

Accept No Substitute

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'" "No! You will not die," the serpent said to the woman. "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." - Genesis 3:1-5 HCSB

Adam and Eve had a good thing going until one day a serpent came along. First, he amplified Eve's self-doubt. "Did God really say...?" he asked. He didn't start out with, "Well THAT'S a bunch of hokum!" He simply questioned her ability to understand God's Word, something we all struggle with. However, God tells us, "*This command that I give you today is certainly not too difficult or beyond your reach.*"¹

Then Satan questioned Hashem's care, "God knows...you'll be like gods." Humans often have ulterior motives but just because we do, this doesn't mean that God does. Every generous act and every perfect gift is from Heaven's throne, coming down from the Father of lights; with Him, there is no variation or shadow cast by turning.²

Once he'd sown the seed of self-doubt and questioned God's motives, the serpent wasted no time in flat out denying God's word. "You will not die," he glibly said, and like every good con man smoothly segued into the substitution, "this fruit will make you wise!"

You see, the Devil usually tempts us with something good. Who wouldn't want to be wise? Who wouldn't see the benefit of loving our children or maintaining our health? The problem is that he usually offers a shortcut or a substitute for the real way.

He'll tempt with, "sleep with this person and you'll be happy" or "lie about this error and you'll get to keep your job." There's nothing wrong with wanting to be happy or to have a job. What's wrong is the supposed shortcut! The devil's shortcuts are always dead ends!

Eve made three huge theological mistakes in a row! She subtracted from God's word, omitting the word "freely",³ then she added, "or touch it" and then to top it off she changed some, saying "or you will die" instead of "you will certainly die". She substituted motor oil for olive oil and wondered why the recipe turned out wrong!

Satan wants you to think he's got a better way, but God's commands are not burdensome.⁴ Satan wants you to think he's looking out for your interests but it's God that wants to share joy with you.⁵ Stick with the original – stick with the best – accept no substitute.

¹ Deuteronomy 30:11

² James 1:17

³ Genesis 2:16

⁴ 1 John 5:3

⁵ Matthew 25:21