



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 1 FALL AND EXILE FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN

SUMMARY OF TODAY'S STORY

On the sixth day, after God created the world, God created the first man, Adam.

Adam names all of the animals, and then is given a partner, a woman whom he names *Eve*. Together, they live in a garden called *Eden*. They are told by God that they may eat any of the fruit from the garden except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, Adam and Eve consciously disobey God, eat the forbidden fruit, and are banished by God from the Garden of Eden.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Temptation
- Sin/Right and Wrong
- Free Will and Its Consequences

WHERE YOU'LL FIND TODAY'S STORY

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

Genesis 2–3

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: First Sunday in Lent

Year B: Proper 5 (Sunday closest to June 1)

Year C: Proper 22 (Sunday closest to October 5)



WEAVING OUR STORY WITH THE BIBLICAL STORY

When God created the world, all was “good.” But we turned against God. Today’s story is the story of the first time we failed God. There’s not much cheer at the end of this story, but it is only the first chapter: how we messed up.

Notice how we put ourselves first before God. The consequence is unbearable loss, not just for us but also for God, who mourns for us. By our sin we drive ourselves out of right relationship with God, out of righteousness. The punishment is death, where death is separation from God, the giver of life.

We can understand how this could happen by looking at our own current and past relationships, and how some of our actions might cause separation and alienation from our loved ones.

After this story come a series of others that tell how we continually fail God by trusting in ourselves rather than trusting in God, and how God continues to stay with us, pardon us and save us, even as we repeatedly abandon God.

Remember, though, that the primary message of the stories in the Bible, including today’s story, is that God stays with us—no matter what.



THE EPISCOPAL THREAD

In our Eucharistic Prayer C, we acknowledge our sinfulness. After praising God for creation of the wonderful universe, the celebrant says:

- From the primal elements you brought forth the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason, and skill. You made us the rulers of creation. But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust; and we turned against one another (*BCP*, p. 370).

Our proclivity toward sin is acknowledged in other places in our Prayer Book. We acknowledge our sinfulness in the General Confession (p. 330), which we say each week in Holy Eucharist. In times when we are unable to “cleanse ourselves from sin” (Psalm 51) through the General Confession, the Church allows a Rite of Penitence, a private confession made to a priest at times other than the Sunday Eucharist.

The story of the Fall is told in Lent. We recognize the finitude of our lives and bodies—without God, there is death—at our Ash Wednesday service. As the ashes are placed on our foreheads, the priest says to us, repeating God’s words to Adam and Eve as God sent them out of the Garden of Eden, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” We are not left with such hopelessness. The mark made on our forehead with ashes is the sign of the cross to remind us that in Christ—and through his death and resurrection—there is life.

Not all Christian denominations understand creation and sin the same way. Anglicans believe that creation is good because God made it. And we believe that humanity is good, though we do fall into sin. We do not believe, as the Calvinists do, in the “total depravity of humanity.” God made us, blessed us and called our creation “very good.” We turned away from God, but we are not inherently evil. We do sin, but we cannot blame it on the “serpent.”



GATHERING

Check-In

Invite the students to sit comfortably, giving them an opportunity to visit with each other, establish friendships and build community. Relationships are an important dimension of Christian formation, so a few minutes of visiting will enrich their spiritual development. This is also the perfect time to “check in” with your group members by asking them to share how they are feeling at the time or what kind of a week they had.



PRAYER

Materials:

- small table with cloth to cover it
- large pillar candle or large Christ candle
- matches
- cross

After all the group members have had a few minutes of fellowship time, gather them together for a simple opening prayer. Ask one of the members to light a pillar candle while saying these words from Psalm 119:105:

- Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Explain that you are inviting the light of God to be with all of you. (You might consider posting that reading in the meeting room.)

Invite the member who lit the candle to read a brief prayer, such as:

- Thank you, Lord, for bringing us together today. Be with us as we hear your story and learn about your abiding love for us. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son. *Amen.*

Another good prayer would be one from the Celtic tradition. These prayers offer thanks and acknowledge God in all activities, no matter how

small. You can make up your own Celtic-style prayer, like this one:

- God be in our hearts today.
God be in our ears today as we listen,
God be in our hands today as we create,
God be in the things that we make, the words that we say, and the love that we give. *Amen.*

Carefully extinguish the flame.

TELLING THE STORY

Set the Scene:



- Give an apple to each participant; then, ask them to guess the nature of the day's story/lesson.
- Display a large picture of a lush natural garden or a forest or a gentle waterfall with quiet pool.
- Ask participants to visualize their own Gardens of Eden while you read.
- Give each participant a Bible, so that he/she may follow along with the story.

Read the story aloud from the Bible, occasionally asking for some of the kids to read aloud. Or, if you wish, tell the story in your own words. When you've finished, ask volunteers to summarize the story in as few words as possible (for example: *From favored to fallen*; or *One bad apple spoils perfection*).

The story about Adam and Eve is an important part of this year's story—the story of our salvation—but you do not need to explain or analyze it, nor do you need to ask the students to explore its meaning at this time. For now, we just want them to absorb the story in their minds and hearts and to remember its power. Later, use the discussion or arts time to help the group members draw appropriate and meaningful connections between the story and their own lives.



WEAVING OUR FAITH

Lesson Box

Materials:

- 1 3" x 5" index card for the day's *scribe*
- pen or pencil
- file box in which to store the cards

Ask a volunteer or assign a student to act as class *scribe*. Then, ask the group to articulate the most important lesson gleaned from the day's reading. As prompts, you might ask:

- What did we learn from this story?
- What did we learn about God?
- What did we learn about ourselves?

Once the class has agreed on its wording, ask the *scribe* to write the lesson on the card, date it and file it in the box. By the end of the year, you will have a wonderful and thorough summation of the lessons covered—in the participants' own words.



CLOSING PRAYER

Before the participants leave, ask them to stand, join hands and say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing. The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- Thank you, God, for being here with us today. Send us now back to our homes, our families and friends in peace. May we spread your love to all whom we meet this week. This we ask in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

End the session with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

The participants respond:

- Thanks be to God.



WEAVING GOD'S BELOVED COMMUNITY

In today's lesson, we learn that our actions have consequences.

Our choices can sometimes harm those around us. Even though God stays with us and forgives us, God still hopes that we will make choices to help instead.

- What choices do we make that hurt God's creation around us? (Could be the environment or could be people)
- How can we encourage others (and ourselves) to make choices that help instead of harm?
- How do we turn back to God for forgiveness and guidance on doing better?



Weaving God's Promises

I CAN RELATE...

Participants will first write about and then share their experiences with temptation and consequence.

Materials:

- copies of "I Can Relate..." worksheet (p. 7)
- pens or pencils
- manila folders, 1 per participant
- file box to hold manila folders

Preparation:

Make copies of the "I Can Relate..." worksheet (p. 7), one for each participant.

Directions:

Invite group members to think about a time they were tempted. Make no mention of whether or not the temptation was "good" or "bad." Hand out the worksheet and tell them to complete each open-ended statement. Let them know that, after a few minutes (5-7), they will be asked to share some or all of their answers (if they wish).

Sharing:

After volunteers have had a chance to share their thoughts, use one or more of the questions below to summarize the activity:

- What is temptation?
- Are all temptations bad?
- What causes a person to fall prey to a temptation?
- Do you ever think about consequences before you act?
- How does forgiveness figure into the play of temptation/consequence?

Close:

- Invite participants to place their worksheets into their individual manila folders for safekeeping. Ask them to write their names on their folders. Place these folders in the file box.

I CAN RELATE...

I can remember a time when I was tempted to...

After I thought about it for a while, I decided to...

The consequence of my action was...

From that point on, I made up my mind to...

I think I made a good/bad choice (*circle one*).

***If you're willing to share your answers, please let your group leader know.

Name _____

Date _____



Weaving God's Promises

STORY-IN-THE-ROUND

Participants will retell the day's lesson/story in their own words, one person and one word at a time.

Materials (optional):

- cell phone (for recording)
- notebook and pencil/pen (or computer for typing story)
- large clasp envelope (9" x 12")

Directions:

1. Invite group members to sit in a circle, with one acting as a *scribe* (optional). As leader, begin telling the story with one word: *This, Once, Many*, etc.
2. Moving around the circle to your left, each participant adds one word at a time until the day's story (in this case, Adam and Eve) is retold in its entirety.
3. This activity requires that each person listen carefully to the word that precedes them, and that they choose the next word purposefully.
4. Once the story is complete, ask the *scribe* to read back the story or play back the recording.
5. Did we leave anything out? Is there anything we need to change?

Close:

- Place the hand-written story in the class envelope, *or*, save the typed story to a file on the computer. Be sure to date the work.



Weaving God's Promises

WEAVING GOD'S STORY INTO OURS: ADVICE, PLEASE!

For groups that would rather have discussions than activities, these questions are great for going deeper and helping to weave God's story into their lives, in a way they can see. You can choose to do this out loud or through journals that are kept in the classroom.

Materials:

- journals, one per student (or, If not available, 5" x 8" Index cards, 1 per student)
- pens or pencils
- white board or large sheet of paper on which the day's "Ask/Answer" statements are written (see below)

Optional Preparation:

Give each participant a journal; ask them to write their names inside. Jump-start their thinking for the upcoming activity by reminding them that, at times, they might feel alone when faced with a big decision or difficult choice. (**Note:** group members may need help locating the day's reading or lesson in the Bible.)

Journal Directions:

Distribute journals (or cards) and a pen or pencil to each member. Direct them to the questions/statements on the board. Ask them to copy and respond to the statement in their journals. Students will *not* share their answers unless they volunteer to do so.

Ask/Answer Statements:

- When I'm faced with a tough choice, I ask myself. . . .
- If I'm not sure what to do, I would ask or go to. . . .
- I know I've made the "right" decision when. . . .
- Where was God in this process?
- A meaningful scripture might be. . . .

Close:

- Once finished, collect the journals and store them for safekeeping.



Weaving God's Promises

“I’M TEMPTED” PICTONARY

Participants will act out and draw common temptations and, as a group, classify them as “good” or “bad” temptations.

Materials:

- large easel
- large pad of paper with removable sheets
- markers
- I’m Tempted Slips, cut apart (see p. 11...or make up or add your own)
- envelope or other container for slips

Preparation:

Divide the group into two teams. Review basic Pictionary rules (drawings only; no words, spoken or written; no help from fellow team members; length of time for guessing). Tell each team to decide who on the team will draw first. The team that guesses the most temptations correctly will be declared the winners.

Directions:

The first artist selects a slip of paper at random from an envelope or other container. They have to draw a picture of the item on the board and entertain guesses from their team until the item is correctly identified. **Note:** the more specific the item, the more challenging the task will be. (Suggestions for Temptations can be found on the next page). Each team member takes a turn until all of the cards have been used or until each team member has drawn a picture.

Close:

- Ask students to classify the temptations drawn as “good” or “bad.” Ask them to explain their thinking.

I'M TEMPTED SLIPS



eating a hot fudge sundae

shoplifting

buying an expensive watch

reading your friend's diary

skipping school

bungee jumping

bringing home a free kitten/puppy

getting a tattoo

cheating on a test

tripping someone

dyeing your hair



Weaving God's Promises

ADAM AND EVE PUPPETRY

Participants make puppets of the characters from the story of Adam and Eve for the purpose of telling the story of the Garden of Eden to elementary school children. (This lesson will most likely span two sessions.)

Materials:

Puppet Patterns (see p. 13)
scissors, markers, 12" wooden or plastic rulers (to hold puppets), tape, stapler
card stock or poster board; markers or colored pencils
optional: fabric, felt, yarn

Preparation:

Make enlarged copies of the puppet patterns (p. 13). Students may use the patterns or create the necessary characters of their own designs.

Directions:

1. Divide into two groups: *artists* and *actors*. While the *artists* make the puppets, you can work with the *actors* on a basic script or outline for the story, being sure to include all of the story's most important points.
2. Once the puppets have been completed, have the *artists* serve as the audience for a rehearsal (or two) of the "play." Schedule a time to present "The Story of Adam and Eve" to the elementary groups.
3. Make the telling more interactive by inviting the audience to listen for key words as the play proceeds and then to respond as follows when they hear these words:

<i>God</i>	"Praise to you!" (<i>Lift hands in air.</i>)
<i>Adam</i>	"Welcome to earth!"
<i>Eve</i>	"Listen to God!"
<i>Serpent</i>	"BOOO!"

Close:

After the play is performed, have your participants ask a few summary questions:

- Where did Adam and Eve live? What was life like for them?
- What did God tell them not to do?
- What happened to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed?

