

# Day Three

## **Scripture:**

Genesis 3 (or Genesis 3:1-13)

## **Reflection:**

Sometimes we find ourselves facing difficult choices. Who should we marry? Should we take that job offer and move out of state? Should we quit putting it off and be baptized? We are sharp enough to understand those are big moments – moments that change everything that follows. So, we usually feel a good deal of anxiety as we come to those big-decision moments. Choose wrong, and it can cause years of regret and heartache.

All of that is true. But, what is also true is that more often than not it is the little decisions that end up changing everything. I decided to go to a Sunday evening of singing worship songs at the North Joplin Christian Church. I'm not a great singer, so it wasn't an automatic decision. I certainly did not feel like I was required to go. But, at the last minute, I got up, put on a nicer shirt, and walked across the street.

Nothing unexpected or earth-shattering happened at the church service. Well, almost nothing. You see, sitting right behind me was young lady from New England named Linda Robison. She was a senior at Ozark Christian College. It was such a small thing. She was there. I was there. And, during a break in the singing for refreshments, we started talking. When the service started again, we sat next to each other. After church, I asked her if she wanted to go to a

movie Friday night. And, three months after that we stood in a colonial-era church building in Seymour, Connecticut and became husband and wife.

Not all our seemingly little choices turn out so well. Every criminal serving years in prison, at some point, stole their first thing – maybe some loose change out of a grandmother’s purse or a CD of a favorite music from a kid at school or whatever. We are left to wonder, if someone’s whole dismal life of crime and prison might not have been different if they had just stopped and decided not to steal that first dollar or CD, after all?

Change-points in our lives do not arrive complete with background music and director’s notes in the script that say: “This one little choice that is about to be made is going to change everything that happens from this point forward.” Life would be a lot easier if it did. We’d like to go back to the moment in Eden and yell out, “Don’t do it! It’s going to ruin everything! Stop!”

But, it was a beautiful day. Eve was hungry. The fruit certainly looked delicious. And that very remarkable serpent assured her eating it would be a genuinely eye-opening experience.

“But God said not to do it. He said we would die,” she found herself saying out loud.

“Come on. It’s just some fruit. You know that’s not going to happen. It’s just a little snack. It’ll make you smart. Trust me. No big deal,” came the reassuring words from the grinning snake (assuming snakes smart enough to talk are surely able to smile).

When Jesus taught us to pray, he said we should explicitly ask God, “Do not lead me into temptation.” In other words, don’t let me be fooled by something that seems attractive into making a choice that can ruin everything – destroy my marriage, wreck my career, or, worst of all, separate me from You forever. None of us is smart enough to know where the really big decisions of our lives might be hiding. The only thing we can do is to make sure the little ones, just like the big ones, are always the ones that would please God.

## **Family**

*Use a small ball on a flat desktop or table. Get the table completely level first, if it isn’t (you can put little props under the legs until it is entirely level). Put the ball on the table. If it is level, the ball will stay wherever you put it. On one side have a piece of paper that has written on it something like “God.” On the other side have paper that says “Devil.” Use some barriers like books or pieces of wood on two sides of the table to make sure the ball can only roll off the two opposite sides. Put the ball on the table. Explain, this is a person who has to make choices. Show them the ball can be rolled to move a few inches toward God or the Devil. Then, let go and the ball stays put. Take the ball off the table and hold it.*

*Now, have them close their eyes. Either remove or add a small prop under the legs. This works best if the table is now slightly leaning toward the side marked “the Devil.” Have everyone open their eyes. The table will look exactly the same. So, they will expect the same thing to happen with the ball. Now put the ball on the table and let go. That’s what happens when we begin to listen to temptation and do things we know we should not do. Even*

*one time we decide to disobey God, we are bending our lives away from the Lord. It is not just that sin moves us a little (like pushing the ball slightly one direction on a still-flat table). Make bad choices bends our hearts away from God so that we are leaning toward sin.*

When Eve and later Adam ate the fruit, the whole world was changed. It is like, after that, everything was leaning down toward the Devil. Everyone's life would end up leading them toward death. Adam and Eve made one small decision to eat one piece of forbidden fruit, but that one choice changed everything in human history.

The Jesse Tree ornament for today reminds us that it was just one piece of fruit (many people think it might have looked like an apple). And the serpent is the way the Devil planted the idea in Eve that it would be okay to go against what God had said and to eat the fruit, anyway. After that, the whole world will be tilted away from God and toward the Devil. One reason God will send His son into the world is to fix the way everything is leaning and to the world to where everything is leaning toward God.

## **Prayer**

What are some small decisions that you have made that you wish now you had done something different? When do you think you will come to your next little decision that will change everything? Ask God to help you, since you probably will not even know it when that moment comes. Ask God to help you make the right small choices so that you look back with gratitude and not regret.