

# Every Good Endeavor

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Genesis 3.1-19, Ecclesiastes 2.10-25  
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## I. Connecting With One Another

What comes to mind when you hear the word "broken"? How about "fallen"? What about the phrase "not the way it's supposed to be"?

## II. Introduction to this Study

The first two weeks of our study Every Good Endeavor began at the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures, Genesis 1 and 2, which reveal that God's original creation was good, with humans - the crown of His work - very good! We have seen that humans, created in the image of God, are given the God-like task of tilling and working the garden God created, continuing His task of cultivation. And yet, we often don't experience work as the joyous partnership with God the way He intended. This week we will engage why.

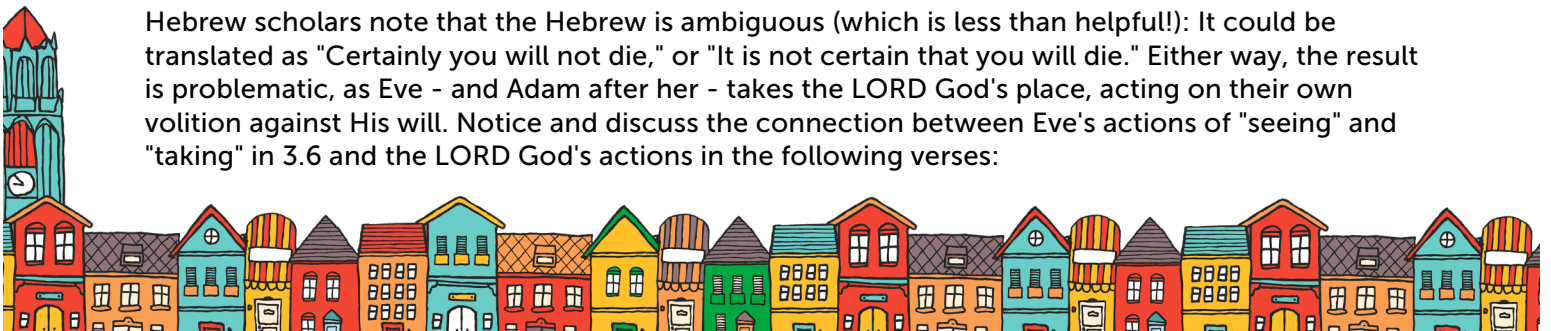
Genesis 3 reveals that even in the garden, the first humans were given a choice: Obey God's commands or not. And if not, suffer the consequences! Christian theology throughout the ages has affirmed that our present difficulties in both personal relationships and work life continue today because of choices made by the first humans so long ago.

## III. Study the Text

- a. Begin by rereading a key passage from last week's study, Genesis 2.15-18. In particular, notice who is in the garden at this point (and who isn't!). Who, then, hears God's command not to eat from the particular tree? Following that, whose responsibility would it be to tell others not to eat from that tree?
- b. Read Genesis 3.1-6. In verse 1, the serpent merely asks a question, but it's a *leading* question, isn't it? While it may seem innocent enough, compare and contrast the serpent's question with God's instruction in 2.16. There is one major difference. What insinuation of the serpent ignores God's original generous permission?
- c. Based on verse 2, it's apparent that Adam did communicate to Eve God's command. Beginning in Genesis 2.4, the Divine is always referred to as the "LORD God," though notice: the serpent only uses the term "God." It may seem insignificant, though this may have been quite profound for the ancient Israelite community. One scholar explains: "In describing God simply as God instead of as the *LORD* God, which is characteristic of the rest of Genesis 2-3, there is a suggestion of the serpent's distance from God. God is just the remote creator, not Yahweh, Israel's covenant partner."  

What words do you use to talk about God? How do they influence your understanding of His work in your life? What word does Eve use? If the above quoted scholar is correct, how - if at all - has the serpent already influenced her thinking by asking this leading question?
- d. Read verse 4 aloud. How do you understand it?

Hebrew scholars note that the Hebrew is ambiguous (which is less than helpful!): It could be translated as "Certainly you will not die," or "It is not certain that you will die." Either way, the result is problematic, as Eve - and Adam after her - takes the LORD God's place, acting on their own volition against His will. Notice and discuss the connection between Eve's actions of "seeing" and "taking" in 3.6 and the LORD God's actions in the following verses:



"Saw" Genesis 1.4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31

"Took" Genesis 2.15, 21, 22, 23

- e. Read Genesis 3.7-19. Adam and Eve's proclivity to hide from God reveals a sense of guilt even *before* hearing Him walk through the garden. What does that tell us about when we do our own thing, going against God's desires for us?

At the same time, even in their sin, Adam and Eve's sowing fig leaves together reveals that they retain their God-given creativity. How do they also hide from the truth by passing the blame? Count all the times Adam and Eve keep from taking responsibility for their actions. How has this one decision ruptured relationships?

- f. After Adam and Eve disregard God's instructions and instead "see" and "take" as they see fit, not only are their relationships ruptured, the nature of their work changes as well. Reread verses 16-19, noting all the ways their labor has shifted from joyful stewardship to difficult toil. Can you relate to any of the descriptions of the difficulty of their work?
- g. Read Romans 8.18-25. Commenting on this passage, Timothy Keller writes,

Nothing works now as it should. Sin leads to the disintegration of every area of life: spiritual, physical, social, cultural, psychological, temporal, eternal. This is important to remember, for many Christians tend to divide the world into "worldly" and "sacred" spaces and activities, as if sin affects only things out in the world; yet absolutely every part of human life – soul and body, private and public, praying and laboring – is affected by sin.

How have you noticed the affects of sin this week? How has it affected your endeavors?

#### IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Have you ever asked or been asked questions that lead a conversation in a different direction than God intends? Are there leading questions our culture asks that divert us away from God's original intentions for our life and work?
- b. Read Matthew 6.5-13. How does Jesus instruct His followers to envision and pray to God? How – if at all – does this influence your understanding of God?
- c. How – in your thoughts and actions – have you taken God's place, deciding for yourself what is right or wrong instead of allowing His instructions to guide you? How about specifically in your work? How have the decisions of others negatively affected your work?
- d. Read Genesis 2.21. How does God creating garments for Adam and Eve communicate His continuing love and mercy even after their sin? How have you experienced God's continuing love and mercy even in a broken, fallen world where things aren't how they're supposed to be?
- e. Return to Romans 8, reading verses 12-17 before verses 18-25. How does this passage relate to what happens in Genesis 3? How does it reframe how we work in a fallen, broken world?

#### V. Pray

Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Thank God (our Father!), that by Jesus' work on the cross, we can be reconciled to Him and join Him in fulfilling His redeeming purposes for the world,
- b. Lift up the ways you experience the fallen, broken world, asking that by His Spirit's continual work, you would be renewed to engage your every endeavor in light of His love and mercy,
- c. Pray for the ongoing ministry of Good Shepherd, that we might continue to connect with God through worship, grow in faith through study, and serve God and the people He created, that in all things, He might have the glory.

