



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

(16) To the woman He said:

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;

In pain you shall bring forth children;

Your desire *shall be* for your husband,

And he shall rule over you." (17) Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it":

"Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat *of* it

All the days of your life.

(18) Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

(19) In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you *are*,

And to dust you shall return."

*New King James 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

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[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 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

**To learn more, see:**

[Leadership and Covenants \(Part One\)](#)

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