

The Great Canadian Bible Study 2015

The Legacy of Eve

Written by

Rev. Faye Reynolds for Canadian Baptist Women



Women carry a confusing and often-tainted legacy as daughters of Eve and depending on the perspective, we have been labeled anything from the *Mother of all Life* to the *Great Seductive Temptress*. Some modern day feminist movements have reinterpreted Eve's act of rebellion as a courageous move of independence and applaud her assertive thinking, where more misogynist views cast blame for every evil in the world at our feet. This study will engage the story of Genesis with the prayer that God will allow us to see whom he created and called us to be from the outset, while acknowledging our weaknesses and continued need for dependency and healing ultimately found in Christ.

Begin with reading Psalm 16: 5 – 11 slowly and perhaps 2 or 3 different readers. Consider what might be your “delightful inheritance” (NIV) or “goodly heritage” (NRSV). Share with another person one woman in your heritage that has left a Godly legacy that you long to continue through coming generations. Perhaps you are the beginning of a new legacy of faith and prayer. In prayer, give thanks for what God has done and will continue to do through a legacy of faithfulness.

The Study of Genesis 1 – 3: We have two accounts of the creation of Eve in these first chapters. The first chapter speaks of the creation of both man and woman as a unit and reveals God's desires and purposes for their lives. The second chapter expands on the details of God's creation of Adam and then Eve, giving greater definition to their relationship and calling. The quick failure and breakdown of the relationship with God and with one another, along with the consequences of that breakdown are detailed in Chapter 3. As these passages are very familiar to most readers, ask the Holy Spirit to give fresh eyes and ears to the texts as we seek His truth. It is very helpful to hear the text from the NRSV with inclusive language, so that it is easy to differentiate between humankind (*adm*¹) as man and woman, and specific gender references to male (*zkr*²) and female (*unqbe*³). What has become a proper name, Adam, is from the three Hebrew letters *adm* and simply mean “human”.

READ Genesis 1: 26 – 31

1. *Let us make (adm) in our own image, in our likeness, and let them rule . . .* There are many ideas of what it means for us to be created in the image of God. Have fun sharing as many ideas as possible of what the image of God looks like in us, especially as women.
2. *Male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them . . .* What is the joint work and calling of both men and women? What are the joint blessings both receive?
3. So we see that in God's initial design, there is no division of labour, in calling or in blessing. Both men and women bear the image of God and it is Very Good! Relationships are established between God, the humans and the rest of creation. How would you define those relationships from these verses so far?

¹ <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/120.htm>

² <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/2145.htm>

³ <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/5347.htm>

READ Genesis 2: 4 – 9, 15 - 25

4. The Hebrew continues to refer to *adm*, (the human) but most translations now use the form “man” though it is not technically a gender term. The order of creation seems slightly different in this chapter for the human is becoming the central character and the role of humanity defined further. We have a very descriptive image of God breathing into the nostrils of his creation. What meaning does that image convey to you?
5. What is 1) the work, 2) the blessing and 3) the limitation placed on the man?
6. There is also a problem stated: *It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a (ezer⁴) suitable for him.* The Hebrew word for helper occurs 4 times in this form in the Old Testament and 21 times in other forms, and it most often refers to God as our helper. This is significant in that it is clear that the role of helper is in no way a subservient role. So discuss how God has been your helper and how you live out your own role as helper.
7. *Eve was not taken out of Adam's head to top him, neither out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him.* (Attributed to Matthew Henry). Is this a helpful quote for you? What did it mean to Adam that his helper was created out of his very essence? How would you now define God's plan for the relationship between husband and wife? Men and women in general?
8. It is significant to note in verse 24 that it is the man who leaves behind his family of origin to be united with his wife, in that it continues to balance out the power base. When a woman is forced to leave her family to join the man's family unit, it leaves the woman in a much more vulnerable place, than when a man joins her family base. However, we see quickly as we move through the stories of the Old Testament that this is forgotten and the woman is often removed from her support base and her status becomes one of possession, not partner.

We now move from God's original dream and desire for his Creation to the reality of sin and its relational consequences. READ Chapter 3: 1 – 13

9. Look closely at the way the serpent raises doubt in the woman. How does he ask questions or make statements that slightly twist the words of God. How does Eve also add to the command of God? Remember also that Eve was not present when God gave the specific order to Adam, so we do not know if God repeated the command specifically to Eve or only through Adam.
10. Share together any thoughts as to why Eve was so vulnerable to this temptation and what was the true desire. Was it the fruit or the idea of gaining wisdom? Why did the serpent talk to Eve and not to Adam, who received the order first hand from God? You will notice in verse 6 some very key words: *She gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.* Adam was there all along, so why is Eve the target?
11. Is there any evidence that Eve was the “temptress”? We live in a society that loves to attach blame to any tragic event, with formal and expensive inquiries launched to assign the burden of guilt upon some poor soul. Look briefly at Romans 5: 12 – 17. Paul is using the argument that sin entered the world through the act of one man and Jesus as one man would reverse the consequences. “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive”. For the sake of this particular argument, Paul puts the responsibility for sin on Adam. More problematic is Paul's writing to Timothy in I Timothy 2: 13 – 15 where the blame is laid fully at the feet of Eve. Both

⁴ <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/5828.htm>

texts are important within the context that Paul is arguing. In the Romans passage, Paul is using man verses man and so Adam is singled out. In the text from I Timothy, Paul is addressing false teachings. In Ephesus, some Greek women were taking liberties from their background in Artemis fertility worship and their newfound freedom in Christ to spread false teachings. Paul reminds the women that it was twisting the truth that got Eve into trouble in the first place. Women are not to have authority over men because they were meant to be partners. So discuss what might have been a different scenario if Adam and Eve had **together** confronted the serpent. Also because they did not act together, how are they both culpable for the failure?

12. What was Eve's weakness in the garden and what was Adam's weakness? How do those weaknesses translate into our relationships today?

READ the consequences of Eve's actions in Genesis 3: 14 - 16

It is important to read these "curses" not as God's arbitrary punishment, but truly as the outcome of broken relationship. The first consequence takes place before God speaks. Man and woman are suddenly on different sides, noticing their differences and feeling shame. They are no longer "one flesh". When God seeks out Adam, he stands apart from Eve and points the finger of blame her way. Eve owns none of it, especially not influencing Adam's actions. They are truly torn asunder.

13. Now God speaks to their future as an outcome of their actions. *I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.* Eve will now long for the intimacy and oneness that they once had, but her husband will not reciprocate that longing. What evidence is there in our legacy from Eve that we long for intimacy and oneness that often seems to go unfulfilled?
14. The ultimate sin described in this chapter is acting apart from God and one another. Rather than delighting in all that God has provided and trusting in his goodness, Eve distrusted God and acted apart from both God and Adam. The consequences of relational separation will be for the man to endeavor to dominate – to wrestle with creation rather than partner with it, and to rule over woman with distrust. The woman will fall into the "people-pleasing" trap of trying to win the affections of another. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen⁵ states sin's distortion this way: *The Man's Abuse: Dominion to Domination. The Woman's Abuse: Sociability becomes Social Enmeshment.* Discuss how this is evidenced in society today. (Enmeshment takes place when one cannot differentiate their own needs and feelings from those around them.)
15. In Genesis 3:20, the man gives a name to his wife. Eve simply means "life" and our true legacy is to bring forth life. This is a wonderful privilege and delight to bear children, but not every woman is granted this opportunity. What are other ways that women can bring forth life beyond bearing children?
16. The good news of Jesus Christ is that the serpent's head has been crushed. The twisted lies that we can live apart from God or one another have been destroyed in the reconciling work of Jesus Christ. In reversing sin's consequences, Jesus taught us to serve one another rather than dominate. He revealed a love so deep for us that the ache in our heart for intimacy is at last filled completely in the love of Jesus. As men and women, we can once again be in a partnership dependent upon God's provisions, his grace, mercy and love. That is our true legacy as daughters of Eve.

⁵ Van Leeuwen, Mary Stewart: *Gender and Grace*, Intervarsity Press, 1990. Pg 44 - 46