

Before we get to our study, let me ask you a question:

What if God had voice mail?

We have all learned to live with voice mail as a necessary part of modern life. But what if God decided to install it?

Imagine praying and hearing, "Thank you for calling My Father's House. Please select one of the following options:

Press 1 for **requests**.

Press 2 for **thanksgiving**.

Press 3 for **complaints**.

Press 4 for all other **inquiries**.

If you would like to speak to **Gabriel**, press 5.

For **Michael**, press 6.

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For a directory of **other angels**, press 7.

If you'd like to hear King **David** sing a Psalm while you're on hold, press 8.

To find out **if a loved one has been assigned to heaven**, enter his or her social security number.

For **reservations** at My Father's House, press the letters J-O-H-N and then 3-1-6.

For answers to nagging questions about

- dinosaurs,
- the age of the earth,
- where Noah's ark is
- where Cain found his wife

please wait until you arrive here.

Our computers show that you have already called once today. Please hang up and try again tomorrow.

Well, I do have an answer to the question about where Cain got his wife. Since we will be studying Cain and Abel, I wanted to find an answer to the question for those might get hung up on such things, or are just plain interested.

Where did Cain get his wife?

Have you ever been asked where Cain got his wife, plus all the people to build and occupy his city? The truth is that people lived to be about **900** years old, a fact supported in writings other than the Bible. Furthermore, the last 10 years have produced scientific evidence on the effects of the Vela supernova to explain how these life spans may have been possible.

Given

- the 900-year life spans
- a reproductive rate of one child every five years per couple
- a reproductive period of 600 years per couple,

there could have been 6,000 people on the earth by the time Adam reached age 350. By his 900th birthday there could have been 4.5 billion! Hence, Cain would have had no problem finding a wife or people to populate his city. Obviously, Cain or one of his brothers must have married a sister.

These types of unions were not genetic problems, since genetic weaknesses from intermarriage would not appear until after several generations. Neither are they morally problematic, for the command against marrying close relatives did not appear until Moses' day. Abraham, you may recall, was married to his half-sister. --Information from *Reasons to Believe*, P.O. Box 5978, Pasadena, CA 91117.

And now, back to our story...

In this study we continue looking at the world's first two children, their mom, and God.

As we discovered in [our last session](#), the two choices these young men represent are presented to everyone, even today.

- **Abel chose to follow God's way;**
- **Cain chose his own way to God,** believing one way was as good as another.

After God rejected Cain's sacrifice, He tried to teach him that there are really only two alternatives in life: We will either master sin, or it will master us. There is no middle ground.

- If we allow sin to master us, it will take us further and further away from obedience to God, and we will actually do things we never intended to do. (Baal worship is a good example.)
- If we repent (go back to the place of disobedience and face that issue by judging it and putting it away), there is the lifting up, restoration, acceptance, and fellowship with God that is promised.

Cain's response, unfortunately, was not repentance. We might call his response

The Ultimate Consequences of Sin: Death

v. 8--Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Certainly it is possible that Abel communicated more than what we have in this account; i.e., he spoke to Cain about the message of God. We know this because Abel is called the first prophet in Luke 11:49-51.

Luke 11:49--Because of this, God in his wisdom said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute." 50] Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51] from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

Whatever Abel said must have been rejected by Cain, because Cain killed him, the first of the prophets. It is possible he didn't initially intend to kill Abel, but I John 3:12 reminds us that Cain allowed Satan to possess him. (*I John 3:12--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.*) In other words, he went further than he intended, because he was mastered by the sin that crouched at his door and thus committed evil actions. He became the first person to let sin and Satan reign in him. The enemy of our souls tried to intercept God's plan by controlling one man, getting him to kill the only righteous son Adam and Eve had at the time.

Principle #1: Roots of bitterness always spring up to defile and destroy others. Heb. 12:15—

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

If we don't resolve bitterness, anger will spring up and destroy others, as it is destroying us. Remember Gen. 4:7b. I have seen this trouble and destruction played out in so many ways in families; through divorce, abuse, sour business deals, etc. The victim, ironically, gets hurt a second time through his/her own bitterness.

Notes on Sibling Rivalry

Since this story is about **sibling rivalry**, let's focus on that potential—both in the home and when brothers and sisters grow up and have separate families. Naturally, siblings will have rivalry, but Scripture does not allow it to be overlooked long term. Cain and Abel are certainly the ultimate example. When children have fights, spats, even wars, it is a clue to the parents that some work needs to be done.

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Don't be stressed about it, but understand that rivalry shouldn't be ignored, either. The sibling relationship teaches children how to get along with those who irritate, take advantage of them, steal, lie, etc. Truly, some of adult life's most difficult experiences are first played out between siblings.

Therefore, rivalry can be used as an arena to teach:

- how to serve, even if that service isn't returned
- acceptance of differences
- patience with another who is less mature and in process
- how to love unconditionally
- how to develop friendships
- how to negotiate
- what things we should value and be willing to "go to the wall" for
- the destructive nature of favoritism
- how to be obedient to God when others go the opposite direction
- what people skills are necessary to get along in the world, e.g., "Johnny, I've so proud of the way you share, and when you fail, how quickly you say, 'I'm sorry.'"

These lessons are helpful in the home, and teaching siblings to get along will reach into adulthood as well.

Many children who don't resolve conflicts in their families of origin end up carrying that tension and rivalry into adulthood, permanently estranged or distant from family members. In such cases, typically family events as Christmas, birthdays, etc., are *not* considered family occasions. If family members do get together, it's only obligatory, because it pleases the parents.

Think about what the children hear when Mom and Dad are griping about getting together with their brothers and sisters. What is that teaching them?

On the other hand, if siblings learn to get along, to negotiate differences, they carry those people skills into their adult world, and their own children see them, too!

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Take, for example, the ability to negotiate. Parents often intercede in every conflict, but sometimes it is best to give that responsibility to the children, letting them be responsible to negotiate differences.

Example: "It is obvious you two have a difference of opinion about what TV show you both want to watch. I'm going to leave the room for five minutes, and I want you to figure out how to settle your differences. If you do, we'll celebrate with a trip to Dairy Queen. If you don't, there will be severe consequences to both of you."

I know every parent is saying, "It won't work with my kids. They'll destroy the TV and get into a shouting match." But I want you to think about the alternatives if they don't learn at some point how to settle differences; of the skills they will lack going into adult life. You have to decide when this is age appropriate, of course, but remember that at some point the stakes could be pretty high if they don't learn to get along.

If siblings don't learn to get along and work through differences as children, they may not have the experience/skills to help each other through crises as adults.

Let me encourage you not to reject, ignore, or drift apart from your grown siblings. You have a wonderful opportunity to be friends, and be aunts and uncles (models, to encourage and affirm) to each other's children. Even if your family members are not believers, it is essential to keep close to them so they have a continued example of Christ's love in their life.

It is definitely worth hanging in there and doing what is right when your brother/sister is

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unable or unwilling to work at your relationship. Don't let bitterness and mistakes keep you from maintaining a close relationship. With Cain and Abel's example in mind, don't kill the relationship because of your differences.

Principle #2: Hypocrisy and jealousy will eventually express themselves in anger toward the one living honestly before God.

Hypocrisy and jealousy actually seek to destroy honesty. The **tragedy** here is that because of these impulses,

Cain killed his own brother.

1 John 3:12

—
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.

We tend to read this story with too much familiarity. Consider the **first murder**: the scandal, the heartbreak, and the shock this would have been to the "first family."

How does God respond to the death of Abel?

v. 9a--Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

God was not seeking information, but a confession. He asked a question because He always seeks our honest response.

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v. 9b--"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

This is one of the most famous sayings from the Bible, but surprisingly, many people don't know it comes from this incident when God asked Cain about Abel. Interestingly, the grammatical form indicates a negative response is expected. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Obviously not!*)

Notice how hard Cain has become. He claims not to know where Abel is. His defiance is growing with his sin, and he is now so hardened that he lies to God and essentially questions God's right to ask him.

Compare Adam and Eve, who feared God and acknowledged their sin, with their son Cain, who boldly denied his sin. It appears he had no remorse over the loss of his brother.

Application:

This is what sin so often does. Once we give ourselves to it, it has little or no concern as to the pain it afflicts on others.

- Do you think Cain was wondering at this point how his father and mother would feel?
- Do you think he really cared whether or not he had sinned against God?

It certainly doesn't appear that he did.

What is God's response to Cain's answer?

vv. 10-12--10] 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."

God can no longer speak to Cain in mercy, but only in judgment, so He charges Cain with his crime. Cain could quiet the voice of Abel, but not his blood. (By the way, this is the first time *blood* is mentioned in the Bible.) When God says, "Your brother's blood *cries* out to me...", the word *cries* denotes hemorrhage. Human blood has no voice discernible to human ears, but its voice reaches God. He hears the cry of blood when it hits the ground.

Murder is a sin, therefore, that cries up to heaven. Abel was the first of the saints whose blood was precious in God's sight—"*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*" (Psalms 116:15). Hebrews 11:4 reveals the depth of Abel's faith. "*By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*"

Verses 10-12 hint at the impact of Abel's blood on the earth. One commentary says: "Because the earth has been compelled to drink innocent blood, it rebels against the murder, and when he tills it (the soil), withdraws its strength, so the soil yields no produce"--Keil and

The contrast between these brothers is so clear. As we have emphasized, their lives represent the choices of mankind.

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- **Abel** is a "type" of the seed of woman who lived righteously, and yet his own blood was shed.
 - **Cain** represents the first of Satan's seed, who would violently do battle with one of God's children.
-

What are the consequences to one who denies God's offer for acceptance?

v. 12 "When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

Cain was driven from the land he served and loved.

Here is the God's poetic justice—justice particularly fitting the crime. That which Cain loved and put before God's direction and purpose, he lost. Cain put his sacrifice from the ground and his brother's life ahead of being obedient and having a right heart before God. Therefore, the ground he loved, which also received his brother's blood, was denied him.

Many times, if not always, this is the case in our lives.

- The idol/sin we put before God will ultimately be destroyed as it is destroying us.
- Do you want success above everything, even your relationship with God and your

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family's happiness?

- If you do, that very success will someday be destroyed as it is destroying you.
(Again, poetic justice at work.)

Cain became a wanderer.

In other words, there will be no rest for the wicked. (We will come back to this!)

That judgment finally got through to Cain. As a result,

Cain felt he was cut off from God and alienated from his brothers and sisters. vv. 13-15--13] 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." 15] But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.

Cain was distressed because he felt he would be hidden from God's presence, but God had not said Cain would be hidden from Him. In fact, His face was *not* going to be hidden from Cain, but unless Cain repented, there would be no ongoing fellowship with God.

Each of us should pay attention to this scene...the other side of getting our way and sinning against God. This is how rebellion feels:

intense loneliness

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Sometimes we don't fully appreciate God's presence until its benefits are removed from us. *"In your presence there is fullness of joy and at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore."*

It is extremely unsettling to anticipate the removal of God's presence.

Example: A number of years ago a man from this church was running from God. In willful obedience he was estranged from God, this church, his family and friends. He had received the sin he desired, but soon it was unfulfilling. In a lonely motel one night, with an overwhelming sense of guilt and aloneness, he got a gun and almost killed himself.

That would have been the wrong thing to do, because even the consequences of his sin were designed to lead him back to God. Forgiveness and restoration of relationship was available to Him at any moment; all he had to do was reach out to God! Thankfully, he finally returned to God and today walks with Him.

When we willfully sin, we may get what we want, but we will soon sense the dread of not feeling God's presence. "Oh, He won't leave, but you will eventually feel all alone...desperately alone." At that moment you can reach out to God, or you can continue to reach for a substitute for His presence. Each time you resist, however, it will become harder and harder to come back to Him, and the consequences of disobedience will keep stacking up!

He became paranoid and imagined everyone was after him. v. 14b--I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

He was so alienated from God that he began to feel alienated from everyone, imagining strangers seeking to inflict pain on him. He believed everyone knew of his sin, that no one loved him, and everyone was against him.

Note: Cain was evidently afraid of revenge from Adam's descendants, either in existence or yet to be born. Considering lifespans before the flood, it is certainly possible that over his

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lifetime quite a few people could have thought he should die for killing Abel. Though Adam might not have had many grandsons or great grandsons at this time, according to Genesis 4:17, Adam undoubtedly had other children who might sooner or later avenge Abel.

Observation:

If you walk away from God and Christian community, you will find the new relationships you gain will not always have your best interests in mind. Be prepared to be ripped off, taken advantage of, and possibly harmed by another.

When someone has once walked and fellowshiped with God, then walks away from His presence, there will be lack of direction and purpose in his life, a form of wandering from event to event that is much like Cain's.

But remember, God still loved Cain.

Cain was marked by the grace of God even in his sin. Why?

Look at vv. 13-14 again. *13] 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." 15] But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.*

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Apparently God acknowledged that Cain's concern was more than paranoia, so He protected Cain with a mark (we don't know what kind). He protected him so that no one could take vengeance on him before God's time of grace was exhausted. God is not willing that any of us should perish, but that we all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

You see, as long as Cain lived, there would be hope that he would repent. So God graciously preserved Cain's life, because He longed to restore him to fellowship. God's face was always towards Cain. Furthermore, as long as Cain lived, the consequences were designed to bring him to repentance. See Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:1-5; II Cor. 2:5-11.

Likewise, after we grievously and consistently sin against God, He will often leave a mark on our life. **Why?**

- to remind us of what we've done
- to jog our memories concerning the relationship we once had with God
- to overtly call our attention to the need for God's grace of God which is available to us.

What could these **marks** be today?

- an impairment
- a violation of the law, i.e., a permanent mark on our record
- alienation from friends and family
- a reminder of the hurt we have inflicted on our children, friends and family.
- shame
- permanent deficits in our life
- a failed marriage
- a financial disaster
- the loss of confidence and reputation
- continuing fear and depression

All these marks are, in reality, marks of God's grace to remind us of what we've done, and

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that His grace is sufficient to heal, forgive and restore.

We don't know how Cain responded to the consequences of his sin, but if he repented, we are assured that God would accept Cain and restore him again to fellowship and His presence. There would be continuing consequences to the land he had lost, but the fellowship with God certainly would be restored.

Conclusion:

The Bible is one of the few books that will tell us of the consequences of sin and righteousness. Cain and Abel speak to us regarding the spiritual lives of our children and how much the family can assist to prepare them for life.

Mom and Dad, even good parents can have a Cain and Abel in the same house. See your home as a place where life makes up its mind. Consider your children's relationships with each other as important. Use everyday events as ways to teach them how to relate to each other.

For adult siblings, the question is: when are you with your family? It's never too late to walk back into these situations and bring peace and grace. In some cases the siblings were abusive, and there may be no interest in rebuilding a relationship. Here it would be best to not put yourself in jeopardy. But even if that sibling is your enemy, you can find ways to bless and pray for him/her.

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If it is possible to rebuild a relationship, don't lose the opportunity. Many are watching—including your children and your siblings' children.

Beyond the sibling issue, there are many other lessons we can learn from this study.

It is clear Cain and Abel were told the way they were to come to God. Unfortunately, Cain believed a contemporary lie: "One way is as good as another," but discovered that only one road leads to God. "...there is only one way to sacrifice and service." The works of his hands alone were unacceptable to God.

Abel believed the way God outlined, and discovered a truth that the blood sacrifice teaches. There must be a life laid down before one can have the life of God. It's only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we really live. It's only when we lay down our life that we really find it.

I encourage you to follow the way of Abel. It will cost you your own selfish life, but you will gain real life now and for eternity.

Make the right choice!