

A study of Genesis 1–12

SAYING GOODBYE

Country music legend, Garth Brooks, tells a story about a time he finished a show to a sold out arena. The crowd was chanting his name as he walked backstage, “Garth, Garth, Garth...” Backstage he saw a young woman dressed in a concessions uniform standing there crying. He noticed and asked her if she was ok. She asked him, “What’s it like?” He took her by the hand, walked back out on stage and asked the crowd to treat her like him. They chanted *her* name and cheered. She and Garth sat on stage while he played guitar and sang. After some time, Garth leaned over and said, “Now you have to tell them goodbye.” She said, “I don’t want to.” He summed it up, “*That’s what it’s like.*”

As amazing as it must feel for thousands of people to cheer for you, how much more to have the full attention and blessing of the Creator of the universe as you walk with him in the garden he created just for you. Last week, we read the story of the first sin. God slaughtered an animal to make clothing for Adam and Eve, and as that creature’s blood soaked the ground, the cost of sin became real—death. We can imagine God speaking to Adam and Eve as he banished them from the garden, “Now you have to say goodbye.” To which they said, “I don’t want to.”

GENESIS 4:1–9

¹ Now the man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. Then she said, “I have created a man just as the LORD did!”

² Then she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel took care of the flocks, while Cain cultivated the ground.

³ At the designated time Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering to the LORD. ⁴ But Abel brought some of the firstborn of his flock—even the fattest of them. And the LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering, ⁵ but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased. So Cain became very angry, and his expression was downcast.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why is your expression downcast? ⁷ Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it.”

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” And he replied, “I don’t know! Am I my brother’s guardian?”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Today many of us talk about sin as simply “making mistakes,” rather than an offense to a holy God. This idea is a hallmark for what many call “Cultural Christianity.”

For more on this topic check out the QR code for an interview with Dean Inserra about his book *The Unsaved Christian*. What you’ll hear is the difference between authentic Christianity versus what we find all around us. In fact, if we examine ourselves, we might realize we too are unsaved Christians.



DISCUSSION

What is something for which you want to be remembered?

1. Describe the two offerings of Cain and Able and God’s response. (3-5a)

2. How did Cain react to God’s assessment? (5b)

3. What warning did God give to Cain and what was the outcome? (6-8)

4. Why do you think Cain reacted the way he did in verse 5?

5. Why do you think God began this confrontation and warning with a question? How does this illustrate God’s mercy? (i.e. What did Cain deserve?) (9)

6. What’s the difference between knowing *about* God versus having a relationship *with* God? How have you experienced this?

If you’ve only been offering God part of your heart and not the whole thing, maybe it’s time for a change. Our way doesn’t work and just leaves us empty. If you have questions or want to give your whole heart to God, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

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STUDY NOTES

GOD IS LONG-SUFFERING

Our story today from Genesis 4 picks up after Adam and Eve were forced out of the Garden of Eden. We don't know how much time has passed. However, some years pass quickly in the first two verses as Adam **was intimate with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain** then **to his brother Abel**. As they grew up the brothers found their profession, **Abel took care of the flocks, while Cain cultivated the ground**.

Although it seems likely that Adam and Eve would have grieved over losing the Garden, we can relate to their excitement at the birth of their children. Eve rejoiced, **"I have created a man just as the LORD did!"**

It's hard to say exactly what she meant in this statement. It's possible, even probable, that she thought this son would be the one to *strike* the serpent's *head* (Genesis 3:15). One thing is clear, Adam and Eve were excited to be parents. However, little did they know that their original sin would have such devastating and generational consequences.

Although never experiencing the Garden, Cain and Abel knew God. **At the designated time Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought some of the firstborn of his flock.** However, there was a problem, **the LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering, but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased.**

We might wonder what it was about their offerings that caused God to accept one and reject the other. Some people have speculated that Abel brought animals whereas Cain brought produce from the ground that was cursed in Genesis 3. Others have suggested that Abel brought first-fruits and Cain brought leftovers. In both cases, the original Hebrew doesn't support those reasons—both boys brought the first, and the word used for "offering" here is not the one used in reference to a blood sacrifice. Instead, we understand that the focus is not on the *reason why* God disapproved, but on Cain's *reaction*, **Cain became very angry**.

In 1 John 3:12, we get a little more insight into this situation, "because [Cain's] deeds were evil, but his brother's were righteous." Cain's offering wasn't rejected because what he gave was bad. It was rejected because the *heart* with which he gave it was bad. Although both boys *knew* God, only one of them *worshiped him* as God.

GOD IS LONG-SUFFERING TOWARD THE UNDESERVING

Knowing Cain's heart, the Lord asked, **"Why are you angry...Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door."** Despite this warning, **Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."** While they were in the field, **Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.**

When Adam and Eve sinned God, arrived on scene pretty quick. So too when Cain killed Abel, **the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"** Cain's response further illustrates the hardness of his evil heart, **"I don't know! Am I my brother's guardian?"**

Can you imagine standing before the Creator of all things, the God of the universe and having the nerve to speak so arrogantly? God's patience with our sin is remarkable. What Cain deserved in that moment was death because of his sin—not only for killing his brother, but for defying his Creator.

We must understand that Cain did a horrible, evil thing by murdering his brother. However, it wasn't the murder that made him a sinner. Murder is a symptom of sin, not the root. From Adam to now, we possess that same sinful nature. We cannot not sin because, at our core, we are sinners.

Our sin deserves instant death, but what we get most often is God's patience. He is long-suffering toward the undeserving, allowing opportunity for repentance.

VAPOR

The name "Able" in Hebrew is a transliteration of the word *hevel*. This word means "vapor" or "breath" and often relates to something that doesn't last long.

Last week, I attended the funeral of a 17-year-old young man. He was riding a bicycle when hit by a truck. This young man came from a godly Christian family. However, he faced ongoing battles with sin and sin's consequences. Nobody in the family can say with certainty that he had a relationship with Jesus. During the service his older brother stood up to share. With tears pouring down his face, he pleaded with the audience, "Don't wait! Turn to Jesus. We never know when it is our time."

Some of you reading this probably squirm at the idea of surrendering your whole life to Jesus. Sure, he can have part of your time and energy, but you're young and have a lot of time to repent for the things you want to test now. That critical difference is often an eternal one—knowing God versus worshiping him as God. Sin isn't what we do, it's who we are. That's why we have to give all of our heart to him.