Chapter 1
Made for Relationship and This Relationship Is Broken

Genesis 2:15 – 17; 3:1 – 7

UNDERSTANDING
Pages 10 - 15

DISCUSSION
Pages 16 - 22
UNDERSTANDING

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

Read Genesis 2:15 – 17; 3:1 – 7

Goal

The goal of this chapter is to go through the first two points of the Gospel presentation: that we are made for relationship and that this relationship was broken through sin.

Context

Reading Genesis

We are going to explore the first two steps of the Gospel through Genesis’ account of Adam and Eve and their Original Sin.

The book of Genesis is about beginnings: the beginning of the world, the beginning of humankind and the beginning of our relationship with God. Genesis is a beautifully written account of this beginning, but oftentimes it can be misunderstood or used to accomplish something it wasn't originally written to do.

Before we read this ancient text, we need to learn more about it and its context. The context of a Scripture passage is vital in understanding.
it. The phrase, “There is a man in the room with a gun” can be taken quite differently depending on the context. If we were talking about a police officer, there would be no need for alarm; if we were talking about a man who escaped from prison, that would be a different story.

In Scripture, the context can refer to the historical context of the passage (for example, the time period, geographical location or culture) or the passages of Scripture that come before and after it. For the book of Genesis, context and background are critical. It is easy to turn the early chapters into a debate about history or science. While these are important issues, we should shift our focus elsewhere for the time being. The author is not trying to tell us exactly how God created the world but to help us understand the Divine Creator, the world in which we live and our own role in that world. The genre of writing is also important to consider: While the author is reporting historical events, he is doing so in mostly an allegorical way. We don’t need to believe that the world was created in seven literal days or that the devil was an actual serpent.

Made for Relationship

For this particular passage, it is important to see that, in the beginning, man was made for a relationship with God. Man is made in the image and likeness of God, meaning we are His sons and daughters (Genesis 1:26). God Himself walks in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8) and provides everything they need. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it this way: “God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man” (CCC 1).
God’s command to Adam and Eve also reveals something about our relationship with Him: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:16 – 17). If God is a loving Father who wants a relationship with mankind, why does He place the tree in the garden that can cause them such harm? Ultimately, because it allows us to have free choice. Humans aren’t created to be robots or slaves. We are created with free will, which allows us to freely choose to love others, including God. But is this choice really worth it? Think of all the pain and suffering caused by sin.

An analogy can be helpful here. What if you had a button that would make your perfect potential spouse appear? They would have all the qualities you’d want in a relationship, and they would be required to be with you for the rest of your lives. Would you push the button? I think most people would say “yes.” But would this really be a great relationship if the other person didn’t freely choose you?

What if there was another person who wasn’t as perfect, but who made the choice to be with you? They wouldn’t stay with you out of some obligation they were required to fulfill; rather, it was something they sacrificed for and freely embraced. Would you prefer that relationship, even if that person had some faults? Hopefully, you would. There is something about being chosen and about freedom that makes real love possible. This is why choice is so important, why it was worth all the trouble — because God wanted a real, loving relationship with us.
Climax

At the Heart of Temptation

This is the classic part of the story. In Genesis 3:1 – 7, the serpent enters into the garden and offers the woman a fruit; the woman eats it, and the rest is history. You might ask, “So, they ate some fruit; what’s the big deal?” Let’s rewind. The serpent begins by misquoting God in verse one: he says that God told them they cannot eat from any tree (in Genesis 2:16, God just said not to eat from one tree). Eve responds by exaggerating God’s command: She says they cannot touch it lest they die (God said they could not eat, nothing about touching). Finally, the serpent tells Eve that they will not die if they eat the fruit, directly contradicting God’s command.

What is going on in the story? It is not about the fruit; it is about God’s identity. God is a loving father to Adam and Eve. The serpent, however, paints the picture of a God who is a liar and an arbitrary rule-giver.

When Adam and Eve eat the fruit, they buy into the serpent’s lie. Their act involves more than the breaking of a rule; they break their relationship with God. In the end, this was the purpose of the tree. God could not know if Adam and Eve truly loved Him unless they had the choice to disobey Him.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church beautifully describes the dynamics of this first sin and how it still affects us today: “Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness” (CCC 397).
Application

A Broken Relationship

The deep meaning behind the punishments that fall upon Adam and Eve as a result of this Original Sin is too lengthy for a full explanation here. However, the Catechism gives a short summation:

“The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul’s spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject ‘to its bondage to decay.’ Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will ‘return to the ground,’ for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history” (CCC 400).

Chaos now reigns between God and man, between man and others, between man and creation and within each one of us. We all now suffer both physical and spiritual death.

As we consider the world around us and reflect on our own lives, we have an innate sense of the truth depicted in the Catechism. If we read a newspaper or think about our own lives and those around us, we know that something is wrong. Prince Charles of England once said, “For all the advances of science, there remains deep in the soul a persistent and unconscious anxiety that something is missing, some ingredient that makes life worth living.”

The early chapters of Genesis provide a narrative that explains this problem: Adam sinned, and the consequences of this sin echo to this day — in our world, in our relationships and in us. At the same time, the problem reveals our original purpose: to be in a relationship with
God. This passage in Genesis spurs us on to find the solution and our true purpose in life.

*To Be Continued*

As Genesis 3:15 notes, this chaos and battle with the devil will continue for the entire existence of the human race. It is so severe that it affects our very nature; this nature is passed down from Adam and Eve to us today (for more, see Rom 5:12 – 17). For instance, how do we view God? Is He a merely a lawgiver, or is He a father? If we follow Him, do we think we will be slaves or sons and daughters? Do we experience the brokenness of Genesis in our own lives? Do we experience the tendency to be selfish in ourselves and others? The power of this story is that it continues to resonate in our lives today.
DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY

Genesis 2:15 – 17; 3:1 – 7

Notes to the Leader

• Reminder of the goal of this chapter: The goal of this week’s chapter is to go through the first two points of the Gospel presentation: that we are made for a relationship and that this relationship was broken through sin.

• Instructions for this chapter: Be sure to help the group get to know one another and yourself before you dive into the content. If your group is still forming or if this is the very first meeting, we recommend using one or two of FOCUS’ “Ignite” studies before you dive into “The Crux.”

Opener

1. For the purposes of this question, let’s assume there is a God. If you could ask Him any one question, what would it be?
Context

(Share aloud with your group.)

This Bible study is about understanding what it means to have a relationship with Jesus and His Church. Today, we are going to study the beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis. *Genesis* means “beginnings.” For Jews and Christians alike, Genesis is the beginning of the story of humankind. While we often want to have Genesis answer our questions about science or history, it’s important to read Genesis as it is to discover what its author intended to tell us.

2. To start, I want you to think for a moment and answer this question just to yourself: Why do you think God created the world?

*Give your group a few moments to think.*

(Share aloud with your group.)

In response to why God created the world, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man” (CCC 1).

God didn’t have to create man — and yet, He does so that man can share in what He has. Because of this, God wants a relationship with us and seeks to draw near to us.

3. How does the way the Catechism described why God created the world compare to why you thought God created the world?

*Allow the group to discuss.*
4. The heart of our story today is how Adam and Eve sinned — but before we get there, we need to see what God asked them to do. In Genesis 2:16 – 17, it says, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” So, God gave Adam and Eve the ability to eat from all of the trees except for one. If God is a loving Father who wants a relationship with mankind, why does He place the tree in the garden that can cause them such harm?

Answer: This is a thought-provoking question. Probably the easiest answer is that the tree gives Adam and Eve a choice, and choice is the heart of a relationship. God didn’t create robots or people to be slaves; He created us to be children who love Him. There has to be a choice involved in loving someone. The tree gives Adam and Eve this choice.

An analogy can be helpful here. What if you had a button that would make your perfect potential spouse appear? They would have all the qualities you’d want in a relationship, and they would be required to be with you for the rest of your lives. Would you push the button? I think most people would say “yes.” But would this really be a great relationship if the other person didn’t freely choose you?

What if there was another person who wasn’t as perfect but who made the choice to be with you? They wouldn’t stay with you out of some obligation they were required to fulfill; rather, it was something they sacrificed for and freely embraced. Would you prefer that relationship, even if that person had some faults? Hopefully, you would. There is something about being chosen and about freedom that makes real love possible. This is why choice is so important, why it was worth all the trouble — because God wanted a real, loving relationship with us.
Climax

Read Genesis 3:1 – 7.

5. How does the serpent’s statement contrast with God’s command to Adam and Eve?
   Answer: The serpent misquotes God as saying, “You shall not eat of any tree of the garden” (Gen 2:16). God only said they couldn’t eat from one tree in the garden.

6. Now let’s look at Eve. How does her statement contrast with God’s command?
   Answer: Eve exaggerates God’s commandment, saying they can’t even touch the fruit. God never said this in Genesis 2:16 – 17.

7. What do their statements reveal about how they view God?
   Answer: They believe God is a rule-giver who is trying to keep something from them rather than a Father who loves them.

8. Why do you think Adam and Eve disobey God?
   Allow the group to discuss. Ultimately, Adam and Eve fail to trust in God. In speaking about Adam and Eve, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness” (CCC 397).
Application

9. A lack of trust in God was the reason for Adam and Eve’s sin, and for our sins today. Can you relate to Adam and Eve in the story, and if so, in what ways?
Allow the group to discuss.

10. In the next few verses of Genesis, it goes on to describe the consequences of this first sin. If we read a newspaper or think about our lives and the lives of those around us, we know that something is wrong. Prince Charles of England once said, “For all the advances of science, there remains deep in the soul a persistent and unconscious anxiety that something is missing, some ingredient that makes life worth living.” Do you have a sense that there is something wrong or broken in our world? If so, where do you see this brokenness?
Allow the group to discuss. Following Adam and Eve’s sin, the book of Genesis illustrates that chaos now reigns between God and man, between man and others, between man and creation and within each one of us. We all now suffer both physical and spiritual death.

Summary

(Share aloud with your group.)

This week, we learned how we were created for a relationship with God but that this relationship was broken through sin. Next week, we are going to look at Christianity’s answer to this problem of sin.
Challenge

(Share aloud with your group.)

Each week, we will have a small challenge for our group. If we are going to be in a study together, we need to get to know one another more. This week’s challenge is to find a time outside of Bible study to get together to do something fun.

[Note to leader: Either have a plan of what to do beforehand or ask your group what they think.]

Additional Resources:

Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Book of Genesis by Dr. Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch

Chance or purpose? Creation, Evolution, and a Rational Faith by Christoph Cardinal Schönborn

New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy by Fr. Robert Spitzer

The Catholic Church and Science by Benjamin Wiker