

Which part of “no” didn’t you understand?

Paradise. Seduction. Nakedness. Love. Betrayal.
Forgiveness. Redemption.
Power. Prestige. Fame.

Plot lines for The OC? Dynasty?
Shakespeare?

We get it--whether it’s the modern day prime time TV writer, the bard himself, Tolstoy, Hildegard, Milton, Virgil or the writers of Matthew or Genesis --since we first began to reflect and record what it was like to have soul and sinew, these recurring themes run deep in (and perhaps define) the collective psyche of us fragile humans.

The scriptures we break open each week can be such inspiration, such nourishment for us as we dig more deeply into what is the complexity and simplicity of the fully human experience for which we were created.

Take today’s three readings (Please).

The Garden of Eden story (parts of Genesis chapters 2 & 3) is actually the less common of the two Creation accounts in Genesis. It’s important to keep in mind the first chapter of Genesis--the “And God saw that it was all very good” version of the Creation. In this account, the Creation of the universe

is an unfolding, evolutionary experience where, from void to light, from empty space to planets, from barren land to living things, from plants to animals, from animals to humans, we see a God so filled with love, so intensely in need of expression, that the only recourse is the creative explosion we call the universe.

Genesis, Eden, and the Whole Apple Thing

With this “all is good, everything is dynamically moving toward something else” idea in mind, it’s easier to see what the eating of the fruit and the fall from grace are all about.

It hinges on the question: “If God’s so smart, creating such a perfect universe, why would, smack in the middle of the best real estate, there be planted a temptation that could screw up the whole deal?”

The problem as God saw it was that the universe was too perfect. Electrons were great, but they could only be electrons. They could only act like electrons. They didn’t choose their electronness, they had no choice. Atoms had to be atoms. Molecules had to be molecules. Cells had to be cells. Fish gotta swim. Birds gotta fly.

Before the “apple,” humankind had it made. We had everything. We were perfect. We had to be.

But God was smart.

God realized that, as the pinnacle of Creation, we were missing something: the freedom to choose our divine/ human perfection, or deny it. That’s why we have this rich story of the garden and the fall.

Was Adam and Eve’s eating of the “forbidden fruit” the first “sin?” Maybe it’s more helpful to think of it as the first fully human thing they did, the first decision they made beyond the heavenly nature that imbued their earthly bodies. God wanted this opportunity for defiance to be available, so that we would have the ability, unique in all creation, to choose our connection to the Creator, or to reject it.

Did this defiance have consequences?

Sure.

And so does gravity--it makes ballet beautiful. And tension--it makes guitar strings and vocal cords produce heavenly sounds. And fatigue--it makes beer taste great. And betrayal--it makes forgiveness so sweet.

So, as we thank our Creator for introducing us to the world of life, perhaps we should offer a nod to Adam and Eve for their introducing us to the world of choice. It brings with it the horrors of war, greed, murder, and oppression and injustice--and the opportunity for heroism, self-sacrifice, excellence, and yes, Christ.