

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE CONSCIENCE

Genesis 3:1-13

INTRODUCTION

The Bible says that when God created Adam and Eve, He did so with a built-in mechanism that is finely tuned for detecting the difference between moral right and wrong behavior (Romans 1:18-21, 32). This mechanism is called the conscience.

A biblically derived definition of the conscience is:

"the faculty of man's immaterial heart that judges the thoughts, intentions, words, and actions of an individual according to the standards given to it by God, human authorities, and/or personally acquired standards."

A troubled conscience is what produces shame and guilt.

Today, much of our secular culture has departed from this biblical understanding of the conscience. Instead, many embrace a view that sees the conscience as simply an evolutionary adaptation for self-preservation. Instead of it incorporating any spiritual component, they hypothesize that it is governed by a complex combination of genetics and societal norms. In their view, various ways to rid oneself of the feelings of guilt and shame that accompanies a troubled conscience exist. One way is to 'deconstruct' its association with sin and 'reconstruct' it under a mental health model. Another way is to redefine those behaviors that are traditionally associated with sin as amoral impulses of biology. We see that happening all around us, do we not? What are the consequences? Does it really relieve one of their sense of moral responsibility and the accompanying guilt? Or does it create a whole new set of problems?

THIS WEEK:

The focus of our discussion this week is on the origin and purpose of the conscience and how ignoring it disastrously impacts our view of God, ourselves, and one another.

OBSERVATION *What does it SAY?*

Discover key details of the passage by reading Genesis 3:1-13 and then answering the following questions:

1. Glance back for context and read Genesis 1: 21, 25, and 31. What words describe how God viewed the things he created?
2. Describe the warning God gave man in Genesis 2:16:

3. Based on Genesis 3:7, what changed in the way Adam and Eve viewed themselves? How about their view of one another?
4. How did they try to compensate for their guilt and shame? Did this take care of the problem of shame? How do we know (v. 8)?
5. How does verse 8 describe Adam and Eve's perception of God?
6. When God tried to get Adam and Eve to confess their sin, what did they do instead (vv. 11-13)?

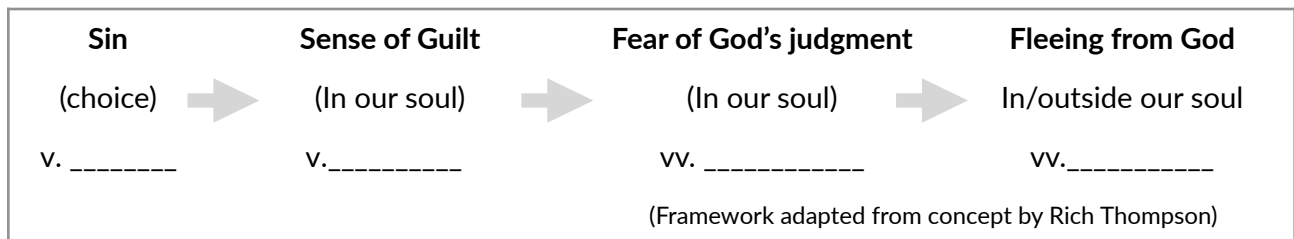
GOING DEEPER

Adam experienced alienation in his relationship with God. "Death" means separation in the Bible, never annihilation.

"Sin always results in alienation: theologically (between God and man), sociologically (between man and man), psychologically (between man and himself), and ecologically (between man and nature). We might also add, sexually (between men and women) and domestically (between husbands and wives)."

—Tom Constable

7. The effect of violating one's conscience is illustrated in the following framework. Fill in the chart below with the verses and reflect how Genesis 3: 6 –13 follows this framework:



INTERPRETATION What does it MEAN?

Use the Bible to interpret the Bible. Look up the cross references and use them to interpret the passage under study:

8. Read Proverbs 28:1. How does this proverb encapsulate the relationship that exists between the dictates of one's conscience and fellowship with God?
9. How does 1 John 3:19-22 describe the effect guilt has on person's fellowship with God?

10. Read Romans 2:15 and describe the relationship between the conscience, the law, and one's thoughts:
11. Read Romans 13:1-5 and describe the relationship between our conscience and submission to authority:
12. Read Romans 14:21-23 and describe the relationship between our conscience and violating our own standards:
13. What does Paul say will happen to our faith if we violate our conscience (1 Tim. 1:18-19)?
14. What does Proverbs 28:13 teach about repentance and fellowship with God?

APPLICATION *Why does it MATTER?*

Now that you have discerned what the passage means, how does it apply to your life?

15. Adam and Eve “sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves”. What are some of the things you use or have used as “fig leaves” to cover the shame of your guilt before God or others?
16. What must you commit to do in order to maintain fellowship with God moment-by-moment?

TAKE AWAY *How does this change me?*

17. What does this passage reveal about God?
18. What does this passage reveal about humanity?
19. What is the Holy Spirit revealing in this passage about your life?

Have your kids do the word find puzzle on the next page or read to them Genesis 3:1-13. Use the following questions to have a discussion about how God knows our secret desires and actions.

1. **Who were the main characters in this part of the story?**
Hint: Think about the first people and the talking creature.
2. **What did the serpent say to Eve that made her think about eating the fruit?**
Hint: It's about something God told them not to do.
3. **What did Adam and Eve do after they ate the fruit?**
Hint: It involves something they realized about themselves.
4. **How did Adam and Eve feel when they heard God walking in the garden? What did they do?**
Hint: Think about where they went and why they went there.
5. **Why do you think the serpent wanted Eve to eat the fruit?**
Hint: Read John 8:44 where Jesus talks about the devil.
6. **How does this story show us what happens when we disobey God?**
Hint: Think about what happened to Adam and Eve after they ate the fruit and read Romans 5:12.
7. **What does this story tell us about listening to God's words versus listening to other voices?**
Hint: Compare with Psalm 119:11 which talks about keeping God's word in our hearts.
8. **Can you think of a time when you knew the right thing to do but were tempted to do something else? What did you do?**
Hint: Think about the feeling you get when you have to make a choice.
9. **How can we make sure we listen to God and do what He wants us to do?**
Hint: Think about things like reading the Bible, praying, and talking to people who love God.

Take some time to listen to your child's answer and then lead them in a prayer that calls upon God to help the them yield to him and depend on his strength to be bold for him.

WORD FIND

Genesis 3:1-13

M G O O D L O R D
U F Y F W O M A N
F W I T N G F H A
W A A H E A R D K
W S G E O V U F E
E K A N P E I D D
S E R P E N T D M
O D D K N O W S A
M Y E Y E S A I D
E W N T D T R E E

Now the **serpent** was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the **LORD** God had **made**. He **said** to the **woman**, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any **tree** in the **garden**?’” The **woman said** to the **serpent**, “We may eat the **fruit** from the **trees** in the **garden**. But about the **fruit** of the **tree** in the middle of the **garden**, God **said**, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’ ” “No! You will certainly not die,” the **serpent said** to the **woman**. “In fact, God **knows** that when you eat it your **eyes** will be **opened** and you will be like God, **knowing good** and evil.” The **woman** saw that the **tree** was **good** for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took **some** of its **fruit** and ate it; she also **gave some** to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **Then** the **eyes** of both of them were **opened**, and they knew they were **naked**; so they sewed fig leaves together and **made** coverings for themselves. **Then** the man and his wife **heard** the sound of the **LORD** God walking in the **garden** at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the **LORD** God among the **trees** of the **garden**. So the **LORD** God called out to the man and **said** to him, “Where are you?” And he **said**, “I **heard** you in the **garden**, and I was afraid because I was **naked**, so I hid.” **Then** he **asked**, “Who told you that you were **naked**? Did you eat from the **tree** that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man replied, “The **woman** you **gave** to be with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate”. So the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me and I ate.”