

Origins of Sin

Lesson # 10 of 27

Scripture/Memory Verse

“Since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, they are justified by His Grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3: 23 – 24

Lesson Goal & Objectives

Goal

- The students need to understand that God is not the source or origin of evil, yet He allows sin to exist. This lesson will examine the difficult problem of the “Fall” of human beings into rebellion against God as our free choice to do things that go against His will which is love and goodness.

Objective

- After reading Holy Scripture and discussing the lesson, the students will construct a short skit dramatizing either the choice to sin of Adam and Eve, or the choice of someone today to commit a sin. (*Teacher: guide the choice of which sin, and keep the skit very short*) The skit should demonstrate that the students understand the meaning of “choice” in rejecting God’s good Will for us.

Introduction and Background for the Teacher

By the time they are young teens, students are keenly aware not only of the evil in the world, but also the sin in their own lives. They sometimes carry heavy burdens of guilt over what may seem to us as being small failures, but what they consider to be large wrongs. They may also feel that other people in their lives have done wrong or have failed them. This class is difficult and requires that the teacher be sensitive to the students’ struggles and feelings. No student should be pressured to disclose more about his life than he or she feels comfortable in doing. Remind the students that the things that others share about their own lives must, “stay in the room.”

God wants us to grow up into fully responsible and loving people. We cannot choose to love unless we have genuine free choice. If our choices are genuinely free, then we must be able to receive what we actually choose and the consequences of those choices. This is true even when we choose to turn away from love and goodness and to choose to do evil instead. If we are really free, then we are free to choose evil, even though God wants us always to choose what is good.

It is very important to emphasize that God did not create something called “Evil” in the way that He created all the good objects in His good universe. Evil is a negative force, not a positive creation of the good and loving God.

Evil is the result of free choices which go against God – rejecting His Love and hurting others and ourselves.

It is very important to remember: **God never wills evil.** He does not want evil to happen – ever. He does not will suffering or harm for any of His creatures. However, He allows us to choose to do evil in order to preserve our freedom to make real choices. If He cancelled the consequences of our choices there would be no real choice. There would also be no justice.

Imagine a world in which people could do evil and simply never have to face any consequences. It would be a chaotic nightmare. Once sin was chosen by human beings and unleashed into God's world, the ongoing chain of the consequences of evil began to cause harm and sorrow. God is continually calling human beings to turn away from doing evil to do good, and He continually offers us the Grace which can make this possible. He wants us to have joy, peace and goodness instead of sorrow and pain. For this to happen, people must be able to choose good instead of evil. God forgives us and provides us with the Grace to be able to choose to do good through the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (This is a topic for another lesson).

The Genesis account of the Fall of the human race is intended to convey the idea that the very first human beings used their freedom to choose to make evil a part of their lives. The students will want to know if this story is "true." Yes, it is. However, there is no mention of an "apple" anywhere in the text. The tree has "The Fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." This is obviously meant to be a way of saying that human beings made a choice to "take in" that is, "eat" the "results," that is, the "fruit" of knowing evil alongside good.

Previously they had only known the good creation of the good God. God warns them **not** to encounter and take in the knowledge of evil because this knowledge will kill them. God desires to protect them from evil, but He gives them a free choice. By choosing to "eat" – to take in – evil they disrupt their relationship with God, one another and God's creation. They hide from God, blame one another and can no longer live in the garden. While they do not die within 24 hours of eating the fruit, they do suffer old age and disease, and their bodies disintegrate in death. Presumably before eating from the knowledge of evil, they would have experienced some kind of peaceful transition into eternal life without suffering death. Turning from God's good will and making the choice to disobey Him brings the loss of His friendship and the entrance of guilt, pain, sorrow and ultimately death into the world.

Every human being, sooner or later in our lives, makes the same choice.

The students may complain that it is unfair that we should have to suffer for someone else's sin (Adam). However, every human being inevitably makes the same choice to encounter and express evil in their lives. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3: 23). We all ratify Adam's choice when we also choose to turn away from God in sin.

The Fathers of the Church have taught that the angels also had some kind of choice as a test at the beginning of their creation. Those who failed their test became our enemies out of jealousy for our relationship with God.

Therefore, our enemy “satan” (this word actually means, “enemy”) wanted to destroy our enjoyment of God’s good creation by tempting us to fail to choose God’s will.

In the next lesson, number 11, we will examine the more personal dimensions of sin.

Materials Needed for Lesson

- _ Items for introductory activity as listed there (cookies, candy, books, other small items)
- _ Book of Common Prayer

Opening Prayer (5min.)

Collect for Easter Day (BCP p. 222 top)

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Let the students also offer their own prayers. Finish with the Our Father.

Review of the Previous Lesson (5min.)

Briefly discuss:

- _ What is the “Promise of the Father”?
- _ What did we talk about last week that God was going to give to us? (*New hearts*)
- _ Why?

Introductory Activity (5-10 min.)

*(These ideas are intended to ensure a lively and exciting atmosphere for the beginning of this lesson. It is fine for each parish to approach this differently if you wish to make use of your own games or other materials. It is best **not** to eliminate doing any activity at all.)*

Either put two similar, but somewhat different, objects on a table (two different cookies, books, etc) or hold two different small objects in your hands (two different pieces of candy, etc.). Ask one of the students to choose one of the objects. When the choice has been made, deliberately give the student the **other** object – the one they did **not** choose. When they start complaining, ask, “If I don’t give you the thing you chose, did you actually have a real choice?” Obviously not.

Discuss: If we have a real choice, then we **must** get what we have actually chosen. God also gives us real choices. If we chose to do wrong, we get the

bad consequences of the evil we have chosen. Making the choice to do wrong is the source of evil in the world.

Lesson (20-25 min.)

Read aloud with the students: **Genesis** chapter 2 verses 4 – 17 and chapter 3 verses 1 – 13.

Discussion:

1. As we have seen, in order to have a real, genuine choice, we have to get what we choose. What was the choice that God gave to Adam and Eve?
(Lead the students to an understanding that they needed to have a real choice in order to be really free)

2. Why *this* particular kind of a choice?
(Lead students to understand that the real nature of the choice was between choosing to avoid evil or to take evil into their lives)

3. What were the results or consequences of their choice?
Choosing to have knowledge of evil meant that evil consequences were set loose in the world. If God prevented them from receiving the consequences of their choice, then the choice would not have been real, and their freedom would not really exist.

4. When God created the world, He saw that everything was good. Can anyone think of something that God created which was really evil in its own original creation?

(No Genesis 1: “God saw that it was very good”) In giving the first human beings a real and genuinely free choice, God allowed them the possibility of choosing to go against His Will. God did not want them to choose evil, and did not encourage them to choose evil in any way. He did, however, allow them to choose in a real way, so they received what they chose.

5. Who is the snake, and what does he want?
The “snake” is the enemy (note: the word “Satan” actually means, “enemy”) He wants to destroy the human beings’ happiness and closeness to God (out of jealousy). He lies and twists God’s words. He wanted human beings to suffer and die – to begin the chain of evil in the world.

Summary: When the human beings chose to take in the knowledge of evil, that evil choice allowed evil consequences to follow. The consequence of evil is more and more evil.

Reflection (10-15 min.)

Choose ONE of the following activities:

Choose 3 or 4 students to do a spontaneous skit re-enacting the choice of Adam and Eve to sin. One student represents God, Who urges A & E to live in peace and joy and not to eat of the evil-fruit. The enemy finds devious ways to convince them to do it anyway. They talk the situation over and choose to go against God's will. Sorrow follows. **OR**

Alternative: Several students act out a situation in which they have to choose either to avoid committing sin or giving in to doing something wrong. Guide the choice of which sin they choose. (Obviously, something like stealing, lying or cheating works better than trying to act out a sexual situation.)

Take-Home Activity (5 min.)

*(It is recommended that you make use of this take-home activity to re-enforce the learning experience. You **may** eliminate this exercise if **necessary**. You may also substitute another activity if you find that to be more helpful. You should briefly review this lesson and review the take-home activity at the beginning of the next learning session).*

Notice this week when a situation arises in which you might be tempted to do something wrong. Make an effort to choose to do the right thing and make a note of the event. Write a short paragraph briefly identifying the choice you made.

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father: in your compassion
forgive us our sins,
known and unknown, things done and left undone;
and so uphold us by your Spirit that we may live and serve you in newness of life,
to the honor and glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let the students also offer their own particular prayers.

The teacher finishes: Almighty God, have mercy on us all, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

Scripture References

— Genesis chapters 2 and 3
— Romans chapter 3 *verse 23