

Genesis Lesson 4: Genesis 4

Lecture

- Genesis 4 is one of those chapters in the Bible which raises more questions than it answers. As you were doing this lesson, some of those questions probably popped into your head.
 - Why does Eve comment about the birth of her first son Cain and her third son Seth, but not her second son Abel?
 - How did Cain and Abel know to make an offering to the Lord?
 - Why did the Lord look with favor upon Abel's offering but not upon Cain's offering?
 - Where did Cain's wife come from?
 - Why did it take so long for mankind to begin to worship the Lord in earnest?
- Let's explore this chapter of Genesis further and try to answer some of these questions.
- Why didn't Eve comment about the birth of her son Abel?
 - Scripture is silent on this topic, but we can make a few assumptions.
 - First, most ancient societies were patriarchal, and the eldest son typically had certain legal privileges over his other siblings.
 - Cain's birth was significant for several reasons:
 - Adam and Eve had neither witnessed nor had a human birth. The birth of Cain must have been miraculous for both parents, even with Eve's painful labor.
 - Cain's birth was proof that God's command to be fruitful and multiply had not been withdrawn after the Fall and the banishment from the Garden of Eden.
 - Further, Eve's comment about Cain may have come from her thought that this son would be the man who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

- Abel, on the other hand, as a second son, was certainly a blessing to the couple, but he was “the spare,” if the oldest son perished.
 - You have likely heard of the British expression “the heir and a spare.” Genesis chapter 4 presents this subject in graphic detail.
 - Once Cain kills Abel and Cain is cast out into the wilderness, Adam and Eve need a new son to continue the family line.
 - This then is why Eve comments about God graciously granting her a son, Seth, to replace Abel and Cain.
- How did Cain and Abel know to make an offering to the Lord?
 - Again, Scripture is silent on this topic.
 - It has been suggested that at some point, God had instructed Adam to present offerings to Him and Adam then instructed his 2 sons to do the same.
- Why did the Lord look with favor upon Abel’s offering but not upon Cain’s offering?
 - Some commentators have compared Abel’s offering of the fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock as superior to Cain’s offering of some of the fruits of the soil, because the passage in verses 3-4 does not mention that Cain’s offering came from the first fruits or because the fat portions, when burned, smelled pleasing to God.
 - Both viewpoints are reading something into the passage which do not exist. Further, both types of offerings were acceptable as outlined in Leviticus 1 and 2.
 - A better way to look at the Lord’s reaction to the two men’s offerings is that there was something lacking in Cain’s attitude towards his offering.
 - We get a hint about Cain’s attitude from Genesis 4:7:
 - “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?”

- 2 passages in the New Testament support this interpretation:
 - Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. 1 John 3:12
 - By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. Hebrews 11:4
- We know God sees man's heart, as attested to by these 2 Scripture verses:
 - The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7
 - A person may think their own ways are right, but the LORD weighs the heart. Proverbs 21:2
- And while the offerings of the 2 men might not be considered sacrifices to the Lord at this point, as outlined in later Scripture, we can consider the context of the following verses:
 - Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. 1 Samuel 15:22-23
 - My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. Psalms 51:17
- Where did Cain's wife come from?
 - For this answer, we can look at Genesis 5:4:
 - "After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters."
 - It is likely then that Cain married his sister or a niece.

- At this point in the Biblical history, family lines had not become genetically weakened by repeat intermarriage.
- The prohibition against incest does not appear until the Mosaic Law in Leviticus 18:6-14:
 - “No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.”
 - Close relations for a man were defined as your mother, your sister, your half-sister, your granddaughter, or your aunt.
 - Surprisingly, there were no Mosaic prohibitions against a man marrying a niece or a cousin.
- In thinking about Genesis chapter 4, it occurred to me that we might give this chapter the heading, “The Line of Cain Spirals into Sin.”
 - When Cain was born, Eve was certainly hopeful that he would be the son who would conquer the serpent, which represented chaos and evil.
 - Instead, we see in this chapter that chaos and evil have conquered Cain.
 - Cain’s sin begins with a bad attitude and progresses to anger with God, followed by fratricide.
 - When confronted by God, Cain lies about killing Abel and makes a snide remark to God.
 - One of Cain’s descendants, Lamech, breaks the bond of monogamous marriage outlined in Genesis 2:24 by taking 2 wives. According to Victor Hamilton, while the Bible does not condemn the polygamous marriages of Abraham and Jacob, every polygamous household in the Old Testament suffers unpleasant and shattering experiences because of this type of relationship.
 - Lamech then commits murder over an incident which did not warrant such violent retaliation.
 - Lamech has no need for God to protect him from retribution. He’s self-sufficient.

- In Genesis 4 there are some interesting parallels to Genesis 3.

	Genesis 3	Genesis 4
Curses	The ground and the serpent are cursed.	Cain is cursed.
The ground	The ground will produce food only with hard labor.	Even when Cain works the ground, it will produce no crops.
Abode	Adam and Eve are exiled from the Garden of Eden but live outside it.	Cain lives in the land of Nod (the land of wandering), east of Eden.
Presence of God	Adam and Eve are removed from the direct presence of God.	Cain is driven even farther than Adam and Eve from the presence of God.
Grace	God clothes Adam and Eve. God does not remove the ability to be fruitful and multiply.	God puts a mark on Cain to prevent others from killing him.
Growth of sin	Disobedience; blame-shifting; hiding from God	An attitude not conducive to sacrifice; malice aforethought; murder; snide remarks; non-discriminatory retaliation; boasting

- Why does Genesis 4 devote verses which denote the arts of civilization (cities, animal husbandry, music, and metallurgy) associated with Cain?
 - Perhaps it is because Cain and his descendants could no longer survive off growing crops.
 - As a result, necessity became the mother of invention and new means of survival resulted in new forms of human advancement.

- The last point about Genesis 4 is associated with verse 26:
 - “Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord.”
 - Calling on the name of the Lord as used elsewhere in Genesis is an umbrella term which refers to formal, communal worship of the Lord, including prayer and sacrifice.
 - We see in verse 26 that it is specifically associated with the line of Seth, which will produce the godly Noah and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - What is more thought provoking is the point in the creation history when this takes place.
 - First and foremost, it is not when God creates Adam.
 - It is not when God creates Eve.
 - It is not when Adam and Eve are forced out of the Garden of Eden.
 - It is not when Cain was born and Eve says of him, “I have brought forth a man, even the deliverer.” Notice that Eve’s comment certainly expresses faith that this child was to fulfill Genesis 3:15. But also notice that Eve’s comment is man-centered, not God centered.
 - It was not when Seth was born and Eve says of him, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel.” Certainly, she is acknowledging that God was the source of this blessing child.
 - Calling on the name of the Lord began with the birth of Seth’s son Enosh, whose name means “frail one” or “mortal.”

- If we move forward into Genesis 5 a few verses, we can do a little math.
 - Genesis 5:3 tells us that Seth was born when Adam was 130.
 - Enosh was born when Seth was 105.
 - So, calling on the name of the Lord began when Adam was 235 years old.
- Why did it take so long for mankind to begin to worship the Lord in earnest?
 - Scripture is silent on this, but God says much later to the prophet Isaiah:
 - “I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’” Isaiah 65:1
 - Enosh’s name suggests that Seth and his line were reminded of human frailty and a need to rely on God. Where we are weak, God is strong.
 - “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

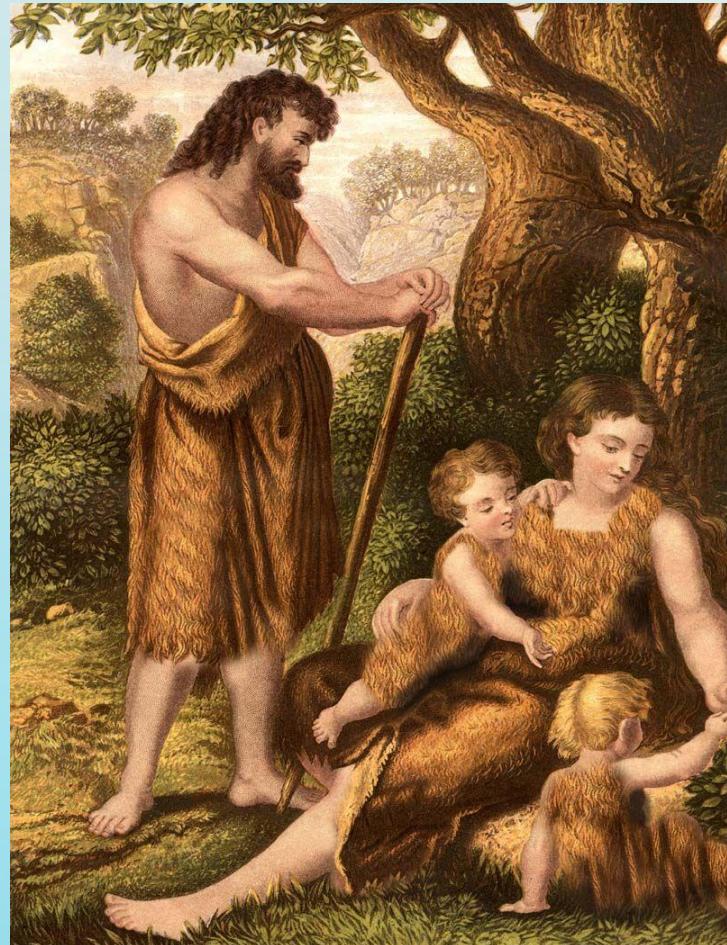
Genesis Lesson 4

Genesis 4

Genesis 4: More Questions Than Answers

- Why Does Eve Comment About Cain and Seth, But Not Abel?
- How Did Cain and Abel Know to Make an Offering to the Lord?
- Why Did the Lord Look with Favor Upon Abel's Offering but Not Upon Cain's Offering?
- Where Did Cain's Wife Come From?
- Why Did It Take So Long for Mankind to Begin to Worship the Lord in Earnest?

Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel



Adam and Eve with Their Sons Cain and Abel, Resting in the Wilderness; Painter Unknown; circa 1860; copyright: Ann Ronan Picture Library/Heritage Images

Why Didn't Eve Comment about Abel's Birth?

- Scripture Is Silent
- A Few Assumptions:
 - In a Patriarchal Society, the Eldest Son Had Certain Legal Privileges
 - Cain's Birth Was Unique for Adam and Eve
 - Cain's Birth Proved God Had Not Withdrawn His Command to be Fruitful and Multiply
 - Cain Would Be the One Who Would Crush the Serpent's Head (Genesis 3:15)
 - A 2nd Son Was “the Spare” if the Oldest Son Perished
 - Once Cain Kills Abel and Cain is Cast Out into the Wilderness, Adam and Eve Need a New Son to Continue the Family Line
 - This Explains Why Eve Comments about Seth's Birth

Cain and Abel



The Sacrifice of Cain and Abel; After a Painting by Raphael; School of Marcantonio Raimondi; 16th century, Italy; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England, United Kingdom

How Did Cain and Abel Know to Make an Offering?

- Scripture Is Silent
- It Has Been Suggested That God Had Instructed Adam to Present Offerings to Him and Adam Instructed Cain and Abel

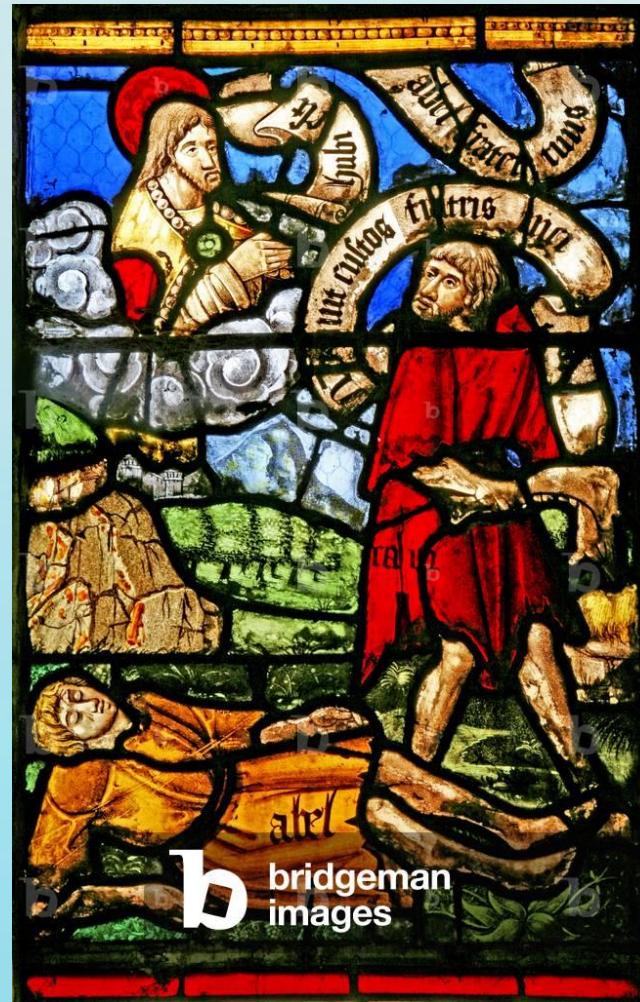
Why Did Abel's Offering Receive Favor?

- Fat Portions vs. “Some” of the Fruits of the Soil
 - Not the First Fruits
 - The Fat Portions, When Burned, Smelled Pleasing to God
 - This Is Reading Something into the Passage Which Does Not Exist
 - Both Offerings Were Acceptable (See Leviticus 1 and 2)
- Something Was Lacking in Cain's Attitude
 - Genesis 4:7
 - 1 John 3:12
 - Hebrews 11:4
- God Sees Man's Heart
 - 1 Samuel 16:7
 - Proverbs 21:2
- Consider Also the Context of
 - 1 Samuel 15:22-23
 - Psalm 51:17

Where Did Cain's Wife Come From?

- See Genesis 5:4
- It Is Likely That Cain Married His Sister or a Niece
- At This Point in Biblical History, Family Lines Had Not Become Genetically Weakened by Intermarriage
- No Prohibition Against Incest Until the Mosaic Law in Leviticus 18:6-14
 - Close Relations Were Your Mother, Sister, Half-Sister, Granddaughter, or Aunt
 - No Mosaic Prohibitions Against Marrying a Niece or Cousin

Cain Kills Abel



Cain Kills Abel; Stained Glass; 16th Century; Church of St. Florentin, Nr. Auxerre, France; copyright: bridgeman images

The Line of Cain Spirals Into Sin

- Eve Was Hopeful That Cain Would Conquer the Serpent, Who Represented Chaos and Evil
- Instead, Chaos and Evil Conquered Cain
- Cain's Sin Begins with a Bad Attitude and Progresses to Anger with God, Followed by Fratricide
- Cain Lies About Killing Abel and Makes a Snide Remark to God
- Lamech Breaks the Bond of Monogamous Marriage
- Lamech Commits Murder Over an Incident Which Did Not Warrant Such Violent Retaliation
- Lamech Has No Need for God to Protect Him; He's Self-Sufficient

Genesis 3 and 4 Parallels

	Genesis 3	Genesis 4
Curses	The Ground and the Serpent Are Cursed	Cain is Cursed
The Ground	The Ground Will Produce Food Only with Hard Labor	Even When Cain Works the Ground, It Will Produce No Crops
Abode	Adam and Eve Live Outside the Garden of Eden	Cain Lives in the Land of Nod (the Land of Wandering), East of Eden
Presence of God	Adam and Eve Removed from the Direct Presence of God	Cain Is Driven Even Farther from the Presence of God
Grace	God Clothes Adam and Eve; God Does Not Remove the Ability to Be Fruitful and Multiply	God Puts a Mark on Cain to Prevent Others from Killing Him
Growth of Sin	Disobedience; Blame-Shifting; Hiding from God	Bad Attitude; Malice Aforethought; Murder; Snide Remarks; Non-Discriminatory Retaliation; Boasting ¹¹

Cain Establishes the City of Enoch



Cain Builds a City; Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld; 1860; Bibel in Bildern (Bible in Pictures); copyright: [wikimediacommons.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

Lamech Boasting to His Wives



Lamech's Song of the Sword; 1877 Woodcut Engraving; copyright: Getty images

The Arts of Civilization

- Why So Much Focus on the Arts of Civilization Associated with Cain: Cities; Animal Husbandry; Music; Metallurgy
- Maybe Cain and His Descendants Could No Longer Survive Off Growing Crops
- Necessity Became the Mother of Invention and New Means of Survival Resulted in New Forms of Human Advancement

Calling on the Name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26)

- An Umbrella Term for Formal, Communal Worship of the Lord, Including Prayer and Sacrifice
- Specifically Associated with the Line of Seth Which Will Produce Noah and the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Why at the Time of Enosh's Birth?

- Not When God Creates Adam
- Not When God Creates Eve
- Not When Adam and Eve Are Forced out of the Garden of Eden
- Not When Cain Was Born; Eve Expresses Some Faith but Her Comment is Man-Centered, Not God-Centered
- Not When Seth Was Born; Eve Does Acknowledge God Was the Source of this Blessing Child
- Enosh's Name Means “Frail One” or “Mortal”
- Doing a Little Math Using Genesis 5, We Learn That Calling on the Name of the Lord Began When Adam Was 235 Years Old

Why Did It Take So Long?

- Scripture Is Silent
- Consider Isaiah 65:1
- Enosh's Name Suggests That Seth and His Line Were Reminded of Human Frailty and a Need to Rely on God
- Where We Are Weak, God Is Strong
- Isaiah 41:10

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Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey —whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? Romans 6:16

1. Read Genesis 4:1-2.

a. Who was the first child born to Adam and Eve?

Cain

b. What does Eve say about this birth?

She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Genesis 4:1

c. Referring to Genesis 3:15, what might Eve have been thinking when this first child was born?

- **And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."**
Genesis 3:15
- **This son of Adam and Eve will crush the serpent's head.**

d. Who was the second child born to Adam and Eve?

Abel

e. What occupation did each child have?

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. Genesis 4:2

2. Read Genesis 4:3-16.

a. What did Cain and Abel do with the fruits of their labor?

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. Genesis 4:3-4

b. Why do you think they brought offerings to God?

They were grateful to God that they had been able to produce food and raise a flock.

c. Which man had the more acceptable offering? Why? (Hint: see Hebrews 11:4.)

- In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. Genesis 4:3-4
- By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11:4
- Abel had the better attitude towards God with his offering.

d. What does God say to Cain?

So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. Genesis 4:5-7

e. What is God offering to Cain?

God is offering Cain a chance at redemption.

f. Using verses 3 to 9, what steps do you note about Cain’s downward spiral into sin?

- Cain’s attitude accompanying his offering is suspect.
- Cain was angry.
- Cain does not try to make amends with God by making an offering with the right attitude.
- Cain draws Abel out into the field, suggesting malice aforethought.
- Cain attacks Abel and kills him.
- Cain lies to God when God asks where Abel is.
- Cain makes a smart mouthed reply to God saying, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

g. What does the account of Cain teach us about the inevitable results of spiraling into sin?

We can progress from what we perceive as a simple sin into an even greater sin unless we stop and repent.

h. Do you think God’s question to Cain in verse 9 is a rhetorical question?

Yes. God knew exactly what Cain had done to Abel. God was giving Cain an opportunity to confess his sin before God.

- i. What was Cain's punishment for his sin?

The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth. Genesis 4:10-12

- j. What is Cain's reaction?

Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear.¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” Genesis 4:13-14

- k. What do you think is Cain's biggest regret and his biggest fear?

- His regret is that he got caught for killing his brother.
- His fear is that he also will be killed.

- l. How does God show mercy to Cain?

But the LORD said to him, “Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.¹⁶ So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Genesis 4:15-16

- m. What do you learn from 1 John 3:11-12?

For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. 1 John 3:11-12

- n. What do you think Adam and Eve were thinking at this point in their lives?

Adam and Eve had just lost their only 2 sons. They might have been wondering if they would ever have another child so that they could be fruitful and multiply, as God had commanded them.

3. According to Genesis 4:17-24,

a. What happened after Cain went out from the Lord's presence?

Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch.

Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch Genesis 4:17

b. What cultural changes took place during this period?

- Cain built a city.
- People lived in tents and raised livestock.
- Stringed instruments and pipes were invented.
- Tools were forged out of bronze and iron.

c. What societal change does Lamech introduce?

Lamech had 2 wives, Adah and Zillah.

d. What is the nature of Lamech's sin in verse 23? How would you characterize this sin?

- Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. Genesis 4:23
- Lamech murdered someone who only injured him; that was out of proportion to the injury.

e. Read Leviticus 24:1-20. What was God's judicial penalty for personal injury?

Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death.¹⁸ Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution —life for life.¹⁹ Anyone who injures their neighbor is to be injured in the same manner:²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The one who has inflicted the injury must suffer the same injury.²¹ Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a human being is to be put to death.²² You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. Leviticus 24:17-22

f. Read Matthew 5:38-42. How did Jesus define dealing with personal injuries?

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. Matthew 5:38-42

g. How do you interpret Genesis 4:24?

- If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times. Genesis 4:24
- Anyone who killed Cain would suffer vengeance 7 times over. Anyone who killed Lamech would suffer vengeance 77 times over. So, Lamech is saying that no one would try to kill him; he's safe.

4. What significant event occurs in verse 25? What might have been Adam's and Eve's hopes at this point in their lives?

- Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." Genesis 4:25
- Adam and Eve were hoping that Seth would also not fall into sin and their line through Seth would continue.

5. What is your understanding of "calling on the name of the Lord" from verse 26b?

- Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD. Genesis 4:26
- People began to publicly worship the Lord.

6. Comparing Genesis 4 to Genesis 3, how would you characterize the progressive nature of the sins?

- Hiding from God.
- Prevaricating when confronting with sin.
- Accusing others as the cause of one's sin.
- Letting one's anger progress into severe sin.