



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

#26 – Cain’s Choice

Genesis 4:1-16

PICTURES NEEDED

- 26-1 Cain and Abel’s offerings
- 26-2 Cain kills Abel

REVIEW (Before Teaching Lesson)

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:** (Use the visual from the last lesson to aid in review) What happened to the serpent because he deceived Eve? What happened to Eve because she ate the fruit? What happened to Adam because he listened to Eve? Why did God banish them from the garden? In terms of overcoming sin what are the milestones in a person’s life?
- **The Big Question Review:** What was the consequence of the Fall? Let the students give their answers to the question.
- **Bible Verse Review:** Romans 5:18-19 Adam made us sinners; Jesus died to make us right.

(¹⁸Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. ¹⁹(For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.)

LESSON CONTENT

Note: The Bible verses included in the lesson are from the NIV 1984 edition. The wording of the questions is derived from that version. If another version of the Bible is used, questions may need to be adapted.

After Adam and Eve sinned and were driven from the Garden of Eden they had two sons, Cain and Abel. Because their parents defied and disobeyed God, Cain and Abel were born with a sin nature.

What does it mean to be born with a sin nature? Because we are born with a sin nature we have a natural inclination to do what is wrong. We have to be taught to do what is right. For example, parents don't teach their children to lie; they have to teach their children to be truthful. Children lie because they are born with a sin nature.

In just one generation, mankind, whom God had created in his image and holy, had become fallen and corrupt. Man's fallen nature can be clearly seen in what happened between Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:1-7 (picture 26-1)

¹Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man."²Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

*Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.³In the course of time Cain brought **some** of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.⁴But Abel brought fat portions from some of the **firstborn** of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,⁵but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*

⁶Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷If 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 master it."

In understanding this passage, we first need to look at the difference between Cain and Abel. What did each of them do for a vocation? Abel was a shepherd and tended flocks of livestock while Cain was a farmer, worked the soil and grew crops. Right from the beginning, we see that each person was a unique individual with different gifts and abilities.

It is implied from this passage that God had given them instructions on what was to be offered to him. Why would God have asked them to bring offerings to him? In asking for an offering God wanted them to honor him as the one who had given them all they had. God asks for the first fruits or the best of our labor to be given to him.

Other than the fact that one offering was from plants and the other from animals, what was the difference between what Cain and Abel offered to God? (Reread verse 3 and the first part of 4 emphasizing the bold underlined words.) Each brought offerings to the Lord from their specific labors. God was pleased with Abel's offering but not Cain's. Abel brought the **firstborn** of his flocks but Cain just brought **some** of the produce from his fields. Abel brought God the first and the best but Cain just gave God what Cain wanted to give him; he didn't give God the best.

God knows what is in the heart of a person and Cain's attitude toward the offering showed that his heart was wrong. Cain did what he wanted rather than what God had asked of him. His offering didn't honor God.

What did Cain do when he knew God wasn't pleased with him? Instead of being sorry for what he did, Cain got mad. He saw Abel as being the problem rather than his own heart. Cain didn't want to look at his own sin. He wanted to blame Abel for God being displeased with his offering.

What do you think Cain was thinking? Cain was probably thinking something like, "If Abel weren't such a goody two shoes, God would have liked my offering. If it weren't for Abel, I would be okay."

What did God warn Cain? God warned Cain that sin was crouching at his door and desired to have him.

Do you remember what the equation of sin is? Evil desires plus temptation = sin that destroys.

What could Cain have done to break the equation of sin? He needed to deal with the evil in his heart. He had to recognize that God favored Abel for a reason and it was his response to God's favor of Abel that was the problem. It had nothing to do with Abel and everything to do with his heart. If he had reflected on that and changed his thinking, he wouldn't have given into sin.

Genesis 4:8-16 (picture 26-2)

⁸Now 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.

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

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

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

¹³Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴Today 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."

¹⁵But 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. ¹⁶So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

What did Cain's unwillingness to look at himself lead to? Cain was jealous of Abel and his wrong thinking led him into sin, resulting in him killing his brother.

Even after he had done such an evil thing, what shows that Cain wasn't sorry? When God confronted Cain on what he had done, he first denied it. Then, when God laid out his punishment, he still didn't ask for forgiveness.

What did Cain say about his punishment? He just said that his punishment was too much for him. He was sorrier about the consequence of what he did than the sin he had committed in killing his brother.

Because God is holy and just he can't let sin go unpunished so there are always consequences to sin. What were the consequences of Cain's sin? Cain was cursed by God. God also said that the ground wouldn't produce food for Cain and that he would be a restless wanderer on the earth.

What happened between Cain and God? The worst part of Cain's sin was that he was separated from God. Sin always separates a person from God. God is holy and can't tolerate sin. If we don't repent and turn from our sin, our relationship with God is broken.

What was Cain's real problem? Cain's problem was that he was a sinner. Instead of focusing on what God said was good and right to do, he did what he wanted, just as his parents had done. Then he got mad at his brother because God wasn't pleased with his offering.

Our tendency is to blame others for our own lack of righteousness instead of looking at our own sin. What had Adam and Eve done when God confronted them about their disobedience? Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent for their sin.

If we think the problem is outside ourselves as Cain did, our sin will continue to grow. On the other hand, if we recognize that our own heart is the problem and uncover and ask for forgiveness for our sin we will get better.

1 John 3:12 says, *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.*

Review the steps into sin and what Cain was probably thinking.

- o Doubt God – I can bring the offering that I want.
- o Deny the Danger – Anger won't hurt me
- o Believe lies or deception – If I get rid of Abel, I will fix the problem.

Review the way of overcoming sin and what Cain should have thought.

- o Believe God – I need to bring an offering that pleases God.
- o Recognize the Danger – Anger will hurt me. God said I need to change.
- o Know and believe the truth – I need to do what pleases God for things to go well for me.

LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** What was the difference between the offering of Cain and that of Abel? What did Cain see as being the problem? What did he do to Abel? What was his punishment?
- **Thought Questions:** What was Cain's choice? Why don't we want to take responsibility for our own sin? Why do we choose to do what we want rather than the good God wants for us?
- **Prayer:** Pray that the desire of your heart would be to please God and do what is right. Thank God that he is smarter than you are and wants what is good for you. Thank him that following his ways brings blessing.
- **The Big Question: Why did Cain murder Abel?**
Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: 1 John 3:12** Cain followed Satan and chose to do evil.

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.

Questions: Why did Cain murder Abel? What makes something evil?

ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: When God was pleased with Abel's offering and not his, Cain killed Abel.

1. Cain and Abel brought offerings to honor God and God was pleased with Abel's offering but not Cain's.
2. Even though God warned him not to, Cain got mad and killed Abel.
3. God punished Cain and sent him away.

- ★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the class notes and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse.

- ★ **Activity Page:** Learn a lesson from Cain
Instructions: Unscramble the words from the NIV Bible passage and learn a lesson from Cain. Scrambled words are in order from the NIV Bible passage: offering, firstborn, favor, angry, downcast, curse, wanderer, mark.

The lesson from Cain is: "Do what is right and don't give into sin."

- **Further Understanding:** Investigation/Reasoning Skills

The Law of Slavery – Romans 6:16-18

If you did the Bible journal, readings at home this past week you read about the law of slavery from Romans 6. (Have the students look up the passage in their Bibles.)

¹⁶Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Ask the questions:

- According to the passage what are the two things we can be a slave to? *Sin or righteousness.*
- What determines what a man is a slave to? (vs. 16) *Whatever he offers himself to.*
- What are the end results of the two types of slavery? (vs. 16) *Death or righteousness*
- Do most people think of themselves as slaves? *no*
- Who do most people think they serve? *themselves*
- What does this passage say to people who think they run their own lives? They are really a slave to sin.
- What is a person's only choice as a slave? Who he will serve as a slave. Who or what he will offer himself to.
- What lie does Satan try to get us to believe in terms of slavery? *We can serve ourselves.*
- What does Satan accomplish if we think that we're serving ourselves? *We're really serving him.*

The law of slavery is: "No man is his own master. All men serve something. A man is a slave to whatever he believes."

Satan's chief deception is to get us to believe that we can be the ruler of our own lives and do what we want. He got Adam, Eve, and Cain to believe that lie. If we believe Satan's lies and deceptions, we will sin. We won't sin if God is ruling our lives. We can only sin if we step outside of God's authority and do our own thing.

When we choose to serve ourselves, we step outside of God's authority and in doing so serve Satan. If we don't serve God then we are serving Satan's purposes. Satan's purpose is to hurt and destroy us. God wants to build us up and bless us. Thinking we can do our own thing puts us on the road of sin leading to ruin, wanting to do things God's way puts us on the road to reward.

The journal is passed out at the end of class for the students to complete at home. It has six readings that answer a digging deeper question. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

Digging Deeper: What happens to us when we choose to sin?

Reading 1: 1 John 3:4-10 When we sin we are following the devil.

What is sin? What does that mean? Why is sin of the devil? What happens when we are born of God?

Reading 2: 1 John 3:11-15 In sin we remain in death.

Why did Cain kill Abel? What causes us to remain in death? What shows that we have passed from death to life?

Reading 3: Proverbs 26:24-27 In sin our wickedness will be exposed.

What does it mean to be malicious? What is a malicious person like? What will happen to a malicious person?

Reading 4: Titus 3:3-11 In sin we are enslaved and condemn ourselves.

What are we like in our sinful nature? How do we overcome that?

Reading 5: James 4:1-4 In sin we are enemies with God.

What causes fights and quarrels? What does it mean to have friendship with the world? What do we show about ourselves when we have friendship with the world?

Reading 6: Jeremiah 17:13-14 Thinking about choices

Think about what leads you into sin. Reflect on how you have a choice to think about and then do the things of God or to dwell on wrong thinking and do what is wrong.