

Women of the Bible Series

Eve: Breaking a culture of blame and shame

(Genesis 3:1-13 & John 1:1-13)

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Summary of key points

Focus Verses: *“The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The snake deceived me, and I ate.’ (Genesis 3:12-13)*

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

- Who are inspirational women for you? It is unlikely that it is Eve – interpretations and perceptions of Eve in the Genesis narratives have filtered into many areas of historical and modern culture, literature, art & media and are traditionally thought to have influenced how women are perceived and treated across generations, including the present era.
- Genesis accounts of Eve portray her as a woman of blame and shame: blamed over generations for the fall and consequential suffering of humanity (Gen 3:16-17), and shamed for being easily deceived, weak and manipulative (Gen 3:12-13)
- Woman is inferior to and dependent upon man – Eve was created after Adam to be his helper (Gen 2:18,20b-22), supported, it seems, by Paul in 2 Cor 11.3; 1 Tim 2.13-14.
- Is there an alternative interpretation of the texts? These suggest that:
 1. The woman is tempted because she is curious and seeks knowledge NOT weak and easily deceived;
 2. BOTH Adam & Eve were deceived – Adam is present during the temptation & remains silent to the serpent’s actions – he doesn’t intervene!(Gen 3:6)
 3. Eve as ‘helper’ – comes from the Hebrew ‘ezer’ - has the meaning of ‘rescuer’ and is also used of God in relation to humanity (a partner to be enjoyed in loving mutuality)
 4. God created *them* in his likeness (Gen 1:26-27); Adam is put in a deep sleep as God fashions Eve from his rib. Adam merely provides the material from which God creates Eve. This interpretation suggests EQUALITY and MUTUALITY.

- Generational blame and shame still exist (for men & women) in many forms. Actions and attitudes from parents / grandparents which tarnish and shape our perceptions and prejudices of self, other and the world. But the presence of God on earth, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, gives us new identity and breaks this worldly culture of blame and shame. We are CHILDREN OF GOD. (John 1:12-13)

Application questions for discussion

Read the Bible passages again, ideally using at least 2 different versions, and then consider the following questions:

1. How has your understanding of the interpretation of Eve, as portrayed in Genesis, been confirmed, challenged, or changed?
2. To what extent do you consider the Genesis narratives of Adam and Eve to be significant in influencing questions of gender roles, stereotypes, and equality in the world today?
3. Where do you see a culture of blame and shame in your own lived experience? Where would you like to see Jesus at work in your life / wider world to break generational shame?
4. How easy do you find it to see yourself as a child of God?

Prayer activity

1. In groups or pairs, turn to your partner and consider how Jesus sees them as a child of God. Write a paragraph to affirm and describe them as Jesus would. Share it with them. If you are alone, try to imagine how God sees you and write a paragraph affirming yourself of God's love for you. Speak these truths over yourself and each other.
2. Pray for women around the world who face issues of oppression, inequality, or shame.

Further reading (optional)

Bruce, Kate and Liz Shercliff, *Out of the Shadows: Preaching the Women of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 2021)

Croft, Steven and Paula Gooder, *Women and Men in Scripture and the Church* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2013)

Peppiatt, Lucy, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2019)