

Eden: The First School



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:7–23; Genesis 3:1–6; Genesis 3:4–6; 2 Peter 1:3–11.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Look, God’s power makes him great [worthy of praise]! He is the greatest [best] teacher of all’ ” (Job 36:22, ERV).



God started the first school in Eden.

MOST BIBLE STUDENTS know the story in Genesis 1–3. This story is about God, Adam, Eve, the angels, and the snake. The story happens in a beautiful garden named Eden. The story starts with God. God makes the earth. Then He makes Adam and Eve. God tells Adam and Eve what to do to stay happy in their perfect home. But Adam and Eve sin. Then God tells Adam and Eve that they must leave Eden. That is the basic story. But we must look closer at Genesis 1–3 and God’s first plan for education. Then we will see more.

“God made the earth. At that time, God gave humans a plan for education. God wanted this plan to be an example for humans for the future too. So, God started a school in Eden. Eden was the home of our first parents. The school in Eden showed God’s important rules about education. The Garden of Eden itself was the schoolroom. The schoolbook was nature. God Himself was the Teacher. Adam and Eve were the students.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 20, adapted.

God started the first school in Eden. God also was in charge of the school and was the Teacher. As we know, Adam and Eve chose to listen to a different teacher. They learned the wrong lessons from Satan. What happened? What can we learn from this story about Adam and Eve’s education that can help us today?

THE FIRST SCHOOL (Genesis 2:7–23)

We do not think about a garden as a classroom, right? But a garden is really a good place for the first school. God filled Eden with all the beautiful things He made. What do you think that Adam and Eve learned from God in that “classroom”? So many things! We do not know the full story about that!

Read Genesis 2:7–23. What do you see in these verses about why God made Adam? Where did God put Adam? What work did God give Adam to do?

God made the man and the woman. Then God gave Adam and Eve a home and work. The work helped them feel that their lives were important. This part of the story shows us an example of the best way for a teacher and a student to work together. God is the perfect Teacher. Adam is a student of God. God knows the skills Adam has because God made Adam. God can teach Adam. God also knows that Adam can grow in wisdom. Adam’s skills can grow stronger and better too. Then Adam can become the person that God planned for him to be.

God gave Adam work. But that is not all. God wanted Adam to be happy. Maybe that is why God gave Adam work. You feel happy, too, when someone gives you work, and you do a good job, right? God knew Adam’s heart. God also knew what Adam needed to be happy. So, God told Adam to take care of the Garden (Genesis 2:15). What work did Adam do? We know a life of sin and death. So, we do not understand fully Adam’s work in Eden. Whatever Adam did, the work taught him important lessons.

In Genesis 2:19–23, God makes animals for Adam. These animals are Adam’s friends. God also makes Adam’s wife, Eve. God knows that Adam needs the friendship and help of someone who is his equal and who is the same as him. So, God makes woman. God also knows that man needs to be close to God. So, God makes Adam a beautiful garden home. All these gifts show God’s love for humans and why He made us. As we already said, we do not know the full story about Eden and its beauty. But we can enjoy thinking about it, right?

True, we are far away from Eden’s beauty. But we can learn lessons from nature. What are some of those lessons?



God knows that Adam needs the friendship and help of someone who is his equal and who is the same as him.

THE UNWELCOME GUEST (Genesis 3:1–6)



God made Adam and Eve free to choose between good and evil.

What was God’s plan for the first classroom? When we look at Eden, we can see God’s plan. God put a lot of love and care into making Eden a wonderful place for learning. God put beauty all around Adam and Eve. Everything offered Adam and Eve a chance to learn more about life and God.

But then something bad happens. An unwelcome guest shows up in the Garden. The unwelcome guest is the snake. Satan uses the snake to make Adam and Eve sin. In Genesis 3 we learn that the snake is “more clever than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made” (Genesis 3:1, NIV). The words “more clever” are different from any words the Bible uses before. In Genesis 1 and 2, the Bible uses the words “very good” (Genesis 1:31, ERV), “not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25, ERV), and “beautiful” (Genesis 2:9, ERV). These words show us the good things God has made. But now in Genesis 3, we see a change in the language when the snake shows up. He is “more clever.” These words also can be written as “more able to fool others than any animal of the field” (Genesis 3:1, NIV). That tells us the snake was very smart and sneaky.

God is different from the snake. God is clear about what He wants Adam and Eve to do. Genesis 2:16, 17 shows us God’s command to Adam and Eve. God tells them that they must not eat from the forbidden tree.

God’s command shows us something important about this story. God made Adam and Eve free. They can choose between good and evil. Our freedom to choose also is known as free will. From the beginning, we can see that God made humans free to choose between right and wrong.

Read what the snake says to Eve in Genesis 3:1–6. What does Eve think about the forbidden tree after that?

In Genesis 2, the Lord tells Adam not to eat from the forbidden tree. If Adam does, he will “for sure die” (Genesis 2:17, NIV). In Genesis 3:3 Eve tells the snake God’s command. Do you see that she leaves out the words “for sure”? We see that Eve does not say the command the same as God did. In Genesis 3:4, the snake puts God’s words “for sure” back in. But do you see how the snake changes their meaning? Eve’s words show us that she did not believe God’s words. Eve believed the snake.

FAILING TO OBEY THE MESSAGE (Genesis 3:4–6)

As we saw yesterday, Eve does not believe God's words. Eve does not misunderstand God's command. But she does not say God's words in the same way God says them (Gen. 3:2, 3). Awful things happened because of Eve's disobedience. Of course, God's command about the trees is not new to the snake. The snake already knew about God's command. He was ready to change God's words and lead Eve into sin.

Read Genesis 3:4–6. Do you see that the snake lies about what God said? What else does the snake say that Eve believes? How does the snake trick Eve into believing him and not God?

The snake tells Eve that part of God's message is wrong. Eve does not talk with God about it. That is Eve's mistake. Eve has the chance to talk with God. God is her Mighty Teacher. In Eden she talks with God. At that time, Eve can look at God's face and talk with Him. But Eve does not run away from the snake. She does not go to God and ask for His help. Eve accepts the snake's message. She doubts God's words to her.

Soon after, Adam must make a hard decision. "Adam understands that Eve has sinned against God's command. Eve failed to obey the one thing that God asked them not to do. It was a test of their loyalty and their love. Adam fought a war in his mind. He was sorry that he allowed Eve to leave his side. But she made her choice. Now Adam must separate from Eve, who made him so happy. How can he live without her?"—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 56, adapted. Sadly, Adam chose to do the wrong thing too. What made Adam's behavior worse than Eve's? Adam knew better.

Think of the snake's lying words. He says that if Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit they will "be like [very much the same as] God" (Genesis 3:5, NKJV). But look at Genesis 1:27. Can you see that Adam and Eve were already very much the same as God? What does this comparison teach us about how we are easily tricked? Why are faith and obedience the only things that can keep us safe from the danger of Satan's lies?



Eve accepts the snake's message. She doubts God's words to her.

GETTING BACK WHAT ADAM AND EVE LOST (2 Peter 1:3–11)



Prayer, serving God, and studying the Bible help us to grow close to God as Adam and Eve were in Eden.

As we saw, Adam and Eve accepted the snake’s message. How did God punish them? One of the things that happened was that God made them leave their Eden home. Eden was their classroom too. Adam and Eve lost their home and school because of sin. That loss helps us to understand God’s plan for education for us today. Life on earth is now spoiled by sin. So, that gives us a new reason for more education.

What was God’s plan for education before the Fall? God wanted to teach Adam and Eve about Him, His law, and His love. After sin, God’s plan for education included helping humans to know Him again. Education also is about helping God to live in us. True, we no longer can see God face-to-face. But as God’s children, we can learn more about Him and His love. Prayer, serving God, and studying the Bible help us to become friends with God as Adam and Eve were in Eden.

There is good news. Because of Jesus and His plan to save sinners, we have hope. We have hope that Jesus will save us and give us new hearts. Christian education should lead students to Jesus. Teachers should teach students about Jesus’ promise to make all things new again.

Read 2 Peter 1:3–11. These verses encourage us when we think about everything Adam and Eve lost when they sinned. God wants His Spirit to live in our hearts. He also wants to make us the same way Adam and Eve were before the Fall. What does Peter say that we must do to change?

Jesus gives us “everything we need to live and to serve God” (2 Peter 1:3, ICB). Wow! This is a powerful promise. What do you think Jesus gives us? Peter gives us a list: faith, a holy life, knowledge, self-control, not giving up, and so on. Do you see that knowledge is on Peter’s list? True education will lead us to true knowledge: the knowledge about Jesus. True education will help us become the same as Jesus in our hearts. Then we also can share our knowledge about Jesus with other people.

Think about this: the forbidden tree was named “the tree that gives knowledge about good and evil” (Genesis 2:9, ERV). What should that tell us about why some knowledge is not good? How can we know what is good knowledge and what is bad knowledge?

PEOPLE WHO DO NOT RESPECT THEIR LEADERS (2 Peter 2:1–17)

Some people are “natural students” in the classroom. They do not need to study much to make excellent grades. They learn fast. They remember what they learn. 2 Peter 1 and 2 show us it does not matter how smart you are when you enter the School of Jesus. He gives everyone the same chance to learn.

2 Peter 1 encourages us. But 2 Peter 2 is a warning.

Read 2 Peter 2:1–17. What is Peter saying in these verses? At the same time, what hope do we find in this warning?

Do you see what Peter writes in 2 Peter 2:10 about people who do not respect leaders and people in power? Peter’s words are important for our day too. We as a church body must work with our leaders (read Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). God asks us to respect our leaders and obey them. Of course, our leaders must be loyal to the Lord too.

At the same time, Peter offers us hope (2 Peter 2:9). Peter says that it is true that the Lord will not accept people who choose to believe lies. But “the Lord knows how to save those who serve him” (2 Peter 2:9, ICB). This verse helps us to see that part of our education as Christians is learning how to avoid Satan’s traps. At the same time, our education also includes learning about the many ways that God can make us free and protect us from people who tell lies. “These people will work in secret ways to bring false teaching to you” (2 Peter 2:1, NLV). The Bible says that our not respecting our leaders is wrong. So, our education as Christians also should include learning the right way to obey our leaders (Hebrews 13:7, ERV), right?

Now we really should not say that Adam and Eve hated God or did not respect His power. But in the end, they chose to not obey God’s law. What made their sin so bad was they chose not to trust God’s Word. God told them not to disobey Him for their own good.

Think more about showing respect for people in power. Why is using power in the right way and obeying it in the right way, too, so important?



Our education as Christians includes learning how to avoid Satan’s traps.



“Adam and Eve always discovered something beautiful that filled their hearts with love and thankfulness.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Adam and Eve were the children of God. They also were His students. The God who made them was also their Teacher! Angels visited Adam and Eve. The couple talked with God. Nothing blocked their view of God. Adam and Eve were full of health from eating from the tree of life. They were almost as smart as the angels. Nature, with its secrets, taught Adam and Eve many lessons. These ‘ “miracles of God” ’ [Job 37:16, ICB] gave them endless joy. Men have studied nature’s laws for 6,000 years. God explained these laws to Adam and Eve. They studied leaf, flower, and tree. Adam and Eve learned the secrets of the life in each of these things. Adam knew every animal. He knew the mighty whale that swam in the waters. Adam also knew the smallest insect that floats in the sunbeam. Adam gave each animal its name. He knew the habits and behavior of each one. Our first parents studied anything in nature they wanted. They learned about the stars and the many different planets. They also learned ‘ “how the clouds stay up in the sky” ’ (Job 37:16, NIV). They studied the secrets about light, sound, day, and night. God’s name was written on every forest leaf, on every mountain stone, on every shining star, and in earth, air, and sky. Nature showed Adam and Eve the wisdom and power of God. Adam and Eve always discovered something beautiful that filled their hearts with love and thankfulness.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 50, 51, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God wanted school and work to be a chance for humans to meet Him and all that He made. Are we following God’s plan in our work today? How can we learn more about God in our jobs? (Our jobs may include the work we do for pay and the time we spend serving God or time as volunteers.)
- ② Satan was very sneaky in the Garden of Eden. Just thinking about it can make us sad because it shows us that we are very weak. Adam and Eve knew God was near. But they accepted the snake’s half-truth. We are far away from God. So, how can we find strength and help from God to help us understand the full truth and fight against sin?
- ③ Why is it so important to obey our leaders? What happens when the leaders hurt the people they should protect? What should we do when that happens?