turn? (based on what happened when the bike turned, NO, the bike was not made to turn)
- Even though the bike couldn't start well and it couldn't turn well, how well did it work when it went in a straight line? (it worked VERY well)

TELL

- So in the movie clip, what we see is that the motorcycle is *designed* to do one thing- go really, really fast in a straight line -and it does that really, really well.
- But when it is asked to do things it was NOT designed to do, it doesn't do those things very well: Like start easily or take sharp corners in the sand.
- And that's what I want us to consider about today's story: That God didn't design us to eat of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil - in other words, God didn't make us to be great at deciding what is good and evil - which is why God cautions Adam and Eve from partaking in the exercise of deciding what's good and evil.
- Because deciding what is good and evil was/is supposed to be God's job
- But -- and this is an interesting choice by God -- God *does* let Adam and Eve choose.
 - And the options are both *want-able*: to decide if WE will determine what is good and evil or if we're going to trust God to decide what is good and evil
 - It is a want-able option to let God decide because, thinking of our design (as discussed earlier and as illustrated by the video clip), when we determine what is good and what is evil, then we tend to fall over, just like the motorcycle did when it tried to take a corner.
 - It is a want-able option to determine good and evil by ourselves because, well, why would we trust anyone else to determine what is good and what is evil?
 - In terms, then, of why God kicks Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, that may seem mean, right? However, what's actually happening there is that God is saying, "If you want to determine what is good and evil, then you have to experience the results of your decisions. The Garden of Eden is the result of my decisions. Go, now, and build a world based on what you think is good and evil and see what you think of the results."
- So, often times, we pick the option to determine good and evil as individuals and a collective whole. And thus, you see a lot of things falling over in this world that we've put together.
- Now - does this story mean all hope is lost and that we'll just keep falling over?
- No, not at all. Otherwise, for example, there wouldn't be any Jesus stories (which, as a reminder, happened well after Adam and Eve).
- What Jesus invites us to learn from him is how to live in the Kingdom of God - the new Garden of Eden - just like he did.
- Jesus shows and teaches his disciples how to put God first - which includes trusting God to determine what's good and evil.
- And, although I agree that the option to decide what is good and what is evil on our own is very want-able, I also think the way of life that Jesus illustrates in his actions, teachings, and parables is ALSO a very want-able choice.
- Last session, we looked at why choosing God's way would be want-able (dancing, healing, healthy diets, etc)
- And this session, we are looking at why people choose good and evil on their own and what happens when they do.
- *Spoiler alert*: A lot of falling over happens.

If there's time:

- One more thing to keep in mind about this design of letting God be God – if just ONE person decides they would rather be like God than let God be first, then that can mess things up for everyone.
- Consider the sliding puzzle for instance
- All the pieces in the puzzle have to “work together” for the design to work.

- Just imagine, for instance, if just one of the squares said, “You know what, I’m done moving. I’m going to stay right here.”
- Then the puzzle wouldn’t work correctly.
- Just for fun, then, let's do a sliding puzzle or two as a class (go to <https://www.helpfulgames.com/subjects/brain-training/sliding-puzzle.html> and then click the WITH DIGITS 3x3” option)

CLOSING PRAYER