

# The Spiritual Roots of Family Breakdown

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**W**hile there are many practical, psychological and emotional causes for marital and family conflict, breakdown and divorce, there are also historical spiritual causes underlying these others. The Bible takes us back to the very root cause for these problems, but in a way that you may not have understood in the past.

In the book of Genesis, we read that there was a brief time when everything was “good”, as God designed it to be. God’s first two children were originally as pure and innocent as the driven snow. They were “naked and unashamed.” A third character in the Garden was referred to as the “serpent”. We read that it wasn’t long before problems arose and God’s children were cursed and evicted from their paradise. Their offspring committed the first act of murder, and we know that society has continued on this path ever since. God was so disappointed with how things went that He later said, in Genesis 6:6, that He was “sorry he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”

The revealing story centers around the “fruit” of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which God had warned his children not to “eat”, lest they die! The story says that the serpent convinced Eve to eat of this fruit, against God’s commandment. She then turned and convinced Adam to eat of this fruit, resulting in the condemnation of the entire human race throughout the rest of history until Jesus gave us a way to be forgiven. Without doubt, this story is filled with symbolism. We will dissect the sym-

bolism and reveal the vital, real-life message it contains for you and me.

### ***The Fruit***

This fruit was something not to be even touched. Was this fruit actually something to eat, or was it a symbol for something more significant to this story than food? First of all, this fruit grew on the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” The name of this tree sounds suspiciously symbolic; and, it stood next to the “Tree of Life” in the center of the Garden. If this fruit was a literal fruit to be eaten by mouth, then we would have a major conflict with Jesus’ words in Matthew 15:11, 17-19. Here Jesus said: “not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man... Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and so passes on? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man...” The context of this passage was a situation in which Jesus was talking about eating with unwashed hands. But, his fundamental point remains. Perhaps the “fruit” which the first humans desired at the price of their lives symbolized something other than food.

Many other people have concluded that the problem was simply *disobedience to God’s commandment*, irrespective of the particulars of this “fruit”. Let’s analyze this view.

Most of us would agree that God is a being whose compassion can be perceived all around us, as Paul said in Rom. 1:20. Not only must God’s love be vast and deep, but since He is the author of life – the “artist”, if you will

– and we are products of His work, then by definition God must have more compassion than all human beings put together. Few would argue with this view. Yet, let us draw a parallel. Let's say you were a parent and you wanted to test the obedience of your children, so you placed poisoned brownies on the kitchen table and told your children that they must not eat the treats, or they will die. Then, you announced that you were going next door to visit the neighbors. In reality, you walked around the house and peeked through the kitchen window to watch your children succumb to temptation and eat the brownies and die. What would happen? Even in this selfish, fallen world, you would likely be either executed for your cruelty or imprisoned for life.

Does this sound like a logical explanation for the actions of a supremely compassionate God? Would a God with far more compassion than you or I could ever imagine condemn to hell all of the future generations of the descendents of his two first children because of one simple act of disobedience? And what chance would there be for any of us to be obedient to God's commandments if these first two children, who were pure and innocent, could not pass such a simple test. Therefore, there must be more to this story than a simple act of disobedience.

If we should determine that the fruit is symbolic, then the tree which bore the fruit would also be symbolic. To assist us in identifying what the forbidden "fruit" really was, let us look first at these special trees, and also at the "serpent".

There are two meanings of "trees" in the Bible. One meaning, of course, is an actual tree which can be

chopped down. However, in other parts of the Bible, “tree” refers to people. For example, Jesus cursed a tree and it withered and died. This was a literal tree. He also referred to himself and others as “trees” when he said in John 15:5 “I am the vine. You are the branches.” Jesus also referred to us as wild olive trees and himself as the true olive tree, to which we should engraft ourselves. And most interestingly, Revelations 22:14 refers to Jesus when it says, “Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and enter the City by the gates.” What relationship might there be between the Tree of Life in Genesis and the Tree of Life in Revelations? Obviously, “Tree of Life” is not referring to the type of tree which can be chopped down. It refers to a person. When you read carefully Genesis 2:9-11, you discover that, indeed, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were distinct from the literal trees of the Garden.

*“And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

### ***The Serpent***

The so-called “Serpent” was also a central character in this story. Who or what was this serpent? We find the answer in Revelations 12:9, where it describes “that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” This tells us several important things. It tells us that the “serpent” in both the Genesis story and also in Revelation is

symbolic for something other than a snake. This serpent was a creature which knew God's commandment to Adam and Eve (i.e., it must have been a spiritual being), is called the "Devil" and "Satan", lived in Heaven from whence it was "cast out" to the earth, and was a leader of angels. Now, as you probably have figured out by now, this can only refer to one creature, namely Lucifer, considered by many to be one of three archangels who ruled over the angelic realms. Thus, the "serpent" in the Garden was not a snake, but rather a symbolic term for the angel Lucifer.

### ***The Process***

Let's get to the point. What really happened in the Garden? After Adam and Eve's disobedience, their immediate reaction was to cover their sexual parts with aprons? If they had sinned with their mouths, they would have been ashamed of their mouths or hands. Why be shameful of their sexual parts? And why did God immediately say, upon hearing Adam's confession of his newly acquired shame, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" There was an unmistakable connection between Adam and Eve's covering of their sexual parts and their sinful act. In the book of Job, he asks a question in chapter 31:33 which includes the remark that Adam "covered his transgression". Lucifer was also involved in this. What was the sin of the fallen angels? Jude 6-7 reveals that...

*"The angels that did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, have been kept by Him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgement of the great day; just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding*

*cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”*

The sin of the fallen angels was immorality and unnatural lust. What is a fruit? A fruit is that part of a tree which contains the “seeds” for reproduction. What was the fruit of Eve? It was her sexual part. Even today, some cultures refer to sexual relationships as “eating the fruit.”

God had wanted his first two children to grow to full spiritual maturity – perfection (of heart) – as Jesus described it in his Sermon on the Mount, before multiplying through having children. As it was, Adam and Eve’s children were born outside of the Garden, after the fall. The children of Adam and Eve obviously did not grow up learning Christ-like love from their parents. Had the first human ancestors matured to have this Christ-like love before having children, what a different world we would live in today!

Everyone is still searching for true love. Only in Jesus can we see it (the Last Adam, not the first). What really happened is this: Lucifer tempted Eve to share sexual love with him (recall numerous human-angelic contacts, such as Jacob wrestling with an angel at the ford of Jaboc) to facilitate his totally selfish motivation and ambition to take his own false dominion over mankind, supplanting God as our earthly “Father”. Eve succumbed to his lies and sexual temptations. She then took her new-found carnal knowledge, guilt and fear to Adam to comfort her own conscience, tempting Adam to disobey God’s commandment, as well, and “eat the fruit”.

Were these two people perfect, and not just created pure?

Their behavior tells us they were not spiritually mature, or perfect. Adam told God it was the woman's fault that he sinned, and Eve told God it was the angel's fault that she sinned. Everyone passed the buck. Would a mature, Christ-like person do that? No! They were not yet mature. Again, they began having children outside of the Garden, after they failed to keep God's commandment and inherited the selfish motivation of Lucifer. Adam inherited it from Eve.

### ***The Consequences***

The mistake was not sex, itself. Malachi 2: 15 tells us that God sought "Godly offspring" through man and woman. Thus, having children was to be Adam and Eve's destiny and the fulfillment of God's blessing to them to "multiply". It was their immature and selfish misuse of love wherein the mistake lies. We have all inherited immature, selfish love. And, while God intended sexual love to be the most beautiful expression of perfected, agape love between a husband and wife, and the mechanism to multiply that perfected, mature love in the form of new children of God, the reality since the fall is that sexual love has often become a replacement for the true agape love God intended for married couples. God's children have been wandering in darkness, unable to find or experience that true, perfect, agape love in their lives, except for what we see in Jesus. Sexuality has been severely compromised from its intended divine purpose and place in our lives.

What is the so-called "oldest profession in the world"? What spiritual purpose might there have been behind the strange rite of circumcision? Why have priests and nuns lived celibate lives in order to draw closer to God? Why did St. Paul say that it is good to marry but better if we



don't? Why have so many spiritual leaders succumbed to sexual temptations and been ruined? Why are there so many sexual perversions, such as pornography, incest, homosexuality, adultery, etc., etc. Why do we market goods and services by utilizing sexual connotations? Why is there almost as much divorce in the community of Christian believers and churchgoers as there is in American society at large? After thousands of years of human history, why did Jesus still have to remind us of the simple basic core message: "Love God above all things, and Love your neighbor as yourself". We still have not digested that core teaching.

The simple reason is our first ancestors, contrary to God's intention, found sex before they found true agape love. In fact, they selfishly found sexuality in their immaturity, and never did find true, perfected agape love. Therefore, when they became parents, much like the rest of us, they did not have perfected and complete love with which to raise their children. The first human family was rife with conflict and even murder. It was just as dysfunctional as many families today. The "School of Love", the home, has always lacked the perfected love that was intended to bind it together as one unit and make it work smoothly, and the extended family in society has reflected the same lack of true love. Divorce, abuse, conflict, lack of fulfillment, etc., are our historical legacy. We are still in the same situation, personally, socially, culturally, and even globally.

This is the root cause of conflict in marriages and families.

What can we do about it? We must first reaffirm the forgiveness which Jesus bought for us by his death on the

cross. Next, we must strengthen the realization that our marriages are sacred institutions established by God. We must strengthen our everyday awareness that we are sons and daughters of God and that our lives are precious with Divine value. Chastity outside marriage should be our legacy. Teach your children the same. It is NOT old fashioned. It is all integrally related to the root of conflict and family breakdown. Pre-marital and extra-marital sex is out. The commitment of agape love is in.

If you would like to know more about this explanation, or the *Divine Principle* from which it is derived, please feel free to contact the Denver Family Church, 3418 W. 14th Ave., Denver, CO 80204.

**List of Biblical References:**

Gen Ch 2-3

Gen 2:9

Gen 6:6

Song of Solomon 4:12-16

Is 14:12

Job 31:33

Mal 2:15

Matt 15:11, 17-19

Jn 8:44

Jn 15:5

Rom 11:17

1 Cor 15:45

Jude 6-7

Rev 12:9

Rev 22:14