



11

Cain and Abel

Key Themes

- God demands obedience and trust.
- God is merciful toward sinners.

Key Passages

- Genesis 4:1–17; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:11–12

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Compare the offering of Cain to the offering of Abel.
- Describe God's mercy and justice shown to Cain.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students get answers to some Big Questions about creation as they pull questions from the cup and determine the answers from the Bible.



Studying God's Word

page 5

The sacrifices of Cain and Abel reveal God's demand for a pure heart of worship toward Him. The first human death occurred when Cain murdered Abel out of jealousy. In this account, God reveals that He is just to punish sin yet shows mercy to sinners as well.



Activity 1: Different Offerings

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Students will participate in a matching game that helps them compare Cain's offering with Abel's to see why God accepted one and not the other.



Activity 2: Justice and Mercy

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Students will recognize God's attributes of justice and mercy as seen in the Bible's account of Cain and Abel.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print the Big Questions 2 sheet and answer key from the Resource DVD-ROM, Lesson 9.

- Cup with Big Questions 2
- Big Questions 2 answer key



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Readers Theater Script and worksheet, parts 1 & 2, from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your own use

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Readers Theater Script and worksheet, parts 1 & 2, for each student
- Readers Theater Script answer key



DIFFERENT OFFERINGS

- Gather baskets, stuffed lamb, crop-like props, and poster putty or tape.
- Print two sets of the Different Offerings cards from the Resource DVD-ROM, then cut apart.

- 2 baskets
- Poster putty or tape
- Stuffed lamb
- Crop-like props
- Different Offerings cards



JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Print one set of the Justice and Mercy cards from the Resource DVD-ROM, then cut apart. Mount on cardstock for easier handling.

- Justice and Mercy cards



Memory Verse

Genesis 2:15–17 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “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.”

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare your heart and mind for this week's lesson, read Genesis 4:1–17; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:11–12.

The sin committed at the Fall of man through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:6–7) brought corruption on the human race. Adam and Eve were cursed by God (Genesis 3:16–17) and sent out of the garden (Genesis 3:24). Eve had two sons—Cain and Abel. As they grew, Abel was a keeper of the sheep, but Cain tilled the ground (Genesis 4:1–2). After some time, they each brought an offering to the Lord—Cain some of the “fruit of the ground,” and Abel “the firstborn of his flock” (Genesis 4:3–4). In Genesis we are simply told that “the Lord respected Abel and his offering, He did not respect Cain and his offering” (4:4–5). But why?

Various Scriptures from the New Testament help to solve this puzzle. The book of Hebrews records that Abel made his offering “by faith,” and that “he was righteous” (Hebrews 11:4). Cain, however, was of the wicked one and murdered his brother because his works were evil (1 John 3:11–12).

Cain's actions spoke loudly of the desires of his heart. Because of his jealousy he killed his brother—who walked by faith in righteousness toward God.

And God used this unlikely scenario to display his gracious mercy. God is a holy God and because of His holiness had to judge Cain's sin. But instead of requiring a life for a life as the law demanded (Exodus 21:23–24), God spared Cain, making him a fugitive and vagabond on the earth—a fugitive specially marked by God and protected from those seeking revenge for his offense (Genesis 4:14–15).

The effects of the Fall came fast and furious. It doesn't take long for sin to corrupt and this first murder illustrates that. In the first generation after Adam and Eve we see greed, jealousy, selfishness, and hatred. And yet, God was already revealing the depths of the mercy in His character—a mercy that has repeatedly been demonstrated as man continues to disobey God in his sinfulness.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

“Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife” (Genesis 4:16–17).

One of the most-asked questions about the book of Genesis is, “Where did Cain get his wife?” This question is often used by skeptics to discredit the historical truth of the book of Genesis because most Christians don't know how to answer it. If Adam and Eve were the first humans, and if their first two sons were Cain and Abel, then where did Mrs. Cain come from? Some have answered this by saying that God must have created other people or races on earth who did not descend from Adam and Eve. However, Scripture is very clear that ALL people are descendants of Eve (Genesis 3:20). And since only descendants of Adam and Eve can be saved, believers need to be able to show that Cain's wife—like all other humans—was a descendant of Adam and Eve.

The answer to this question is, in fact, quite simple: Cain married his sister or perhaps another close relative like a niece. Genesis 5:3–4 states:

And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters.

Notice that the Bible tells us that Adam had “sons and daughters.” Exactly how many, we aren't told, but given that Adam lived more than 900 years, it could have been a lot! One Jewish tradition states that Adam had 33 sons and 23 daughters.

Many people reject this very clear answer, citing the law against brother-sister marriages. But keep in mind that way back then (about 6,000 years ago) close relatives could marry—they had to in order to start their own families. Even Abraham married his half-sister (Genesis 20:12). It was not until much later—2,500 years after Cain married his wife—that God commanded Moses that people were not to marry close relatives (Leviticus 18:6). We know now that this command, directed by the providence of God, protects us from many genetic deformities that could result from the marrying of close relatives. These deformities are one of the results of sin and its consequences, which brought disease and death to God's perfect creation. Cain and Mrs. Cain, living near the beginning of creation, wouldn't have had as many genetic mutations as we do today, so marrying a close relative was no problem.

God's Word gives us answers. We need to approach all questions with biblical glasses, standing on the authority of the Scripture—knowing that the Bible is our starting point.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the account of Cain and Abel we see that God respected the offering of Abel (Genesis 4:4). Abel's offering was the firstborn of his flock—an animal offering presented with a pure heart. As we look at animal offerings throughout biblical history, we can see the amazing foreshadowing and significance of them.

The very first animal sacrifice was made by God Himself to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve after they had disobeyed and introduced sin to the human race (Genesis 3:20–21). Adam and Eve deserved instant death because of their sin, yet we see God displaying His glorious mercy as He killed the animal(s) to make garments as coverings for the sinners. In hindsight we can see how this is a foreshadowing of the substitutionary death of an animal to pay for sin. The foundational elements of God's plan of redemption are shown here on the occasion of the first sin in the Garden of Eden.

Scripture tells us of more customary animal sacrifices ordained by God. Noah sacrificed animals after the Flood (Genesis 8:20), Job sacrificed animals for the sins of his family (Job 1:5), and Abraham sacrificed the ram that God provided as a substitute for Isaac (Genesis 22:13). Clearly, God had revealed the concept of substitutionary sacrifice long before the time of Moses and the Law.

However, it was at the time of Moses, when the Israelites left Egypt, that God specifically appointed a sacrificial system to cover the sins of His people. Leviticus 17:11 states "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." In this system, the life of the animal atoned for—or covered—the offenses of the sinner; the animal died as a substitute for the sinner.

We know, of course, that animal sacrifices can never cleanse us from our sin. Scripture states, ". . . in

those [Old Testament] sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:3–4). The ultimate purpose of the sacrificial system was to demonstrate that the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). It was God's way of preparing us to receive and believe in the perfect Lamb of God whose blood would finally take away the sins of all who would turn to Him in repentance and faith (John 1:29).

This we know, that before the universe was created, before time existed, before man was formed, God knew that we (in Adam) would sin. He also had a predetermined plan by which salvation for our sins could be received through the free gift of grace by the death of the perfect sacrifice—Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God and only Savior.

What an amazing God we serve! "For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Holy, sovereign God, thank you for your Word. Please seal it to my heart and give me total faith and trust that every word is true. Instill in me, dear Lord, a heart that is obedient, faithful, and righteous like the heart of Abel. Please accept my life as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to you. And please work in the hearts of the children this week. Give them the desire to please you with all their hearts—not just in appearances—but with all their soul. Thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness, justice, and mercy.



COME ON IN

As student arrive . . .

- They will pick big questions about creation from the cup or container and read them aloud.
- They will look up the Scripture on the question slip to determine the correct answer. Refer to the Big Questions 2 answer key for answers.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme posters from previous weeks, quickly review the lessons with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you review the Lesson Theme posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

When sin and corruption entered the world, everything changed. We refer to the moment in history when Adam and Eve sinned as “the Fall of man.” After the Fall, Adam and Eve lost the privilege of living in the Garden of Eden. Remember, the Bible says God drove them out and then blocked the entrance, so no one would ever be able to enter the Garden of Eden again.

Let's see what happened after Adam and Eve left the garden. We are going to read Genesis 4:1–17 from these Readers Theater scripts. We will read Part 1, discuss it, and then we'll finish with Part 2. I'll need volunteers to read for us. I'll give all of you a script so you can follow along. *Pass out Readers Theater Scripts for parts 1 and 2 to each student. Choose students to read from the script. You can read the narrator part yourself to help the reading progress more quickly.*

Genesis 4:1–7

EXAMINE THE WORD

Very good! Readers sit down and we'll take a look at this text and see if we can answer some questions about it. Use the scripts today to find and circle the answers to these questions.

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? **Who are the characters mentioned in Genesis 4:1?** *Adam, Eve, and Cain. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*
- ? **Who is mentioned in Genesis 4:2?** *Abel. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*
- ? **Look in your scripts in the section, Genesis 4:2. What did Abel do for a living?** *He was a keeper of sheep. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*
- ? **And what does that mean exactly?** *He was a shepherd.*
- ? **And what was Cain's job? Also in Genesis 4:2.** *He was a tiller of the ground. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*
- ? **And what does that mean exactly?** *He was a farmer.*
- ? **What offering did Cain bring to the Lord? See Genesis 4:3.** *An offering of the fruit of the ground. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*
- ? **What offering did Abel bring? See Genesis 4:4.** *The firstborn from his flock. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*
- ? **What did God think of Abel's offering of the sheep? Also in Genesis 4:4.** *The Lord respected his offering. Have children circle "respected" on their scripts.*
- ? **What did God think of Cain's offering of the fruit? See Genesis 4:5.** *He did not respect Cain's offering. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*

Let's see if we can get a little more information on why God liked Abel's offering and did not accept Cain's offering. As we answer questions about these verses, you'll be filling in the blanks on your scripts after Part 1.

Hebrews 11:4

Turn to Hebrews 11:4 in your Bibles. *Assign a reader.*

- ? **How did Abel offer his sacrifice to God?** *By faith. Have children fill that word in on their scripts.*
- ? **What does this verse tell us about Abel? His sacrifice showed that he was what?** *Righteous. Have children fill that word in on their scripts.*

Abel offered his sacrifice by faith and his sacrifice revealed that he was righteous before the Lord. His sacrifice and offering were given out of honor and respect to the Lord. He loved the Lord and obeyed the commandments of the Lord.

1 John 3:11-12

But that wasn't the case with Cain. Turn to 1 John 3:11-12 in your Bibles. *Assign a reader.*

- ? **Who does Cain belong to according to this verse?** *The wicked one. Have children fill in the blank on their scripts.*
- ? **Who is the wicked one?** *Satan, the devil.*
- ? **What did Cain do to his younger brother, Abel?** *He murdered him. Have children fill in the blank on their scripts.*

? **Why did Cain murder his brother?** *His works were evil and Abel's works were righteous. Have children fill in the words on their scripts.*

Discover the Truth

Chapter 4 in Genesis begins with the exciting news of new life on the earth. Imagine the joy and amazement Adam and Eve must have experienced when their first son Cain was born. New life—it was a new start for them since their sin and separation from God. And then God blessed them with another son. Abel was born. Their family of three was now four. Four people living on earth. The work to survive was tiresome, but the joy of having a family must have eased Adam and Eve's weariness. The two brothers grew quickly, as children do, and chose different career paths.

When the time came for them to offer sacrifices to the Lord, Abel's sacrifice from his flock was accepted by God. Cain's offering of the fruit of the land was not.

? **Who can tell me why God accepted Abel's and not Cain's sacrifice?** Look at your sheets. *Abel was righteous before God. Cain was of the wicked one.*

Right. Abel's sacrifice was brought out of humble obedience and faith to God—he was righteous in God's eyes. But Cain was not righteous; he was wicked, evil—his heart was not righteous before the Lord. God demands obedience and trust from all of His children.

Cain's offering was not given out of the goodness of his heart. He did not really intend to honor God because we know from Scripture that he was wicked. So even though Cain was making an offering to God, it wasn't acceptable to God—God knew his heart and knew that his offering was not meant to bring honor to God. God demands obedience of His children. Cain clearly was not obedient to God—his works were evil. His sacrifice was not acceptable.

God knew Cain's heart and He knows our hearts. He is omniscient. He knows everything. *Refer to the Attributes of God poster.*

OMNISCIENT
(Refer to Attributes poster)

He demands our obedience on the outside and requires a humble attitude and total trust in Him on the inside.

Cain and Abel's offerings were very different. Cain brought the Lord fruit from his crops. Abel brought a firstborn animal from his flock. Not only were their offerings different, but the Bible says their hearts were different as well. Abel was righteous—obedient to God. Cain was wicked and his works were evil.





Different Offerings

MATERIALS

- A basket with a stuffed lamb or white felt
- A basket with crop items, such as fruit/potatoes/wheat/corn
- Two sets of the Different Offerings cards cut apart
- Poster putty or tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Use poster putty to randomly attach the different offering cards face down to a wall in your classroom. If you have a smaller class, the cards can be placed face down on the table. Place the two baskets showing the offerings of Cain and Abel somewhere in the room. Students will be trying to get matches by turning over two cards that describe Cain or two cards that describe Abel. If they get a Cain match, the cards should be placed in the basket with the crops. If they get an Abel match, the cards should be placed in the basket with the lamb. The descriptions on the cards do not have to match each other but both cards must relate to either Cain or Abel.

Cain cards: Gave God fruit from his garden; offering unacceptable to God; did not have a heart of faith and righteousness; not righteous; was of the wicked one; oldest brother.

Abel cards: Gave God the firstborn of his flock; offering respected by God; righteous; had faith; more excellent than Cain; younger brother.

Cain and Abel's offerings were very different. Look at the baskets. Cain brought the Lord fruit from his crops. Abel brought a firstborn animal from his flock. Not only were their offerings different, but the Bible says their hearts were different as well. Abel was righteous—obedient to God. Cain was wicked and his works were evil.

These cards have phrases that describe Cain or his sacrifice and Abel or his sacrifice. Your job is to try to get two Abel cards or two Cain cards. When you turn over the cards read them out loud and decide if it refers to Cain or Abel. If both cards refer to Cain, put them in the Cain basket. If both cards refer to Abel, put them in the Abel basket. If the cards don't both describe Cain or Abel, return them to the board (table). Go around the room allowing one student at a time to turn over two cards. If the student gets a match, he or she may put it in the proper basket. Have students read the cards out loud as they turn them over.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Although both of these offerings were made to God from the work of these two men, God accepted one and did not accept the other. God accepted Abel's offering. Abel was obedient to God and God knew he was righteous. God did not accept Cain's offering. God knew Cain's heart—that it was wicked and his works were really evil.

God knows your hearts, too. He knows exactly why you do what you do. Although you might fool me, or your parents, or your teachers at school—you can't fool God ever. He always demands obedience and trust. If you don't offer Him that first, your offering will not be acceptable to Him.



READ THE WORD

Genesis 4:8–17

OK. We are going on to Part 2 of our script—Genesis 4:8–17. We are going to witness the very first murder—and see how God had to judge that sin, but also showed His mercy in it. Have volunteers return to the front of the class to read Part 2. You may want to take the part of the Narrator to keep things moving.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Now, let's study these verses a bit. You'll be marking your scripts again, circling the answers, as we go.

Observe the Text

? Well, I think we see quite clearly here that Cain was wicked and his deeds were evil. What did he do to his younger brother? See Genesis 4:8. *He killed him. Have children circle the answer on their scripts.*

? Why did Cain kill Abel? *Allow for answers.*

Cain was jealous of Abel. If you look back in Genesis 4:4–5 you will see that Cain and Abel both brought their offerings to God. God respected Abel and his offering. In other words God accepted and approved of it. But God did not respect Cain and his offering. God did not approve of Cain's offering. This made Cain angry and jealous of his brother's accepted sacrifice.

? And what did God ask Cain in Genesis 4:9? *Where is Abel your brother?*

? Right. Now after Cain killed his brother do you think God was really wondering where Abel was? *No.*

? Why not? *God knows everything. He would know that Cain had killed Abel.*

? What was Cain's answer to God in Genesis 4:9? *He said he didn't know where his brother was. Circle the answer on their scripts.*

? Hmm. So, Cain lied to God? That's not too smart, is it? This lie is a direct sin against God. How does God feel about all sin? *God hates sin. He must judge sin.*

? Which attributes on our poster explain why God must judge sin? *He is Holy and Just. Refer to the Attributes of God poster. Review the meanings of these words.*

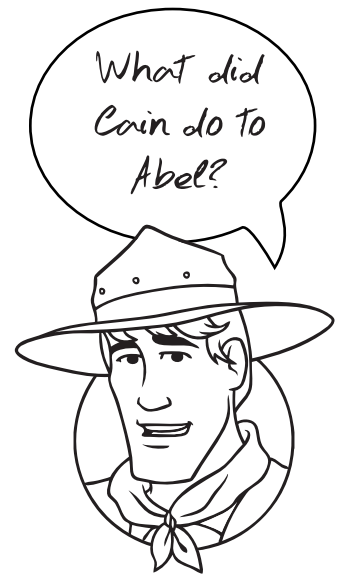
That's right. God must judge all sin and it is clear that Cain was an evil sinner against God. The punishment for sin is death.

? But did God kill Cain right then? Like Cain killed his younger brother? Look at the script. Genesis 4:10–12 gives us an idea of God's punishment to Cain. What was it? *Cain was cursed from the earth. Cain would be a fugitive and vagabond.*

? What do you think that means? Look at the verses and see if you can tell me. *Allow discussion. Have students circle the words on their scripts—"cursed from the earth," "ground shall no longer yield," and "fugitive and vagabond." The ground would no longer yield fruit for Cain. Cain would be a fugitive on the earth.*

? How did Cain react? Look at Genesis 4:13–14 on your scripts. *The punishment was more than he could bear. Have the children circle the words on their scripts.*

? And what was Cain really afraid of? It is at the very end of that section. *That someone would find him and kill him. Have the children circle the words on their scripts.*



HOLY
JUST

(Refer to Attributes poster)

? But God showed mercy to Cain. How did He show mercy? It is in Genesis 4:15. *God promised to put a mark on Cain so no one would kill him.*

Find and mark that answer on your scripts.

Discover the Truth

This is the very first murder in the history of the world—one brother killing another brother. It didn't take long for people to get very hateful once sin entered the world, did it? This was a terrible sin against God and Cain deserved death.

God revealed two wonderful attributes in this account. He showed that He must be just—and punish the sin of Cain. He did this by cursing the ground so Cain could no longer farm and He sent Cain away from his home to become a fugitive.

But God also showed mercy. Cain was a fugitive. He knew he was sure to die at the hands of those who were angry at him for killing his brother Abel. But God put a mark on Cain. We don't know what the mark was, but we do know that the mark protected Cain—and if anyone killed Cain, that person would be punished.



Justice and Mercy

MATERIALS

- Justice and Mercy cards

INSTRUCTIONS

Print and cut out the four Justice and Mercy cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Arrange in a pile in numerical order. Ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the class. Have the volunteer select the top card. Read the card to the volunteer to answer. Encourage student to come up with answers to what punishment he deserves. Let student try to answer the questions about what justice and mercy would look like. If necessary, allow other students to help answer, or offer your own suggestions.

Repeat with cards 2–4 calling on different volunteers.

After that is finished, read card 5 to them—presenting the gospel and God's attributes of holiness and justice that demand our sin be punished, and His mercy shown to us in Jesus Christ.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Because we are not perfect, we often face the consequences of our sins against others—parents, neighbors, sisters, brothers, teachers. Sometimes we get the punishment we deserve—and that is justice. Other times we don't get the punishment—but we are shown mercy.

When we receive justice, we should be reminded that every sin against God demands death and eternal punishment. When we receive mercy from others, we should be reminded that God has offered us amazing mercy through His Son Jesus Christ. This mercy offers forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ to all who will repent of their sins and trust in Him.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Two brothers—Cain and Abel—made offerings to God. One offering was an animal, the other the fruit of the ground. One sacrifice was accepted. One was not. One brother loved the Lord, was obedient to Him, and wanted to honor God with his sacrifice. The other brother was wicked and his works were evil. Even though he made the sacrifice, it was not acceptable to God.

Abel's sacrifice was accepted because his heart was right with God. Cain's sacrifice was not accepted because God knew his heart—that it was not set on true worship of the holy God.

After killing his brother, Cain deserved punishment, and he received it—this revealed God's justice. But God also showed Cain mercy by sparing his life and protecting him from being killed by those who were angry because of Abel's murder.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

This historical account of Cain and Abel often brings up a very interesting question. God sent Cain out to be a fugitive and a wanderer. He left his homeland and went to the land of Nod. The Bible says he went with his wife.

- ? The question often asked is where did Cain get his wife? People often wonder about it—because Cain was from the very first family of Adam and Eve. So where would he have gotten his wife? Can anyone tell me?
Allow for answers.

Most people believe that Cain married one of his sisters or a niece. Back then, about 6,000 years ago, it was OK for close relatives to marry. They had to so they could start their own families.

Today it seems strange because we don't do it anymore. In fact, the Bible tells us that God later commanded that we not marry our close relatives. But back then it was OK. And there wasn't anyone else to marry!

- ? So, if you ever hear that question, where did Cain get his wife, what would you say? *Cain probably married his sister or perhaps a niece.*

Right. Adam and Eve's family was the only family on earth at the time. They had to marry their relatives so that they could obey God's command to populate the earth.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 2:15–17 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “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.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for His mercy. He provides forgiveness and life through Jesus Christ to all who will repent of their sins and trust in Him for salvation.
- Ask God to help us all to obey and honor God in our actions but especially in our hearts so our lives will be acceptable to God.