



Welcome!

Welcome to *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross* family devotional! These 15 Bible times are designed to be used with the accompanying calendar, starting the Sunday before Palm Sunday, to prepare your family's hearts for Easter as you journey together from the very start to the very end of the Bible. They're written to be used both by families who are new to looking at the Bible together and those who already do so.

Each Bible time should last about 10 minutes (the earlier days are deliberately a little shorter), and they follow the same format each day. All you need to do is read them out! Each devotion includes the Bible text, taken from the International Children's Bible. For children who can read, we recommend giving them their own copy of the ICB passage to read along with.

In each study you'll find:

- a short opening prayer.
- a starter question or task to begin conversations and introduce a concept that children will need to understand.
- a question to think about or action to do as they listen to each Bible passage. This helps children engage with the text. Questions they're asked prior to the passage are deliberately repeated straight afterwards.

- "Let's Think" questions, which will help your children think more about the Bible passage.
- Brief sections for you to read out.
- Application questions, which will help your children to see what the Bible passage means for them.
- A prayer at the end (later devotions get children involved in coming up with and saying the prayers).
- An optional "Let's Think a Bit More" section, for use with older children or if you have time. (You'll need to look up the passage for these: a useful online resource is biblegateway.com.)

If you'd like some more tips for how to get the most out of this booklet, go to: thegoodbook.com/gccfamilytimes

The studies look at the passages that underpin the message of *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross* storybook, and a lot of the phrases in these studies come from that book. You don't need to have read it in order to enjoy these studies; and if your children are familiar with it, they will still find a lot in these studies that isn't in the storybook.

We pray that you'll enjoy your time looking at God's word, and that you will all grow in love for Jesus together.

Carl and Lizzie



Day 1: The Garden

Let's Pray

Lord God, please excite us about this picture of your good garden. Amen.

Let's Start

Think of the best garden or park you've ever been to... What do you love about it?

Well, a long time ago, right here in this world, God planted a good garden. Today we're going to think about four types of tree in that garden that help us understand why God's good garden was the best garden there's ever been!

Let's Listen to God

As you hear them, count on your fingers the four different times trees are mentioned.

We're reading Genesis 2 verses 8-9. It says: "Then the Lord God planted a garden in the East, in a place called Eden. He put the man he had formed in that garden. The Lord God caused every beautiful tree and every tree that was good for food to grow out of the ground. In the middle of the garden, God put the tree that gives life. And he put there the tree that gives the knowledge of good and evil."

Let's Think

... about the first two types of tree:

The first people were called Adam and Eve. The trees gave them something they needed. What was it?

How do we know that the trees looked lovely?

What two other, unusual-sounding, trees are mentioned?

In God's good garden the tree that gave life meant there were no illnesses or accidents or death. There was nothing to make life bad and people sad.

And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was God's tree. It showed that the garden belonged to God, who was good, who was in charge of it all and ruled it all perfectly.

WOW! The Garden of Eden was a beautiful place, to live in for ever, full of good food, ruled by a perfect God!

But that's not all—there is one more thing that made Eden ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!

Let's Listen to God Again

Genesis 3 verse 8 says: "Then [Adam and Eve] heard the Lord God walking in the garden."

What does that sentence tell us about where God was?

Yup! Right there—in the good garden with the people he'd made. Those people could see God, and speak to God, and just enjoy being with God. It was wonderful to live with God!

We are not in that good garden, but we still enjoy the creation that God made. He created all the mountains and beaches and plants and fruits and vegetables and animals and creepy-crawlies.

What are your favourites?

Let's use this prayer to say thank you to God for those things now... Get ready to say your favourites when I leave a gap.

Let's Pray

Lord God, thank you for making _____ and _____ and _____. You're amazing!
Amen.

Let's Think a Bit More

Have a quick glance over Genesis 1. Again and again it says, "Then God said..." as well as telling us about various things God did.

Now read Genesis 2 quickly, looking for every time God is mentioned.

What difference do you notice?

If you know someone, you know their name. And where it says "Lord" in Genesis 2, it's a translation of God's name for himself—Yahweh (lots of Bibles translate it "LORD", with little capital letters.) "Yahweh" is the name that God told Moses to call him in the book of Exodus (Exodus 3 v 13-14). The writer of Genesis is using this name for God—it shows he is a relationship-making, promise-making, promise-keeping God.

What does this tell us about the God who made Adam and Eve?

How does this help us to understand just why it was so amazing to live there in the good garden?





Day 2: A Terrible Thing

Let's Pray

Lord God, please show us what it means to sin against you. Amen.

Let's Start

Think of some rules you have, either at school or at home. What happens if you break them?

In God's good garden, there was only one rule...

Let's Listen to God

Listen out for what God told the first people, Adam and Eve, not to do; and what would happen if they broke that rule.

Genesis 2 v 16-17 says: "The Lord God commanded [Adam], 'You may eat the fruit from any tree in the garden. But you must not eat the fruit from the tree which gives the knowledge of good and evil. If you ever eat fruit from that tree, you will die!'"

Let's Think

What did God tell the first people not to do? What would happen if they broke that rule?

The first people had been given a beautiful garden, with trees and plants for food, life for ever, and God himself living with them! There was only one thing that was not for them: they were not allowed to decide what was right and wrong. They were not in charge. God was.

But then, one day, the people did a terrible thing.

Let's Listen to God Again

Give a short hiss every time you hear the word "snake"...

Genesis 3 v 1-6 says: "Now the snake was the most clever of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day the snake spoke to the woman. He said, 'Did God really say that you must not eat fruit from any tree in the garden?'"

"The woman answered the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden. 'But God told us, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not even touch it, or you will die.'"

"But the snake said to the woman, 'You will not die. God knows that if you eat the fruit from that tree, you will learn about good and evil. Then you will be like God!'"

"The woman saw that the tree was

beautiful. She saw that its fruit was good to eat and that it would make her wise. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of the fruit to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.”

Let's Think

Who did the first people listen to—God or the snake?

What did they decide to do?

Did you notice WHY they decided to eat the fruit?

Despite all the amazing gifts that God had given them, the first people disobeyed God's one rule. They ate the fruit because they thought it would make them like God. When they did that, they were saying to God that they wanted a world without God in charge.

The Bible calls this disobedient attitude towards God *sin*. And sin spoils things, as we'll see...

Today, we're not in the Garden of Eden and we're not in front of that tree. But God is still in charge of this world, and every day we face the same choice: whether to let God be in charge of our lives or whether to act like we're the boss.

Let's use this prayer to ask God to show us where we are thinking or acting sinfully, like Adam and Eve did.

We're going to talk to God now—that's what praying is. If you agree with a prayer, then at the end you can show that by saying "Amen".

Let's Pray

Lord God, please show us all the ways in which we like to act as if we're in charge, and we ignore or disobey you. Amen.

Let's Think a Bit More

Look at what the snake says in Genesis 3 v 1 and compare it with 2 v 16-17.

How does the snake try to make Eve doubt that God has been generous to her?

Look at what the snake says in 3 v 4-5 and compare it with 2 v 17.

What is he claiming about what God said?

The Bible tells us that the snake is Satan, the devil. He encouraged the first people to doubt God's goodness and the truth of God's word.

Can you think of ways in which you have been tempted to doubt that God is good or that what he says is true?

Let Genesis 1 – 3 encourage you that everything that God says is both good and true!



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Day 3: The Keep Out Sign

Let's Pray

Lord God, please help us to understand how seriously you take sin. Amen.

Let's Start

Share some examples of places you are not allowed to go—perhaps at school, or at church, or even at home. How do you know you can't go there? Why are you not allowed in?

Today we're going to come across the first ever "Keep Out" sign.

After the first people ate from the tree that God had commanded them not to eat from, God told them the punishment for their disobedience. Because of their sin, they were now going to pain and suffering, and their work would be hard and frustrating. Their sin had spoilt things. And then he told them something else...

Let's Listen to God

Listen out for where Adam and Eve were no longer allowed to go, and what stopped them going there.

Genesis 3 v 22-24 says: "Then the Lord God said, 'Look, the man has become like one of us. He knows good and evil.

And now we must keep him from eating some of the fruit from the tree of life. If he does, he will live for ever.' So the Lord God forced the man out of the garden of Eden. He had to work the ground he was taken from. God forced the man out of the garden. Then God put angels on the east side of the garden. He also put a sword of fire there. It flashed around in every direction. This kept people from getting to the tree of life."

Let's Think

Where were Adam and Eve no longer allowed to go?

What stopped them from going there?

We have seen the first "Keep Out" sign—angels and a sword of fire that stopped people going into Eden.

Did you notice which tree is mentioned twice in those verses?

If the people could no longer eat from the tree of life, what do you think would happen to them?

God had kept his word. He had told the people that if they ever ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. And now they would be cut off from the tree that gives life.

But that was not the worst thing...

Think back to what you saw on day one. What was the best thing about living in God's good garden?

It was wonderful to live with him. But now God said, *Because of your sin, you can't come in.* They could no longer be with God.

Think about all the places you talked about where you're not allowed to go.

Where can you only go if you're an adult? Or only if you have the right equipment? Or only if you have permission to work there?

God said that only people who perfectly obeyed him could live with him in his garden. So he shut Adam and Eve out. That is how seriously he takes sin.

How would you feel if you gave someone a great gift and then they ignored you? How is that a bit like what Adam and Eve did?

Let's use this prayer to praise God that he is perfect and to thank him that the story doesn't end here.

Let's Pray

Lord God, thank you that you are perfect and will not allow sin to spoil your perfect place. Thank you that this story doesn't end here with the "Keep Out" sign of the warrior angels. Please prepare us to hear the good news of the rest of the story. Amen.

Let's Think a Bit More

God didn't only punish the first people. He punished the snake, too. Read Genesis 3 v 14-15.

In verse 15, God mentions a child, who would be Eve's son, or grandson, or great-grandson, or great-great-grandson, or... you get the idea!

What will the snake do to that child in verse 15? And what will that child do to the snake?

So, who will win?

Maybe you have an idea of who the child is! Perhaps you have an idea about how he crushed the snake. But for now, notice that right here, in the middle of a very sad chapter, God gives the people who have just sinned against him a glimpse of good news! How kind is that?!

