

# “Church & Gender” Study Guide

## Lesson 5: The Fall

### Outline

#### 1. GENESIS 3:1-7

- a. Who Is Responsible?
  - i. Adam and Eve
  - ii. Adam (Rom. 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:21-22)
  - iii. Eve (1 Timothy 2:14)
- b. Historical Answers & Comments:
  - i. TERTULLIAN (d. 220): “And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert ----that is, death ---- even the Son of God had to die.”
  - ii. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (347-407): “The woman taught once and ruined all. On this account therefore he saith, let her not teach ... for the sex is weak and fickle, and he is speaking of the sex collectively.”
  - iii. THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274):
  - iv. “The human group would have lacked the benefit of order had some of its members not been governed by others who were wiser. Such is the subjection in which woman is by nature subordinate to man, because the power of rational discernment is by nature stronger in man.”
  - v. JOHN WESLEY (1703-1791): “This verse shows why she ought not ‘to teach.’ She is more easily deceived, and more easily deceives.”
  - vi. Note: These interpretations seem to claim that women are inherently less intelligent than men or at least more gullible. These interpretations seem to ignore other statements by Paul blaming Adam.
- c. COMPLEMENTARIAN: The serpent subverted male headship by tempting Eve rather than Adam, and Eve sinned not only in eating but by eating first. She is a negative model because she acts autonomously rather than submissively.
- d. EGALITARIAN: Paul's statement assumes a cultural context where women were more susceptible to deceit because they lacked education, married early (husbands were generally much older) and were socially constrained (limited exposure within the culture). In Paul's cultural setting women were more easily deceived than men. Paul uses Eve as an analogy.

#### 2. GENESIS 3:16-19

- a. Genesis 3:16 is not the basis of headship, but the consequences of sin invading the gender relationship.

- b. Genesis 3:16 is the beginning of the “battle of the sexes.” It is not prescriptive, but descriptive.
  - i. GENESIS 3:16 (NRSV) “yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”
  - ii. Compare to similar verb in GENESIS 4:7 (NRSV) “its desire is for you, but you must master it.”
- c. EGALITARIAN: This story reveals that patriarchy, misogyny, and all gender inequality originate in sin.
- d. COMPLEMENTARIAN: This story reveals that God’s original arrangement for gender has been corrupted by sin, but the original, created “headship” of man should be restored.

### Discussion Questions

1. Do the Complementarian & Egalitarian views differ in explaining who is to blame for the sin in the garden and fall of humanity? Do they differ in explaining how the fall took place?
2. What does it mean to say that Genesis 3:16 is descriptive, not prescriptive?
3. What do you think about the historical Christian explanations given above from giants of the Christian faith? Is it fair to say that Christian doctrine (or at least Christian teachers) have at times demeaned women? Assuming Christian teachers have demeaned women throughout Western history, does that fact undermine the credibility of Christianity to speak to issues of gender today? Why or why not?