THE GREATEST MARKETING SCHEME

I once heard of a couple who received an unexpected invitation in the mail for a special evening gala with a fancy dinner. The invitation assured them they had also won a grand prize worth hundreds of dollars. Intrigued and perhaps a bit gullible, the couple decided to attend this event and claim their prize. They dressed up nicely and drove across town to the location. Once they arrived, they quickly realized that they might not have been the only “lucky winner,” for there were many others from their city who had received the same invitation. Soon after, it became evident that the entire event was a deceptive marketing scheme. The “dinner” was nothing to write home about and came with the caveat of having to sit through a product presentation aimed at selling unnecessary trinkets. The frustrated and disappointed couple hoped to claim the promised prize, but they were disappointed once again. The only prize available that night turned out to be a cheaply made milk frother that anyone could buy for only $1.50.

A few thousand years ago, another couple was duped on a much grander scale. Having received an unexpected invitation and the assurance of being “lucky winners,” Adam and Eve were deceived through the first marketing scam in humanity’s history. During the product presentation, lofty experiences were guaranteed and a grand prize was promised, only to result in immeasurable disappointment and devastation that has rippled down through the ages. This week will focus on the moment of humanity’s defection from God, which was also the moment humanity was sucked into the great controversy.
Write out Genesis 3:1–15 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out verses 1–6. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
SATAN’S SALES TACTICS

In marketing, professional sales experts have developed and refined strategies for selling products. The most successful marketing techniques often sell the product by selling a feeling. The seller tries to awaken a sense of need in the customer’s mind and then offer the “perfect” solution—for a fee, of course. Whether that need is legitimate or artificially inflated doesn’t matter; only the sale matters. Marketers take various steps toward this goal, often using questionable and sometimes unethical methods in the process.

After Satan was cast out of heaven, he looked for a foothold on planet earth. God restricted Satan to one tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden, as is evident in His instructions to Adam and Eve: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16, 17). So long as they believed in His word, they would be safe, away from Satan.

To sell the idea of joining his rebellion against God, the deceiver devised his own marketing strategy. Having the power to disguise himself, Satan appeared as a serpent. This was Satan’s first sales tactic: camouflage. Whether disguised as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) or a serpent, his success relies on master deception.

Another sales tactic Satan used was twisting God’s words and sowing doubt, both of which were unknown experiences to the then holy human pair: “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?” (Gen. 3:1). Through this carefully crafted question, he got Eve to engage in a conversation and step into confusion. We must keep in mind that Eve had never encountered lies and evil. For her, this must have been quite an odd but curious discussion. But the poison had already begun its work. Eve responded by slightly misstating what God had said about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan knew there was no point in trying to make Eve an atheist; she had literally spoken to and walked with God. He simply needed to get her to doubt God’s words and righteous intentions, so, through confusion and half-truths, he laid the foundation for doubt to take root.

Satan’s next tactic was to blatantly lie: “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (vv. 4, 5). Exploiting the God-given desire to grow in knowledge and holiness, Satan implied that God was withholding a better experience from humanity. He claimed it was possible to become like God and gain access to a higher level of intelligence. He promised Eve the freedom to do whatever she desired without suffering any consequences.

Satan’s tactics have not changed much through the ages. He is an expert at mixing truth with error. He and his legions of demons are still utilizing the same tried and (by now) refined sales tactics. Only one sale matters to them: you, trading your eternal life for eternal death.

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

What lies about God have you chosen to believe in the past?

How can we avoid stepping into confusion and doubt?
A SMALL STEP WITH GIANT CONSEQUENCES

Eve had a high-stakes decision to make when Satan offered her the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Step by step, he led her to a choice that resulted in a painful life and, ultimately, death. Though deceived by false promises, she could have walked away from Satan and consulted with her husband and with God before making the fatal decision to eat the fruit. Ellen White highlights the conspicuous absence of Adam when Eve was conversing with the serpent at the tree. She describes angels who had warned Adam and Eve “of Satan and cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment” (Early Writings [1882], 148). Unfortunately, as we know all too well, Eve chose to eat the fruit. All it takes is one small step toward temptation for the almost irresistible domino effect that leads to sin to be engaged. Sadly, when Eve shared the fruit with Adam, he chose to join his wife in her fate. Taking a closer look at this week’s scripture passage reveals the exact steps that led to eating the fruit as well as the resulting effects of sin.

Steps that led to sin (v. 6):

1. “when the woman saw” Seeing the sin (represented by the fruit)
2. “that the tree was good for food” Evaluating the experience
3. “that it was pleasant to the eyes” Allowing senses and feelings to guide decision
4. “desirable to make one wise” Considering the benefits of the action
5. “she took of its fruit” Committing to the experience
6. “and ate” Committing the sinful action
7. “She also gave to her husband” Leading others into sin

Results of sin:

1. “the eyes... were opened” (v. 7) Awareness of a change
2. “they knew that they were naked” (v. 7) Shame/guilt feeling
3. “they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings” (v. 7) Self-righteousness
4. “in the cool of the day” (v. 8) Procrastinating seeking out God
5. “Adam and his wife hid themselves” (v. 8) Broken relationship with God
   “I was afraid” (v. 10)
6. “The woman whom You gave to be with me” (v. 12) Blaming God/others
   “The serpent deceived me” (v. 13)
7. “multiply your sorrow and conception” (v. 16) Sin’s effects on human nature and relationships, nature, and lifespan
   “cursed is the ground for your sake” (v. 17)
   “to dust you shall return” (v. 19)

Satan is an expert at making the experience leading up to the sin as pleasant and tempting as possible. He knows human beings thoroughly and can customize his temptations for each of our personalities and according to our personal inclinations. The only safety lies in avoiding the tempter’s ground altogether and trusting in God’s Word completely.
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What relationship do the following verses have with Genesis 3:1–15?

Romans 5:12–21
2 Corinthians 11:3
Matthew 4:1–11
John 8:44
James 1:13–16
John 3:16
Hebrews 2:14, 15
1 Corinthians 15:24–26

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with the primary passage?

In the United States, when you have an emergency and call 911, the operator usually begins by asking the nature and location of the emergency. As long as they know those two things, they can formulate a response plan and set it in motion. Even though Adam and Eve did the opposite of calling for help (i.e., hiding in the garden), God, in His proactive mercy and grace, already had an emergency response plan ready to go. Having anticipated that moment long before time began, God had already prepared a solution to the sin problem: “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). This plan, however, was not just one option among many; it was the only possible path to offer full salvation while still upholding justice—but it was also by far the costliest.

God’s crisis management for Adam and Eve truly highlights His character. Despite being the hurt and wronged party, He took the first step toward a solution. Having given the human pair time to process what had happened, God came “in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8), seeking out the location of the emergency to deal with the nature of the emergency. Herein God’s attitude toward sinners is revealed: even when we have separated ourselves from God by breaking our covenant with Him, still He comes looking for us to restore the broken bond. Even as the victim, He always takes the first steps toward offering healing to the wrongdoer. God loves His enemies.

God warned Adam and Eve that “in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). What had not yet been made known was the fact that God had already prepared a plan to offer them a second chance without jeopardizing His integrity or justice. This second chance is what Genesis 3:15 is all about. Theologians call it the protoevangelium, the first gospel announcement, because in it God prophesied that a “Seed,” meaning a descendant, would deliver a deadly blow to Satan, the instigator of the great controversy. Satan would also wound the Seed, as evidenced by God saying, “you shall bruise His heel,” but this wounding of Jesus on the cross would someday become the ultimate revelation of God’s great love for His children. Nothing else could ensure lasting enmity between God’s children and Satan like the murder of the Son of God on the cross. Even though it cost Jesus’ life, the Godhead was committed to unmasking Satan’s lies and winning His children’s love-based loyalty back. In willingly giving up His life, Christ promised not only redemption but also the final and eternal destruction of Satan, sin, and evil.
“Satan represented to the holy pair that they would be gainers by breaking the law of God. Do we not today hear similar reasoning? Many talk of the narrowness of those who obey God’s commandments, while they themselves claim to have broader ideas and to enjoy greater liberty. What is this but an echo of the voice from Eden, ‘In the day ye eat thereof’—transgress the divine requirement—‘ye shall be as gods’? Satan claimed to have received great good by eating of the forbidden fruit, but he did not let it appear that by transgression he had become an outcast from heaven. Though he had found sin to result in infinite loss, he concealed his own misery in order to draw others into the same position. So now the transgressor seeks to disguise his true character; he may claim to be holy; but his exalted profession only makes him the more dangerous as a deceiver. He is on the side of Satan, trampling upon the law of God, and leading others to do the same, to their eternal ruin.

“Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God’s word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan.” (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets [1890], 55.)

“The Son of God, heaven’s glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.” (Ibid., 63.)
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What are some ways you see people misstating God’s Word today?

What were the steps that led Eve to sin?

Was God fair in offering humanity a second chance?

How can we learn to seek God when we sin instead of hiding or seeking distractions to numb the guilt?

What does enmity with Satan look like in a practical sense?

Why is sin fundamentally bad?

Where can Satan’s lies from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:3–5) be found in today’s world?

What are some of Satan’s strategies to lead people into a life of sin?

What are some ways to combat Satan’s custom-made temptations?

As believers, how can we echo God’s proactive, grace-driven approach to reconciliation in our relationships with others?