



[Genesis 3:17-19](#)

(17) To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'
"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it
all the days of your life. (18) It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field. (19) By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return."
New International Version

Some commentators make a great deal out of the fact that [God](#) addresses this curse to *adam* rather than to "the man" (*ish* in Hebrew), seeing this as proof that this curse was to fall on all mankind. This semantic argument means very little in the end, since both *ish*, the man named Adam, and *adam*, mankind, received the effects of the curse, just as both Eve and all other women have suffered from her curse.

English-speaking peoples have a saying that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." God, of course, understood this, and thus His curse on Adam centers on eating. In fact, eating is a major theme of the first three chapters of Genesis (see 1:29-30; 2:9, 15-17; 3:1-6, 11-13).

Eating, however, stands for more than simply nourishing the body; it is one small part of mankind's daily struggle to survive his hostile environment, planet earth. The [Garden of Eden](#) was a place where man's work "to tend and keep" what God had made was pleasurable, fulfilling, and probably not overly strenuous. The earth worked with the man to produce his needs for food, clothing, shelter, and whatever other need he might have.

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Once God pronounced his curse, though, the ground—from which comes all material wealth and produce—turned uncooperative. Instead of man and nature united in productive labor, the situation became man versus nature, a competition for dominance. Now, man would have to use all his physical and mental powers to subdue the earth.

The earth would yield its fruit only after a man forced it through hard labor in plowing, planting, watering, cultivating, and reaping. Animals from insects to deer to wolves, fearful of man, would become pests and destroy his crops, herds, possessions and even his life on occasion. Materials for building homes, crafting tools, making clothing, and manufacturing items would be gathered only by raping the land of minerals, metals, wood, and stone.

The earth would protest through natural processes like earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, wildfires, erosion, and infertility. Denuded of trees, the land would become a desert. The weather would turn foul, sending too much or too little rain. Windstorms like hurricanes and tornadoes would devastate vast stretches of territory. The sun would beat down mercilessly or withhold its heat for long stretches.

Such was the situation [Adam and Eve](#) faced after God drove them from the Garden of Eden. For six thousand years all their descendants have struggled to survive the harsh conditions of life separated from God and in competition with nature. Surely it has affected their eating, but it has also had an impact on every other endeavor of mankind—from breaking horses for riding to blasting satellites into orbit. Men accomplish nothing except by the toil of hard work and overcoming the obstacles the environment places in their way.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The First Prophecy \(Part Three\)](#)

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