

Take-Home 2. What Went Wrong

From the Beginning

What We Found

The serpent works on the picture of God first. The eating comes late in the sequence, after God has been quietly recast as someone who withholds.

The first casualty of sin is not the relationship with God but the ability of two people to be seen by each other without covering up.

The first question God speaks in the Bible is where are you. He already knows. It is an invitation to come out. The serpent had asked the first question of all, a few verses earlier.

Nobody in Genesis 3 takes responsibility. The man blames his wife and blames God for giving her to him.

Genesis 3:16 describes a consequence, not a command. The domination of the woman is named as damage, and the New Testament will dismantle it.

Human nature after the fall is wounded, not destroyed (CCC 405). The design of marriage survived. Our ability to live it unaided did not.

In the middle of the judgment God says the woman's offspring will bruise the serpent's head, and then he makes clothes for the two people who betrayed him.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IRENAEUS ON THE TWO WOMEN

St. Irenaeus taught that the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by the obedience of Mary, setting the two women deliberately side by side so that the undoing matches the doing.

He did not mean that Mary replaces Christ. He meant that God repairs the story with the same materials he used to make it: a garden, a tree, a woman, a word given and either refused or received.

Against Heresies, Book III, chapter 22. The Eve and Mary comparison recurs in Book V.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON WHAT THE WOUND ACTUALLY IS

St. Thomas taught that original sin leaves human nature wounded rather than destroyed, and he named four wounds in particular: ignorance in the mind, malice in the will, weakness in the face of what is hard, and disordered desire.

Read that list against Genesis 3 and against your own last argument. Both spouses will bring all four into the marriage. Neither of them put them there.

Summary of his teaching on the wounds of nature, Summa Theologiae I-II, question 85.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON THE BLAMING

Preaching on Genesis, St. John Chrysostom pressed hard on the moment when the man answers God by pointing at his wife, and at God for giving her to him. In substance he criticized the man sharply for shifting the blame onto his wife and onto God rather than confessing plainly.

He is a useful voice here because he is unsparing with the man. In a room of engaged couples that lands

differently than a general observation about human nature.

Summary of his teaching in the Homilies on Genesis.

Live It This Week

- **Go to confession this week, both of you, separately.** Not because tonight was about how bad you are. Because Genesis 3 is a story about hiding, and the sacrament is the practice of coming out of the trees. If it has been years, tell the priest that at the start and let him help you.
- **Name your move.** Tell your fiancé, in plain words, what you do when you are hurt. Attack, silence, humor, logic, exit. Naming it in peacetime makes it recognizable in wartime.
- **Break one inherited pattern once.** Choose one habit from your family of origin that you do not want, and consciously do the opposite a single time this week. Tell your fiancé you are doing it.
- **Read Hosea 1 through 3 before next session.** It gets uncomfortable. Keep reading anyway.

BEFORE THE ALTAR

This week. Both of you go to confession, separately. Then put a recurring date in the calendar for confession in the month before the wedding, and keep it.

Also. Each of you write down one pattern from your family of origin you do not want to repeat, and trade lists. Keep them. You will come back to them later in the study.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, Where are you?

Genesis 3:9

Before next session: Read Hosea 1 through 3 before Session 3. It gets uncomfortable. Keep reading.

Catechism: CCC 390, 397-401, 405, 410-411, 1606-1608.