



THE GARDEN

9 WEEK BIBLE STUDY

embrace

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Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.

GENESIS 2:8-9, 15-17 (NIV)



They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ... Going a little farther, He fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from Him. "Abba, Father," He said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will."

MARK 14:32-42 (NIV)

The Tale of Two Gardens

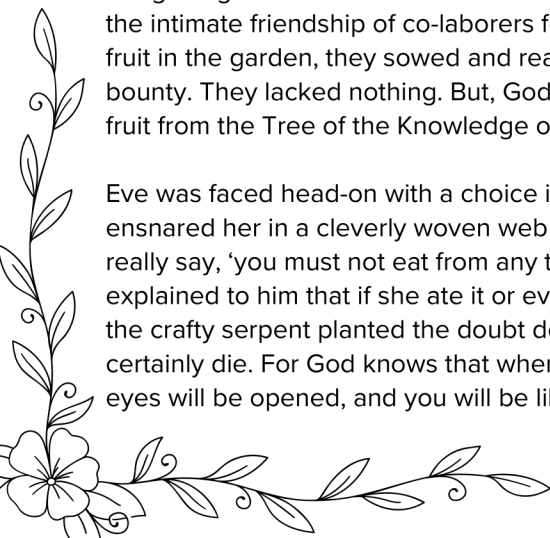
Big Idea

Two gardens starkly contrasted; one bright and newly begun, the other dark and foretelling of death. Yet, within each is a story of life and loss, gladness and pain, choices and consequences.

The first of these two gardens was spoken into existence at the beginning of time. All manner of living things dwelt there in unison under the canopy of God's presence. He called the garden Eden, which means "delight" or "place of pleasure." It was a perfect paradise and He selected it as the earthly home for mankind. Two trees sat resplendent at Eden's center. The Tree of Life, which represented God's vitalizing presence, sustained both physical and spiritual life in the garden. The other was called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

This second tree symbolized a choice. God created Adam and Eve—and by extension, all mankind—to have dominion over the world and each of its inhabitants. He commissioned them to name, tend, and care for every living thing. He often walked with them in the cool of the day, sharing the intimate friendship of co-laborers for a common purpose. From the fruit in the garden, they sowed and reaped, and enjoyed an abundant bounty. They lacked nothing. But, God forbade them from eating the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Eve was faced head-on with a choice in Genesis 3. The serpent ensnared her in a cleverly woven web of doubt by asking, "Did God really say, 'you must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" She explained to him that if she ate it or even touched it, she would die. But the crafty serpent planted the doubt deeper by saying, "You will not certainly die. For God knows that when you eat from [the tree], your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

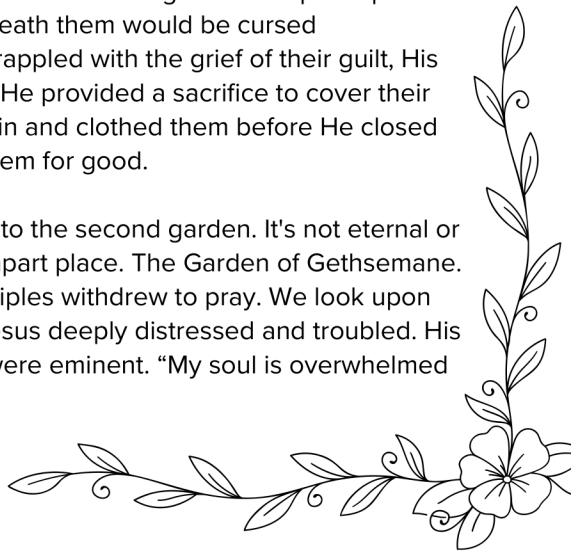


Can we pause here for a moment? Do you think Adam and Eve, up to that point, had any concept of “evil”? All they knew was good, verdant and righteous. That fruit must have looked delicious, but do you think Eve would have ever considered eating it if the serpent had never spoken up? Yet the serpent’s suggestion gave doubt a foothold in Eve’s mind. When she heard what the serpent said, she became curious about being as wise as God, seeing what He sees, knowing what He knows. Maybe she figured that since God shared everything else with her, why not this? She might not have even realized at the time that acting on her curiosity was an act of disobedience. So she ate the fruit. Initially, it must have seemed like the serpent was right because she didn’t actually die. She turned and gave some to Adam, who was there with her, and he ate it as well. The moment he did, their eyes were immediately opened, and they saw their sin. They realized they were naked and covered themselves in shame as their word fractured and fell apart. Their perfect communion had been lost. Death had entered the garden after all.

Then they heard the sound of the Lord as He was walking in the garden and hid in fear among the trees. "Where are you?" the Lord asked. When they answered Him, the Lord said, "What is this you have done?" Can you imagine the disappointment of the Father at that moment? Have your kids ever done something so grievous that it knocked the wind out of you? After all the Father had given them, Adam and Eve chose disobedience and rebellion.

How it must have broken the Father’s heart. God knew He would have to withdraw His presence from them and that they could no longer call Eden their home. The law of sowing and reaping had to play out, and He banished them from the garden. Their sin brought toil and pain upon themselves, and the ground beneath them would be cursed forevermore. Yet even as God grappled with the grief of their guilt, His grace made a way. By His hand, He provided a sacrifice to cover their shame. He made garments of skin and clothed them before He closed the gate to the garden behind them for good.

Fast forward thousands of years to the second garden. It’s not eternal or perfect, but it is a quiet and set-apart place. The Garden of Gethsemane. Here Jesus and three of His disciples withdrew to pray. We look upon the scene in Mark 14 and find Jesus deeply distressed and troubled. His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion were eminent. “My soul is overwhelmed



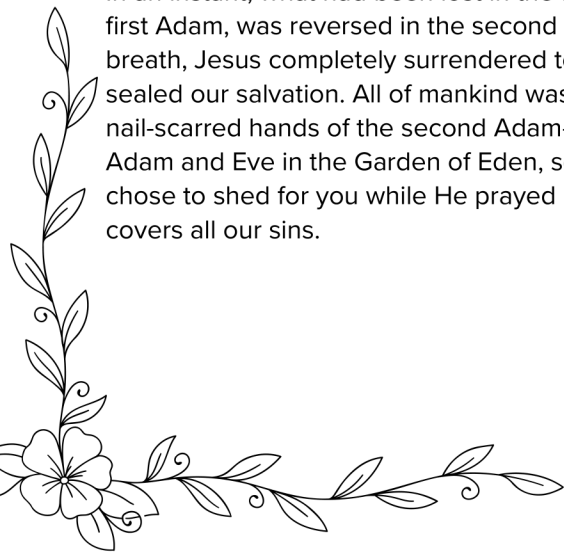
with sorrow to the point of death,” Jesus said. In anguish, He fell to the ground, pleading with the Father. “Abba, Father,” He said, “everything is possible for You. Take this cup from Me.”

The word *Gethsemane* means "an oil press," and the garden was located near Jerusalem at the foot of the Mount of Olives. An oil press, or expeller, uses extremely high pressure to squeeze the oils out of a plant product. The continuous high pressure upon the raw materials creates friction which causes exceedingly hot temperatures. The combination of pressure and heat is what extracts the purest oils.

In the midst of this press, Jesus—who was fully God and fully man—was faced head-on with a choice. On the one hand, He had all authority to exercise His supernatural power and overcome His oppressors. On the other hand, He had been sent to restore and make right all that had been lost in Eden. He must have been dreading the torture and pain that awaited Him and knew that He would feel devastated to be separated from the Father.

The Passion Translation describes that moment this way, "Because His heart was focused on the joy of knowing that you would be His, He endured the agony of the cross and conquered its humiliation..." (Hebrews 12:2 TPT). What ultimately moved His heart that night was you. You were His joy in that moment. He knew what awaited you if He chose not to go to the cross. He became the payment for our sins and bore the penalty we deserved. He concluded His prayer, “Yet not what I will, but what You will.”

In an instant, what had been lost in the first garden, at the hand of the first Adam, was reversed in the second garden. With one resolved breath, Jesus completely surrendered to the will of the Father and sealed our salvation. All of mankind was redeemed by the outstretched, nail-scarred hands of the second Adam—Jesus. Just as God covered Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, so the blood of Jesus—which He chose to shed for you while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane—covers all our sins.



Discussion

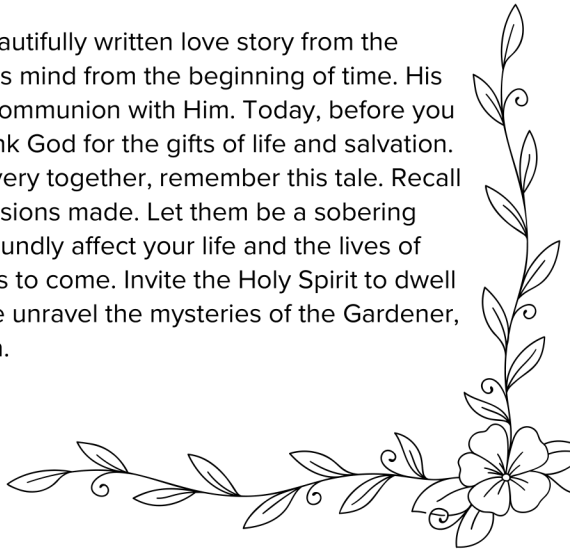
What are modern day traps the enemy sets for you to cause you to doubt the Word of God?

Describe what you think Jesus felt when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus chose YOU despite the pain and torment it caused Him?

Takeaway

This story of two gardens is a beautifully written love story from the Gardener to you: you were on His mind from the beginning of time. His plan for you has been to live in communion with Him. Today, before you do anything else, pause and thank God for the gifts of life and salvation. As we start this journey of discovery together, remember this tale. Recall to mind the choices and the decisions made. Let them be a sobering reminder that your choices profoundly affect your life and the lives of those around you for generations to come. Invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in the garden of your heart as we unravel the mysteries of the Gardener, and unlock secrets of His garden.





Dear Dweller,

Come, walk in the cool of the garden with Me.

Enjoy the fragrance of My presence.

See the beauty I've crafted for our time together.

I will whisper sweet somethings in your ear
of the treasure you are.

Let me show you how to live in victory.

I wait.