



## [Genesis 3:16-19](#)

(16) To the woman he said,  
"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;  
with pain you will give birth to children.  
Your desire will be for your husband,  
and he will rule over you." (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*

The matter of leadership—whether nationally, locally, at home, on the job, or on the team—has always been a vexing problem for mankind. “Always” should be taken literally because [Genesis 3:16-19](#) reveals it was a major part of several issues that triggered mankind's circumstances ever since, down to this very second. After Adam's and Eve's sins, [God](#) imposed curses, at the same time pointedly stating why this major flaw in man's character helped to trigger the human condition that persists today.

Notice that God mentions to Adam, whom He had appointed as leader of the family through which He intended to populate the entire earth, “You have heeded the voice [counsel] of your wife.” In other words, he had failed to lead the only person who was then under his authority. He took her counsel rather than do what God had commanded him to do, and thus he sinned. The context does not state why he did so, but what resulted was an act of idolatry. He put her counsel before God's, breaking the first

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commandment.

How long did Adam ponder the challenge of the serpent's arguments to break God's commandment by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? A few seconds? A few minutes? Whatever it was, in comparison to the amount of time that has passed since, it remains as little more than a flash of lightning. Yet, consider how this seemingly minor sin motivated God to react.

This singular episode in Eden illustrates how seriously God treats sin as compared to how lightly we tend to take it. It was a brief moment in time, when Adam, along with Eve—only two people—failed to exercise leadership by obeying God's simple stricture. What they chose to do instead has brought far more difficult lives on billions of people—difficulty that otherwise may have never occurred. Life, righteousness, and sin do not operate in a vacuum. There is no such thing as sin that does not hurt others, as some so foolishly think or proclaim to justify themselves.

[Ecclesiastes 7:29](#) makes a telling statement regarding our creation: “Truly this only have I found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” Solomon intends that we understand Adam and Eve to be representative of all mankind. However, Genesis 3 makes clear that they exercised their leadership by leading us into sin. In so doing, they led us all to fall from the pinnacle of human innocence in which they had been created.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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