

**DID GOD REALLY SAY?**  
Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch  
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TEXT: Genesis 2 & 3, Luke 4:1-11

Through the years, I have read many lists of answers kids – and yes, even college students – have given to a quiz about the Bible. Some of them are quite humorous. They go like this:

“Noah’s wife was called Joan of Ark.”

“The Fifth Commandment is to humor thy father and mother.”

“Lot’s wife was a pillar of salt by day and a ball of fire at night.”

“The epistles are the wives of the apostles.”

“Moses died before he ever reached Canada. Then Joshua led the Hebrews in the Battle of Geritol.”

“David was a Hebrew King who was skilled at playing the liar. He fought the Finkelsteins, a race of people who lived in Biblical times.”

“Solomon, one of David’s sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.”

“Moses led the Jews to the Red Sea where they made unleavened bread which is bread without any ingredients.”<sup>1</sup>

And then there is the story of the new minister was asked to teach a boys' class in the absence of the regular teacher. He decided to see what they knew, so he asked who knocked down the walls of Jericho. All the boys denied having done it, and the preacher was appalled by their ignorance. At the next elders' meeting he told about the experience. "Not one of them knows who knocked down the walls of Jericho," he lamented. The group was silent until finally one seasoned veteran of disputes spoke up. "Preacher, this appears to be bothering you a lot. But I've known all those boys since they were born and they're good boys. If they said they didn't know, I believe them. Let's just take some money out of the repair and maintenance fund, fix the walls, and let it go at that."<sup>2</sup>

Oh my, how crazy are those answers! It is true that many people really don’t know their Bible – and can get easily confused. In fact, I am guessing that all of us, from time to time can get mixed up. I know there are times when Greg and I will be discussing a verse that we somewhat remember from Scripture – and we can’t find it. It is either worded differently than we remember – because of the different translations – or we only know half of the verse and don’t know the whole verse and context. So sometimes we discover that we are remembering phrases and sayings that are not in the Bible – OR – are just not exactly what the text says.

For example, I am going to show you a variety of phrases and sayings that we all have probably said at one time or another. I want you to tell me if any of these are in the Bible? Just call out the letter of the phrase you think are in the Bible.

- a) Cleanliness is next to godliness.
- b) God works in mysterious ways.
- c) The three wisemen.
- d) The lion shall lay down with the lamb.
- e) Money is the root of all evil.
- f) To thine own self be true.

Well, as some of you have probably already guessed – this was kind of a trick question. None of these are found in the Bible! Now some of them may be close to a Scripture – but has words left out or added in. Like the phrase the three wisemen. It never says how many wisemen came to see the Christ child. Or the saying, “money is the root of all evil” – the Bible actually says, “the LOVE of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” (I Timothy 6:10)

We are beginning a new sermon series today called “Did God Really Say”. Throughout the summer, we will look at phrases and sayings that might not actually be in the Bible – or statements that are just only half right from the Bible. Along the way, we will discover the truth and the promises that God *really* says in each of them.

That phrase “Did God really say” is the first question that is actually recorded in our whole Bible. And that is in the text that we will be looking at today from the first book of the Bible, Genesis. I invite you to get your Bible out and turn to Genesis, chapter 3 and we will read our story about Adam and Eve and their temptation in the Garden of Eden.

We remember that Genesis 1 & 2 share the story of creation – the design of the Garden of Paradise and the creation of the first woman and man. Chapter 2 ends with the words that the couple was together, and were naked, and felt no shame. But that was all getting ready to change.

Let’s start reading at 3:1 – *‘The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”*

Let’s stop there for just a moment. Just think about how the serpent is approaching Adam and Eve. He doesn’t come up to them and say, “Hey, you shouldn’t trust God” or “go ahead and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Instead, he begins with a question – it is an innocent sounding question – and yet I think he is trying to cast doubt into their minds about the goodness and generosity of God. “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” Is God being stingy and withholding something from you all?

So, look how Eve responds: <sup>2</sup> *“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied.* <sup>3</sup> *“It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”*

Ah – now this is very interesting. It seems that Eve is already starting to doubt and distrust God already. Because you would think she might say, “Oh no, God says we can eat abundantly from all the trees, except for one – what a generous God we have!” But she doesn’t! What she actually does is misquote God.

Look at this comparison of what God actually says, in chapter two, and how Eve misquotes God, in chapter 3.

GENESIS 2 & 3	
WHAT GOD SAID	HOW EVE QUOTED GOD
1. Freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden (2:16)	1. We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden (subtracted “freely” – 3:2)
2. except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17)	2. it’s only from the fruit from the tree which is in the middle of the garden (left out knowledge of good and evil - 3:3)

GENESIS 2 & 3	
WHAT GOD SAID	HOW EVE QUOTED GOD
3. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die. (3:17)	3. We are not allowed to eat. God said “You must not eat it or even <i>touch</i> it. If you do, you will die.” (Adds “touch” and subtracts “If you eat it” and “you are sure to die”) – 3:3)

So what is interesting is that she is just understating what God said – and it is not completely accurate. With very subtle differences, Eve adds to God’s words – and then takes away from God’s words. She doesn’t emphasize how generous God is in giving them EVERY tree in the garden, except one. Rather she is emphasizing how God isn’t being fair – that He is not very generous because there is one tree that they can’t eat from. A pastor named Jacob Gerber describes this as the first act of ingratitude in the Bible. He says, “It’s not pronounced or well developed but the woman should have been standing in awe of what God had said – instead of focusing on His strictness and unfairness. I read somewhere this week that sin begins when we lose the “awe” of God – start believing the lies of the enemy and placing our own wills above God’s will. Adam and Eve are starting down the path towards sin.

Let’s continue the story. Look how the serpent responds to Eve:

<sup>4</sup> “*You won’t die!*” the serpent replied to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “*God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.*”

Now what is interesting here is what the serpent – (who we know to be Satan) – says. First of all, he negates God’s word – for God *did* say they would surely die. And then he says, “your eyes will be opened and you will be like God.” Well, that is exactly what Satan wanted – to be like God – and that is what got him thrown out of heaven. (Isaiah 14:12-14) Adam and Eve were already created in the image of God but Satan tempts them with an even great privilege - to be like God! So Satan plants the seed: God hasn’t told you the whole truth – He is really withholding a wonderful gift in that fruit from tree of knowledge of good and evil. God is not good and not telling you the truth.

So, with all this information from Satan, Eve considers the fruit and then decided to listen to the voice of Satan, and turn her back on the Word of God. Look at verse 6: <sup>6</sup> *The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the*

*wisdom it would give her. So, she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup> At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So, they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.*

You know, at this point of the story, I just want to shout out, “Don’t do it Eve! Don’t take that apple! Think about what you are doing! Don’t do it!” God had never given them any reason to doubt Him. He had been abundantly generous and provided them with everything they needed. Why did she have to listen to the wrong voice?

Well, we know of course, the rest of the story. First, they both are filled with shame – and then they hide away from God – and then blame each other – and history is changed forever!

But, before we get too hard on Adam and Eve and blame them – we need to admit that we are really a lot like Adam and Eve. Don’t we often listen to other voices that cause of us to doubt God’s goodness and turn away from the truth of God’s word? Aren’t we tempted to listen to other voices – including our own desires and experiences – more often than we do the very word of God?

Pastor Scott Denny says it this way: *Think about the onslaught of voices that scream for our attention just through (news broadcasts, social media, Tik-Tok, Instagram, Facebook, etc. captivate our attention. In those moments of mindless scrolling, we can be tempted to think differently about what God says about our identity, our possessions, our relationships, our purity, our marriages, our children, our pursuit of righteousness and holiness, just to start. In those moments those ‘voices’ within each (broadcast) and social media post, can have a hint of “Did God really say?” We can be tempted just like Eve and Adam were and can find ourselves succumbing to the wrong voice and going down the wrong path.*

So, what are we to do? What should we learn in our own struggle against sin and against Satan?

First, we need to examine the thoughts and voices that are planted in our mind. We’re learning this in our Wednesday Bible Studies by Louie Giglio. He shares that when thoughts or voices come into our minds we need to simply ask ourselves two questions:

1. Where did that thought/voice come from?
2. Is it congruent with God’s word?<sup>3</sup>

That will take some discipline – to stop and think, and filter those thoughts voices through the word of God. Plus it will require Bible Study – so you can learn to distinguish God’s voice from others.

Warn Wiersbe, in his book, *“The Strategy of Satan”* says that Bible study is not a luxury – it is a necessity. Thus we need to study it diligently and regularly.

- 2) And we must memorize God’s Word.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan – he responded to every temptation by quoting Scripture. He didn't have a concordance with him the wilderness. He reached into his heart and quoted three verses from Deuteronomy to silence Satan. Like Eve – and Jesus – our temptations will come to us at any time – and we may not have the time to go get a concordance and try to seek the answer from God. We need to be prepared. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:11 - *"Your word have I treasured in my heart so I may not sin against You."* Know God's word and store it in your heart and mind!

(3) We must meditate on God's Word. Meditation is really taking time to study and learn Scripture and reflect on what it means for your life. Joshua 1:8 says: *"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it."* How often do you study God's word? Do you rush through your morning devotions or do you take time to really feed on God's truth? The more you read and study – the more God's words will become a part of you. And then:

(4) We can live God's word, led by the Holy Spirit. Wiersbe says, *"The believer's mind should become like a spiritual computer. It should be so saturated with Scripture that when (you) face a decision or a temptation, you automatically remember the Scriptures that relate to that particular situation. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring God's Word to our minds when we need it. [Jn 14:26] But the Spirit of God cannot remind you of something that you have not learned! You must first let him teach you the Word. You must memorize the Scripture that he opens up to you. Then the Spirit of God will be able to remind you of what you have learned, and you can use that truth to battle Satan. Please remember that Satan knows the Bible far better than we do! And he is able to quote it! The Spirit of God will enable you to use the Word of God in the battle against the devil. The Spirit will show you when Satan is "using" the Bible to promote his own lies, as he did with Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus took into consideration the total message (THE WHOLE CONTEXT) of the Bible and did not stop (as did Satan) with one isolated passage. Satan enjoys taking verses out of context and using them to PROVE his false claims. You and I must have a grasp of all Scripture if we are to detect Satan's lies and defeat them."*<sup>4</sup>

Psalm 119:105 says that God's word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. We can trust the truth of God's word – as we know it in our heads – stow it in our hearts – show it in our lives and sow it out in our world.

In one Peanuts comic strip Sally was struggling with her memory verse for Sunday. She was absorbed in her thoughts trying to figure it out when she remembered, "Maybe it was something from the book of Reevaluation."

She never did find the memory verse, but we should always read the Bible with the intent of reevaluating our attitudes and actions to make sure they are in line with the truth of God's Word.

## PRAYER

## INVITATION

## RESOURCES

<sup>1</sup>“*The Bible According to Kids*” and “*Bible Illiteracy*”, sermoncentral.org.

<sup>2</sup> Source Unknown.

<sup>3</sup>Louie Giglio, “*Don’t Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table.*”

<sup>4</sup>Warren Wiersbe, *The Strategy of Satan*. Portion quoted in preceptaustin.org.