



HEROES OF THE FAITH

ABEL: HIS BLOOD STILL SPEAKS

GENESIS 4:1-10

MAIN IDEA

We must recognize the importance of how we bring offerings to the Lord and why we should be careful about letting sin have any control in or influence on our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

What are some situations where people tend to bring out their best? Whether it is best clothes, attitude, dishes, or whatever, we always have a choice of how we want to present ourselves. These decisions are largely based on circumstances, who will be present, and the effect we hope to achieve. When you want a casual relaxed feel, then you don't typically dress in an evening gown or tuxedo. If you are trying to impress a potential boss or client, then you likely don't show up in your pajamas. The attitude we have toward something or someone will be reflected in the way we approach a situation and can have a lasting effect as we will see today.

- **When have you made a wrong choice in the way you presented yourself?**

- **What are circumstances that cause you to be more careful about how you look or act?**
- **How do you see your attitude reflected in the way you approach different situations?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have someone in your group read **Genesis 4:1-7**.

Genesis 4 compares two brothers: Cain and Abel. They had the same parents and upbringing but different callings and responsibilities. Both brought an offering to the Lord, and those offerings were received very differently. There are lessons we can learn from both brothers that help us live in way that is pleasing to the Lord.

- **What did each brother do for work?**
- **What did the brothers have in common?**

Notice that both brothers had major responsibilities and both brought a sacrifice to the Lord. This indicates that they had been raised and taught the discipline of sacrifice. Different descriptive words were used to paint the picture of the offerings that help us understand why the Lord responded to each the way He did. Abel brought his best and offered it in faith. Cain didn't.

The Lord made it clear that one offering was acceptable and the other was not. When Cain showed his anger over the situation, God told him that if he made his offering appropriately, it would be accepted like Abel's. God warned Cain that the opportunity to sin was waiting to influence him away from the Lord.

- **How would you describe the difference between the way Cain and Abel brought their offerings?**

- **How have you seen the warning God gave Cain to be true in your own life?**

- **What can you do to keep sin from ruling over you?**

> Have someone in your group read Genesis 4:8-10.

The anger and jealousy of Cain over Abel and his more acceptable offering grew even though the Lord warned Cain about allowing sin to master him. Think about how Cain could have responded differently and avoided the consequences of unchecked sin in his life.

The wording in verses 8-10 point to Cain planning the murder of his brother. He plainly avoided God's warning and the opportunity to repent and flee further sin. This first murder in Scripture was premeditated and demonstrates the terrible downward spiral that sin can have on a person, even one who was raised to know better.

After Cain murdered his brother, God questioned him. This was not because God didn't know what had happened but more about giving Cain the opportunity to confess and repent. Cain chose to avoid the question and responded with what has become a well-known statement about being his brother's keeper. The truth is that we are all supposed to be our brothers' keepers and to look out for those God has placed in our lives.

Our influence should point them to Jesus and His way. Cain showed the devastating consequences that can happen when we let sin rule.

- **Why do you think God asked a question of Cain that He already knew the answer to?**

- **How have you seen jealousy and pride lead to sin in your life?**

- **How would you describe what it means to be your “brother’s keeper”?**

- **How could the murder of Abel have been avoided?**

- **What is the application for our lives from this part of the story?**

> Have someone in your group read Hebrews 11:4; 12:24.

Cain and Abel’s story is used as an illustration of living by faith in the New Testament. These verses give even more clarity to the situation in Genesis 4. By holding up Abel’s offering as one given by faith, we recognize that Cain’s offering was not given by faith but out of routine or fake piety. That’s a sobering thought, especially in our culture where many people settle for looking like Christians but are not actually people of real faith.

This emphasizes the importance not just of giving but how we give. Think about the testimony of your faith that is displayed every time you offer something to the Lord. If you give generously with a cheerful heart, that speaks volumes to the people around you. If you give out of duty and begrudgingly, that also tells a lot about who you are.

God told Cain that Abel's blood called out from the ground. This speaks to how God feels about injustice. Abel's spilled blood was also compared to the blood of Jesus that was willingly offered on the cross for our sins. Hebrews 12 tells us that Jesus's blood speaks even more than Abel's did. Abel brought an acceptable animal sacrifice and his innocent blood was shed at his brother's hand, but Jesus was the perfect, spotless sacrifice for all time. The blood of Jesus speaks louder and more powerfully than any other.

- **Why do you think it matters how you give as much as that you give?**
- **What does it mean to you that Abel's blood was "crying to [God] from the ground"?**
- **How do your acts of offering to the Lord give testimony to others?**
- **Why was the sacrifice of Jesus supreme and lasting over any sacrifice made by anyone else?**
- **What role does sin play in bringing offerings to God today?**

APPLICATION

- **Identify your particular areas of temptaiton. Write out specific things you will do this week to seek more to surrender to Jesus than to the temptations of sin crouching at your door.**

- **Where have you allowed a spirit of pride or jealousy to affect a relationship? Confess that in prayer and take at least one step to reconcile that relationship.**

- **Where do we allow sin to be present in our lives? What can we do to protect ourselves from the downward spiral that follows sin?**

PRAY

Thank Jesus for His perfect sacrifice on the cross. Confess any ways you have brought unacceptable offerings and repent of those now.

GENESIS 4:1-10

4:1 Adam and Eve now begin to fulfill God's original command to them, to "be fruitful" and "multiply" (1:28). Eve, whose name means "life," now becomes the life-giver. Eve knew that the child was more than the result of her and her husband's love; he came into being with the Lord's help. A wordplay in the Hebrew suggests that the name Cain (qayin) came from the verb had (qaniti) in Eve's comment, I have had a male child.

Notes:

4:2 The name Abel means "breath"; the term is used elsewhere in the OT to refer to that which passes away quickly and is insubstantial (Ps 62:10; Ec 1:2).

4:3 Cain's sacrifice marks the first mention of an offering to the Lord in the Bible. The Hebrew term used here suggests a freewill gift given to an authority.

4:4–5 Ironically, the first recorded offering given to God was also the first one rejected by him. Since grain offerings were authorized in the law of Moses, the fact that Cain's offering was of vegetation rather than an animal is not why God did not have regard for it. Cain's furious reaction suggests that the offering was rejected because of sin in his heart, not the nature of his offering. See note at vv. 6–7. For more on why Abel's offering was accepted, but Cain's wasn't, see Hebrews 11:4.

4:6–7 The Bible makes it clear that God had rejected Cain's offering because of Cain's wicked lifestyle (1Jn 3:12). The animal-like description of sin as crouching is reused in 49:9 to describe a lion. The parallel use of desire in this verse and 3:16 suggests that sin wishes to be as intimate with humanity as a woman is with her husband. The only way to avoid this is to be its master, not its companion.

4:8 In a move that demonstrates premeditation, Cain led Abel to the field and attacked him in a place where there were no human witnesses. Though the blood of animals had been shed prior to this (v. 4), Cain's killing of his brother brought about the first death of a human. The curse of

human death pronounced against Adam (2:17; 3:19) had now been realized.

Notes:

4:9 God's use of questions with guilty sinners continues here (v. 6; cp. 3:9–13). By claiming he did not know where his brother was, Cain added lying to his sin of murder. God once made Adam a guardian (Hb shamar) of the garden (2:15). Cain now asked if he was to be his brother's guardian (Hb shamar). The Bible's answer to Cain's question is yes (Lv 19:18; Mt 22:39; Gl 5:14).

4:10 Unlike his father Adam (3:12), Cain never confessed his guilt, even though God directly confronted him with his sin. Though Abel never spoke in the preceding narrative, his blood now cried out from the ground.

HEBREWS 11:4

11:1–40 This chapter compares the faith of the OT fathers with the faith exercised by Christian believers. Faith is defined as the reality of what is hoped for and the proof of what is not seen. The Greek word for "reality" is *hupostasis*. It has been used previously to describe the relationship of Christ to God (1:3) and the firm confidence that believers possess (3:14). Faith is not fleeting but substantial enough to generate confidence. The Greek word for "proof" indicates an inner conviction that is not based on visible matters. To please God requires faith. One must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. He is there and he responds.

Divine approval is the primary consequence of faith. Other results of faith are: (1) the declaration of righteousness; (2) the ability to look forward to the heavenly city of God; (3) the recognition that sin is a short-lived pleasure; (4) the ability to understand that faith is possible only because God is faithful; (5) the ability to accomplish great things in the world; and (6) the ability to see that even when believers are persecuted and murdered, beyond this world is a better resurrection.