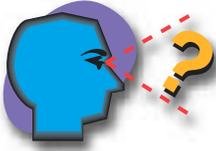


# Genesis

## Responses to the Questions



NOTE; BE SURE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS YOURSELF BEFORE READING THE ANSWERS IN ORDER TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS STUDY.

### Discovery and Effect

#### Read Genesis 3:7-13

1. The first consequence of the disobedience in the Garden is that something inside Adam and Eve radically changes. The text says their "eyes were opened." We know they had open eyes before they ate the forbidden fruit, so what can this mean? We are told right away-"they knew they were naked." They were able to see that something was very wrong with them. They could perceive that they were no longer able to be at peace in their nakedness. Not wanting to be fully revealed that way, they make coverings for themselves. Had their bodies changed? No, their bodies remained the same, but their disobedience took away their innocence, leaving shame in its place.
2. Newly aware of their weakness and vulnerability and ashamed before one another, Adam and Eve's relationship with God now is damaged as well. They could no longer face their Creator and Father openly. They hid from Him among the trees. Had God changed? No, He is the same God, but their disobedience fills them with fear, making them want to flee from communion with Him in the Garden.
3. God knows everything that has happened. He asks them for an accounting of their behavior. He wants them to put into words what they have done. He does this for their sakes, not His. It will allow them to have enough self-knowledge to recognize how far they have departed from the life God had designed for them. He wants to hear what they have to say about it, as the good Father that He is. A Father Who asks His children for an explanation of their rebellion acknowledges that who they are and why they do what they do is important to Him. His primary concern is for them. He gives them an opportunity to cast themselves on His mercy. And mercy always means hope!
4. Adam's primary concern is himself. He is ashamed of his nakedness and afraid of God, now that he has disobeyed. He no longer sees God as his all-loving and good Father. Something deep inside him has changed: trust and love have been replaced with fear and shame.
5. Adam passes the buck to Eve-and actually to God, by saying the woman whom thou gavest to be with me gave him the fruit. He is defensive, denying that any of the fault is his. As he did when the serpent tempted them, he leaves Eve all on her own. Eve, in turn, passes the blame to the serpent, whom she says "beguiled" her. Can this be the same pair we saw in Genesis 2, perfect companions and co-workers in God's creation?
6. There is no evidence of remorse or grief over their disobedience---no crying out for forgiveness. With their new eyesight, they cannot even see how offensive their behavior is to their Father. It isn't that they are unaware of what they've done. They are unaware of what it means.
7. As a direct result of their disobedience, Adam and Eve see everything in their world differently. First, they see themselves as naked, which causes shame. Second, they see God as One to fear and avoid at all costs. Third, they lose sight of each other as helpers and companions. They are fearful and defensive. Although their bodies are alive, something inside of them has died. It is an internal death, affecting every aspect of their lives. The Church calls this



## Responses to the Questions (cont.)

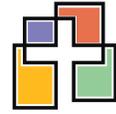
## Catholic Scripture Study

original sin. Their human nature has been weakened: "not totally corrupted...[but] wounded in the natural powers proper to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin-an inclination to evil that is called 'concupiscence'" (CCC 405). Yet perhaps the most devastating consequence is that they are blind to it. The new eyesight promised by the serpent has left them unable to see what they have become. What a tragic irony this is! Hear the words of Jesus: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matt. 6:22-23)

### Curse and Promise

#### Read Genesis 3:14-15

8. Satan is the actual villain here. He is God's true enemy. This is not to deny the humans' responsibility, but the first order of business is to address this one who seems to have gained such power over them. They will not be safe as long as he can wield that power.
9. By God's curse, the serpent is destined to be the most wretched creature on earth-cursed "above all cattle" and "all wild animals." He will be the lowest form of life, a status that will be evident even in how he moves from place to place ("upon your belly"), eating dust. [Does this imply that the serpent in the temptation scene appeared upright, more like a dragon, but was condemned to slither in a posture of complete defeat and humiliation?] The meaning is clear: Satan has gone from a position of pride and power to one of lowliness and impotence. His demise is lightning-quick. This sudden and irrevocable fall of Satan is a common theme in Scripture, as is clear from the other readings.
10. Yes, a battle already existed in the rebellion of Satan against God. The difference now is that God is going to extend the battle to include the human beings. Initially, the humans had been targets of the devil's wrath against God. But now God is going to enlist the humans on His side. Could the serpent have possibly imagined this incredible twist? It is the first great reversal in the story of man. From this point on, reversal will be the underlying theme of our human history. Pause now to think carefully about this. However we come to understand ourselves and our world, we must get this one truth firmly in place--God does His work through reversals.
11. This is surely a sign of hope. It means that humanity will not come to an end with Adam and Eve. Even though their disobedience has been severe, Adam and Eve will be allowed to procreate, and mankind will continue.
12. The serpent aimed his attack on Eve. It was through her act of disobedience that the first bite was taken. It is appropriate that God's punishment on the serpent should begin with "the woman."
13. The "woman" cannot be Eve because whoever this woman is, she is engaged in a battle against the serpent, the devil. Eve has already succumbed to his power. This "woman" will be God's co-worker in bringing the enemy to defeat; she will be outside of his power.
14. The question this phrasing provokes is: Why is there no husband mentioned in this scenario? The only "he" is the seed of the woman, not her mate. How can a woman have a child without a husband?



## Responses to the Questions (cont.)

## Catholic Scripture Study

15. A head wound suggests one that completely incapacitates. What else does a serpent have to keep him in action beside his head? A bruise on the heel, although painful and an aggravation, is not one that would end the life of a man.
16. Power to overcome an angel would have to be divine power. Yet this "seed" will be a human being, born of a woman. How can this be?
17. Remember the contempt for the humans that filled the serpent, infusing that deadly conversation he began with Eve? The devil despised Adam and Eve. They must have looked like such dupes to him. He decided he would strike out at God by striking out at them. He made patsies of them in short order. They appeared to be weak links in the chain. So, when God announces that the serpent, as his punishment, will face a battle with human creatures, the woman and her seed, in which he will be defeated, it is a crushing, mortal blow to his pride and arrogance. We need to linger long enough to let it really sink in. Whatever the devil attempted to rob from humanity-our life, our dignity, our exalted position in God's family-is more than made up for in the punishment meted out to him. God will vanquish His enemy through human beings!
- That, of course, means that in the midst of the worst thing that could possibly have happened to man and woman, God makes a promise. That promise is so full of hope for them that it swells and bursts into a vision of glory bright enough to make us want to shield our eyes from it. Who is this God, Who loves His creatures so much to allow them to participate this way in His plan to defeat evil? How could such faithless beings matter so much to Him? The details we have in the story thus far hardly explain it. We are forced to recognize that behind the words and action that we can see in Genesis is an unseen love that is fathomless, mysterious, unconquerable, and capable of unimaginable displays of power and constancy. What can it all mean??