**3**

**The Serpent’s**

**Strategy**

**Genesis 3:1-6**

One of *C.* S. Lewis's most popular books is entitled *The Screwtape Letters.* It is a collection of letters from a senior devil, Screwtape, to his young apprentice devil, Wormwood. Throughout their correspondence, Screwtape instructs his young pupil in the diabolical craft of leading a person into temptation and ruin. Their ultimate goal is to ensnare their victim eternally "in our Father's house below." Although the characters and conversations are somewhat fanciful, the book urges us to consider a sobering fact: Satan is a master at the art of temptation.

**GROUP DISCUSSION**. In many restaurants, at the end of the meal, the waiter brings an entire tray of luscious desserts, places them in front of you and describes them one by one. Why is this a more effective form of "temptation" than simply giving you a dessert menu?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** What temptations have you faced that appeared harmless or even attractive on the surface?

***18 Spiritual Warfare***

Genesis 3 allows us to study Satan at his finest hour, at the dawn of the human race, when through one temptation the whole of humanity fell into destruction and death. The account reveals many of the same techniques Satan is

using today with great success. *Read Genesis 3:1-6*

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1. Reflecting on this passage, what different thoughts

and emotions do you think Eve had throughout?

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2. In verse 1 the serpent asks Eve, “Did God really say,

“You must not eat from any tree in the garden?” How

does Satan’s version compare with what God really said

(see 2:16-17)?

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From the way he worded this question, what do you

think Satan hoped to accomplish?

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3. Why do you think Satan appears to Eve in the form

of a serpent (v.1) instead of showing himself openly?

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4. How does Eve’s response reveal that Satan’s venom

is beginning to affect her thinking about God (vv. 2-3)?

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***The Serpent’s Strategy 19***

5. How can doubting God’s generosity make us targets

for temptation and sin?

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6. Satan’s next tactic is to boldly declare, “You will not surely die” (v.4). Why do you think he lies to Eve about

the consequences of sin?

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7. Why is it tempting to believe that sin has no consequences?

(Give examples, if possible.)

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8. In verse 5 Satan goes a step further: “For God knows

that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you

will be like God, knowing good and evil.” What does this statement imply about both God and sin?

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9. What evidence do you see today that some people

believe God is a “cosmic killjoy” and sin is really good

for them?

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10. In verse 6 the conversation between the serpent and

the woman breaks off. How is Satan’s tactic at this point similar to the one a waiter uses with the dessert tray (see group discussion question)?

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***20 Spiritual Warfare***

11. The great reformer Martin Luther said, “You can’t keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair." Why is it dangerous to toy with temptation or to fantasize about it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Instead of toying or fantasizing, what should you do when you're tempted?

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*Pray that God will make you more alert to Satan’s tactics so that his venom won't affect your thinking or your behavior.*

**Now or Later**

Helmut Thielicke captures the decisive moment in Eve's transition from temptation to sin.

*Under the pressure of this twofold curiosity, the fascination of the senses and the mind, Eve reached out for the fruit. And only as she did this, as she performed this practical act of disobedience, did she actually answer the serpent's question whether she was really going to take God so dreadfully seriously and whether she was really going to*

*trust his goodness so utterly-answering it almost without being conscious of answering it. Now she is going to do neither of these things any more. And therefore she is*

*quitting- not officially, not formally, and not by flinging an emotionally charged and defiant " No!" toward heaven- like Prometheus-but through one very small gesture, through one very harmless snatch of a tidbit. ("But Man Fell On Earth,” Christianity Today, March 4, 1977, p. 15.)*

What does Thielicke’s summary of Genesis 3:6 to you about the nature of temptation and sin?