

# **Christian Education**

## **Education in the Garden of Eden**

Lesson #1 for October 3, 2020

Scriptures: Genesis 2:7-23; 3:1-6; 2 Peter 1:3-11; 2:1-17; Hebrews 13:7,17,24; Job 36:22.

1. While the “educated world” believes in evolution and ignores or rejects the story we are studying this week, even many Christians regard the first eleven chapters of Genesis as “myth,” that is, stories which may teach good lessons but are not really telling us the truth and may not have really happened.
2. By contrast, most Bible students know the story in Genesis 1-3. What could we possibly learn from this very familiar story that we have not previously discovered?

**The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime.** As an illustration of its principles **a model school was established in Eden**, the home of our first parents. The Garden of Eden was the schoolroom, nature was the lesson book, the **Creator Himself was the instructor**, and the parents of the human family were the students.—Ellen G. White, *Education*\* 20.1.†

**I saw that the holy angels often visited the garden, and gave instruction to Adam and Eve concerning their employment, and also taught them concerning the rebellion of Satan and his fall. The angels warned them of Satan, and cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe.** The angels enjoined upon them to closely follow the directions God had given them, for in perfect obedience only were they safe. **And if they were obedient, this fallen foe could have no power over them.**—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*,\* vol. 1, 20.1.†

3. **Try to imagine what it would be like to have a school in which God Himself was the main Teacher and the angels were His assistants!** Would that be a good education? Put in that way, it is hard to imagine why Eve and Adam would have chosen another teacher.
4. How much “original knowledge” do you think Adam and Eve had? God must have instilled many skills—like how to walk—and maybe information in their minds at the point of their creation. But, nevertheless, there was an enormous amount of knowledge that they should have learned. What we have recorded is the very brief description found in Genesis 2:7-23.
5. How long do you think Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden? Do we have any clues?

The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and **their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels.** The mysteries of the visible universe—“the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16)—afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. The laws and operations of nature, which have engaged men’s study for six thousand years, were opened to their minds by the infinite Framer and Upholder of all. They held converse with leaf and

flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life. **With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that playeth among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all.** God's glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds," the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night—all were open to the study of our first parents. On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, God's name was written. The order and harmony of creation spoke to them of infinite wisdom and power. They were ever discovering some attraction that filled their hearts with deeper love and called forth fresh expressions of gratitude.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 50.3-51.0.<sup>†</sup>

6. God did not leave Adam and Eve just to wander around, wondering what to do. They were given responsibilities. And, no doubt, they enjoyed with great satisfaction being able to do what God had told them to do. What kind of responsibilities did God give Adam and Eve?
7. The garden provided them with a fabulous diet. There must have been literally tons of great food available. What did they do with all of it? Did they share the fruit with the angels who came to teach them? Or, did the fruit just remain on the trees, awaiting the arrival of Adam and Eve to pick it? Sin had not yet entered our world. We have no idea how large the Garden of Eden actually was; but, one day, we will see that garden!

Transported with joy, he [Adam] beholds the trees that were once his delight—the very trees whose fruit he himself had gathered in the days of his innocence and joy. He sees the vines that his own hands have trained, the very flowers that he once loved to care for. His mind grasps the reality of the scene; he comprehends that this is indeed Eden restored, more lovely now than when he was banished from it. The Saviour leads him to the tree of life and plucks the glorious fruit and bids him eat. He looks about him and beholds a multitude of his family redeemed, standing in the Paradise of God. Then he casts his glittering crown at the feet of Jesus and, falling upon His breast, **embraces the Redeemer**. He touches the golden harp, and the vaults of heaven echo the triumphant song: "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and lives again!" The family of Adam take up the strain and cast their crowns at the Saviour's feet as they bow before Him in adoration.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 648.1.<sup>†</sup> Compare *Adventist Home* 541.1 [which has punctuation differences only].<sup>‡</sup>

8. According to the Bible story, God created Adam, probably out of lumps of clay. God knew Adam would need a companion. Earlier, God had created the animals out of other lumps of clay. He then assigned Adam the job of "naming" or studying and categorizing all the animals. This is very important to understand. Adam had the ability to discriminate, to understand, and to judge the quality of the things he saw. This set him apart from the rest of God's creation.
9. Then, God put Adam to sleep, took out a rib, and made Eve. Adam's response when he awoke and saw Eve was incredible. She must have been the most beautiful woman ever to exist.
10. Some Bible students try to claim that man is superior to woman because Eve was taken

out of man. They seem to have forgotten that every man from that day until this has been taken out of woman!

11. So, what can we learn from this story, even though we are so far removed from it?
12. Every seed contains that amazing power of life given to it by God. The flowers are not only beautiful, but also many have wonderful aromas. The fruit must have been exceedingly great tasting. How could they have avoided eating too much?
13. Try to imagine watching God arrange the Garden of Eden. Did any of the angels assist Him in any way? Did the birds love to come and sit on Adam and Eve's fingers? Imagine how the hummingbird flies! Was it necessary for Adam and Eve to till the soil in any way? Did they have any fertilizer to be applied? Did they need any fertilizer?
14. Almost before we even have a chance to think about those issues, we come to Genesis 3. Suddenly, there is an abrupt shift in the narrative.
15. First of all, we need to recognize that Satan had already been thrown out of heaven and down to this earth before God created this world.

**Revelation 12:7-9:** <sup>7</sup> Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, who fought back with his angels; <sup>8</sup>but the dragon was defeated, and he and his angels were not allowed to stay in heaven any longer. <sup>9</sup>The huge dragon was thrown out—that ancient serpent, called the Devil, or Satan, that deceived the whole world. **He was thrown down to earth, and all his angels with him.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Revelation 12:7-9). New York: American Bible Society.<sup>†</sup>

16. Did God allow Satan and all his angels to watch as He created our world. What did they think? Obviously, Satan demanded immediate access to those new beings.
17. What is implied when we say that Satan was more subtle or cunning than God?
18. Before we move on, we need to ask ourselves one very important question: Why was the tree of knowledge of good and evil placed in the Garden of Eden? Why do you think He placed both the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil right in the middle of the garden? Was God trying to tempt or test Adam and Eve? That is what almost everyone says. But, notice these very significant words from Ellen White.

The angels warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. **While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them;** for, if need be, every angel in heaven would be sent to their help. If they steadfastly repelled his first insinuations, they would be as secure as the heavenly messengers. **But should they once yield to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no disposition to resist Satan.**

The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. **Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree.** Should they attempt to investigate its

nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 53.2-3.†

19. The tree was not placed in the garden primarily to test or tempt Adam and Eve. **It was placed there as protection by limiting the access that Satan would have to our first parents.** Satan could not follow them wherever they went, trying to tempt them at every corner. The great controversy had already started, and God knew what Satan was capable of doing!

20. In God's early instructions to Adam and Eve, He was very clear.

**Genesis 2:16-17:** <sup>16</sup>He said to him, "You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, <sup>17</sup>except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day."—*Good News Bible*.\*

21. As we know from 1 John 4:8,16, God is a God of love. In order to have love, one must have freedom. And so, God created Adam and Eve with the power of free choice. They could choose to obey or disobey. And we know what happened.

22. Why was it necessary for God to allow Satan to have that one tree in the garden? Was that one tree necessary to give Adam and Eve freedom? Satan clearly sinned in heaven without any tree to tempt him. So, did they really need that tree?

23. God knew exactly what was coming. We do not know how much He told the angels; but, the angels also taught Adam and Eve. God gave humans the power to have children; Satan does not have that capability! If he could have children, no doubt, he would fill the world with "little satans"!

24. It is very likely that the conversation between Eve and the serpent was longer than what we have recorded in Genesis 3. What other things do you think the serpent might have said to Eve? Did he compliment her on how good she looked?

25. Notice the conversation between the serpent, speaking on Satan's behalf, and Eve.

**Genesis 3:1-6:** <sup>1</sup>Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the LORD God had made. The snake asked the woman, "Did God really tell you **not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?**"

<sup>2</sup>"We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden," the woman answered, <sup>3</sup>"except the tree in the middle of it. God told us not to eat the fruit of that tree or even touch it; if we do, we will die."

<sup>4</sup> **The snake replied, "That's not true; you will not die. [Satan claimed that God is a liar.]** <sup>5</sup>God said that, because he knows that when you eat it you will be like God and know what is good and what is bad."

<sup>6</sup> The woman saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, and he also ate it.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

26. What can we learn from this interchange? What do you think would have been the result if Eve had rushed to her husband or to God and asked about this encounter? Eve knew

that tree had been there every day of her life. There was nothing new about it. She knew it would be there the next day and she could come back and eat of it if it was the right thing to do. But, she apparently did not think of those things. **She was overcome by the surprise of a talking serpent.**

27. Satan, of course, knew exactly what God had said about the tree. **And in order to gain Eve's attention and mislead her, Satan's first words were an accusation against God, saying that God had been lying.** How should Eve have responded?
28. What was Eve's first mistake? What was Adam's first mistake? Was it not when they each realized that they were separated and did not immediately return to each other's company.

**The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels' caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree.** The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with herself why God had withheld it from them. Now was the tempter's opportunity. As if he were able to discern the workings of her mind, he addressed her: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing. Instead of fleeing from the spot she lingered wonderingly to hear a serpent speak. **Had she been addressed by a being like the angels, her fears would have been excited; but she had no thought that the fascinating serpent could become the medium of the fallen foe.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 53.5-54.0.†

29. Try to imagine yourself in Adam's place as Eve approached him with the forbidden fruit. What would you have done? Was it noble for Adam to support his wife in her mistake?

Adam understood that his companion had transgressed the command of God, disregarded the only prohibition laid upon them as a test of their fidelity and love. There was a terrible struggle in his mind. **He mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side.** But now the deed was done; he must be separated from her whose society had been his joy. How could he have it thus?—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 56.2.†

30. **Adam was not deceived in any sense. He knew right from wrong; however, he chose wrong.**
31. One of the greatest appeals of Satan was that by eating the fruit, they would become like God! But, Genesis 1:27 tells us that Adam and Eve were created to be like God. Did Adam and Eve know that they had been created in the image of God?
32. While Adam and Eve, no doubt, had a lot of things to learn and could have continued learning for the rest of eternity, they failed the test. So, now we have not only the challenge

of learning what they had not yet learned, but also the challenge of reacquainting ourselves with God, His truth, and the plan of salvation. God is ever ready to share His love, kindness, and knowledge with us. Are we ready to receive His gifts? Think of the incredible life and death that Jesus was willing to go through in order for us to be saved. The incredible number of lessons that we can learn from the life and death of Jesus is so great that we are told that we will continue to study the plan of salvation for the rest of eternity. (See *Steps to Christ* 88.3-89.0.)

33. What provisions has God made for us to regain our relationship with Him?

**2 Peter 1:3-11:** <sup>3</sup> **God's divine power has given us everything we need to live a truly religious life through our knowledge of the one who called us to share in his own glory and goodness.** <sup>4</sup>In this way he has given us the very great and precious gifts he promised, so that by means of these gifts you may escape from the destructive lust that is in the world, and may come to share the divine nature. <sup>5</sup>**For this very reason do your best to add goodness to your faith; to your goodness add knowledge; <sup>6</sup>to your knowledge add self-control; to your self-control add endurance; to your endurance add godliness; <sup>7</sup>to your godliness add Christian affection; and to your Christian affection add love.** <sup>8</sup>These are the qualities you need, and if you have them in abundance, they will make you active and effective in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>But those who do not have them are so short-sighted that they cannot see and have forgotten that they have been purified from their past sins.

<sup>10</sup> So then, my brothers and sisters, try even harder to make God's call and his choice of you a permanent experience; if you do so, you will never abandon your faith. <sup>11</sup>In this way you will be given the full right to enter the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

34. What is the specific knowledge referred to in Peter's letter? Might it be the ability to distinguish between the good and bad?

35. Anyone who has gone to school for any period of time will know that there are some students who find school a lot easier than others. Knowledge seems to stick in their brains. So, Peter warned us of what we can expect to happen.

**2 Peter 2:1-17:** <sup>1</sup> False prophets appeared in the past among the people, and in the same way false teachers will appear among you. They will bring in destructive, untrue doctrines, and will deny the Master who redeemed them, and so they will bring upon themselves sudden destruction. <sup>2</sup>Even so, many will follow their immoral ways; and because of what they do, others will speak evil of the Way of truth. <sup>3</sup>In their greed these false teachers will make a profit out of telling you made-up stories. For a long time now their Judge has been ready, and their Destroyer has been wide awake!...

<sup>9</sup>**And so the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials and how to keep the wicked under punishment for the Day of Judgement,** <sup>10</sup>**especially those who follow their filthy bodily lusts and despise God's authority....**

<sup>17</sup> These people are like dried-up springs, like clouds blown along by a storm; God has reserved a place for them in the deepest darkness.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

36. Thinking about things that we need to learn from this story at the beginning of Genesis and from the plan of salvation, might it be true that we need to learn not only how to avoid temptation but also learn of the many ways in which God can help us do so and grow in His knowledge and will?
37. Adam and Eve committed a sin, disobeying a direct command from God. Do we do that in our day? If one disobeys one of the Ten Commandments, is that a direct disobedience of one of God's commands?
38. There are many passages in Scripture and especially in the writings of Ellen White, suggesting that our first work should be witnessing for the Lord. We may be busy in any kind of work—educational, voluntary, ministerial, or a host of other possibilities. But, in each of those contexts, shouldn't we be witnessing for the Lord?
39. Considering the craftiness of Satan, are we prepared to meet his temptations? Satan is not omnipresent; however, God is. So, we are physically close to God at all times unless we refuse to recognize God's presence. We do not know exactly where Satan is. What we do know is that good and evil angels are with each one of us. We can be as close to God as we choose to be. So, what have we learned about how we can discriminate between good and bad authority?
40. What are the most important lessons we can learn from Genesis 1-3? We can imagine ourselves walking in Adam and Eve's footsteps, thinking of what we would have done in each situation. We can learn of God's enormous power in creating our world. We also can learn about the importance of authority and why it is important to obey good authority.
41. Many parts of Scripture refer back to the story we are studying this week. What lessons are there in this story for us? Why do we need to know the story of the Garden of Eden in order to understand the plan of salvation? Or, do we? We need to understand God's methods.
42. Try to think through Satan's temptation of Eve. How did he do it?
43. It was God's original plan for all of us to be living in the Garden of Eden, learning about Him every day. Someday, we may do that.

**So long as they remained loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to enjoy, and to love would continually increase. They would be constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unfailing love of God.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 51.1.†**

44. If we learn something great, we naturally want to know more along that line.
45. It is interesting to notice that each of Satan's accusations in this first recorded conversation are all directed against God. He implied that God is very restrictive, almost suggesting that God had forbidden them to eat from any tree in the garden. He implied that God feels threatened by someone else trying to gain a knowledge that might impart to him/her powers equal to His! Satan further suggested that God had deceived them and misinformed them about the lethal consequences of eating the fruit from the tree.
46. So, what should we have learned from this lesson? Are we clear about God and the answers to all of Satan's accusations against God down through the generations?
47. God placed Adam and Eve in a free universe. There was no embarrassment; there was no shame even though they were naked. When God approached them after their sin, He did not make accusations against them, accusing them of sin, rebellion, or iniquity. He

simply asked them, “Where are you?” And then, He had to reveal to them the awful truth that they would be expelled from the garden.

48. How many of Satan’s initial accusations against God are still popularly believed today? Do we understand clearly that God hates only one thing: Sin? He hates sin because it damages and destroys His children. There are many variations on sin and many ways in which we can disobey God. We may often hear the questions: “What’s wrong with doing this? Or, that?” Do we recognize that these questions are really an attempt to smear or question God’s reputation?
49. There is a story told of an ancient nobleman who lived on the top of a mountain. On the road up to the top, there were some very narrow sections of road. He wanted to find a driver who could safely carry his wife up and down the mountain. He had three applicants. He asked the first one: “How close to the edge of the cliff do you think you can safely drive?” The first driver suggested that he could drive within one foot of the edge and still be safe. Then, the nobleman asked the second driver how close he thought he could drive to the edge and still be safe. Thinking that he would have to sound better than the first driver, he said he could drive within six inches of the edge and still be safe.

The third driver then was asked the same question. He turned to the nobleman and said: “The only safe place to drive on this road is as far from the edge as one can.”

Who do you think got the job?

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