

2024 BIBLE STUDY SERIES
THEME: “GET YOUR HOPES UP!”

JUNE 26, 2024

KINGDOM-LED RELATIONSHIPS: SIBLING RIVALRY
CAIN AND ABEL
Genesis 4:1-16 (continued)

Topics

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Reflection Question

- A. If you grew up with brothers and sisters, did your parents show favoritism toward anyone? If yes, briefly explain how this impacted family relations.

- B. Have you experienced rivalry between yourself and any of your relatives? If yes, briefly explain.

- C. If you have children or grandchildren, have you witnessed rivalries among them? If yes, briefly explain how you manage them.

Important Emphasis

The Blessing of the Lord turned to Bitterness

Genesis 4:1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.”

The Lord Helps

Psalms 46:1

Psalms 121:5

Psalms 107:19-21

Health of Cain (Proverbs 3:7-8)

Harvest of Cain (Matthew 9:38)

Heir of Adam (Cain) (Deut. 21:15-17)

Hostility of Heaven by Cain (James 4:4)

The Drama of Cain--the Triangle of Brother/ God/ Sin

Walter Brueggemann suggested that this family is at worship! John 4:24 “Life can be unfair, but God is free.” Life is not a garden party but a harsh fellowship among watchful siblings.

Cain - The Etymology for Cain’s name is “*to get, to create.*” The name is given as praise to God.

Abel - The Etymology for Abel’s name is “*vapor, nothingness;*” without the possibility of life. Look at the reversal. Abel is revealed as a man of faith. **Hebrews 11:4**

As with Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau yet to come, the firstborn does not fare well in Genesis!

Cain brought a gift with his hands.

Abel brought a gift with the right heart.

Abel was a keeper of flocks. What is amazing was the question God asked of Cain. “Where is your brother?” His reply was “Am I my brother’s keeper!” WOW!

The question is a cynical one, implying that God bears the responsibility if anything has happened to Abel because God is traditionally supposed to be the one who *keeps* or *guards* God’s people. Is this an insult so to speak of the activity of God? Ps. 121:5; Isa 27:3

Does the Lord have regard for what you are doing? Abel is caring for others, while Cain is caring for the ground. Is this point toward himself in some way?

The Power of a Seed

Genesis 4 We have the power of Conception. There is a seed given to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve have given God sin but in return, God has given them grace through a seed. A seed is a chance or an opportunity. God Blesses us by giving assistance after the offense. God helped birth something after the offense. Can you help someone after the offense?

Genesis 1:11-12 The seed is an opportunity, but the challenge is when that seed becomes an obstacle. **Gen. 12:7, Matt. 13:1-9.**

The slaying of Cain's brother turns into the shutting down of the blessing from God. Your killing of someone else can cut off your blessing from God.

Both (Cain & Abel) were ambitious they are working toward something substantive.

Both were accounted for (or held accountable) concerning their works.

Brother (Abel) was approved by God, and this was his reward. Why was this? Is it how he did it? Or was this based on why he did it?

Emotions

Inward Emotions manifest Outward Expressions

What affects your emotions can cause your outward experience.

Key terms

Admission
Arrogance
Attitude
Brother
Competition
Consequences
Contrite/Contrition
Depravity
Exile
Favoritism
Grace
Harmony
Heart

Humility
Jealousy
Keeper
Love
Lovelessness
Mark
Mercy
Murder
Obedience
Offering
Parallel
Pattern of sin

Petty
Pridefulness
Protection
Punishment
Rebellion
Rivalry
Separation
Sibling
Strife
Unanimity
Uniformity
Unity
Unrepentant

Introduction

The biblical evidence that rivalry causes division is overwhelming. It goes back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve chose Satan's way over God's way, they became God's rivals. God immediately expelled them from the garden. He did not put the matter off (**Genesis 3:22–24**). As Adam and Eve shifted blame to one another, they initiated the long, sad history of marital strife in the world, another example of rivalry in the home.

Over the past few weeks, we studied Kingdom-Led Relationships for Marriage, Parenting, and Children. The next lesson in the Kingdom-Led Relationship series deals with Sibling Rivalries. We will review and compare definitions from both secular and biblical sources. There are numerous examples of rivalries in the Bible; however, we will focus on only a few of them beginning with the "First Children," Cain and Abel. Their story is found in Genesis Chapter 4:1-16.

Scripture Reference (Genesis 4:1-16 NKJV)

4 ¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired [gotten] a man from the LORD." ²Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵but He [God] did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. ⁶So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance

fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” ⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where *is* Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰ And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. ¹¹ So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.” ¹³ And Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! ¹⁴ Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

Outline

IV. Kingdom-Led Relationships: Sibling Rivalry (Genesis 4:1-16)

- A. Sibling Rivalry Defined
- B. Pattern of Sibling Rivalry (4:1-4)
- C. Pain as a result of Sibling Rivalry (4:5-8)
- D. Pridefulness in Sibling Rivalry (4:9-10)
- E. Punishment for Sibling Rivalry (4:11-14)
- F. Protection despite Sibling Rivalry (4:15-16)
- G. Sibling Rivalry in the Home and the Household of Faith

Exploring the Text

A. Definitions

Sibling - The legal definition of a sibling is a person who shares a parent with another child. This includes natural or adopted siblings, such as stepsiblings, half-siblings, foster siblings, and adopted brothers or sisters. Siblings can also be children who have lived with other children whom they identify as siblings.

Rivalry - The dictionaries define a rival in various ways. *The Random House Dictionary* definition is typical:

Rival: A person competing for the same object or goal or trying to equal or outdo another.

In all definitions, as in this one, the ideas of *competition* and *strife*, whether internal or external tend to prevail. Competitive thought and action are expended about, and over against, another. These two elements are always present, no matter what form rivalry may assume.

However, in the biblical concept of rivalry, a third element appears: to *competitive* and *striving* is added the note of *bitterness* and even *hatred* that can go as far as murder (i.e., Cain). One dominant Hebrew term indicates that to be a rival is to be an _____ or _____ (**Deuteronomy 32:27, 43; Joshua 5:13; 1 Samuel 1:6; Nahum 1:2**). The rivalry then, is a spirit of competition in bad will that leads to negative thoughts and/or actions (striving) toward others.

Sibling Rivalry is an _____ in which one tries to get even, get ahead, get more than another. _____ and misplaced _____, along with intense opposition and self-centeredness motivate such rivalry. Rivalry—it's an ugly word for a distasteful lifestyle! But it is a reality, and we should not ignore it.

J.B. Lightfoot in *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids: 1970, p. 211) says jealousy, as used in **Galatians 5:20**, is “rivalry, in which the idea of self-assertion is prominent.”

“Envy begins with empty hands, mourning for what it doesn't have.... Jealousy ... begins with full hands but is threatened by its loss of plenty.”

If ever a passage forbids rivalry it is **Galatians 5:26**, where Paul, capturing the essential elements that we have been examining, says,

“Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”¹

B. Pattern of Sibling Rivalry (4:1-4)

4¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired [gotten] a man from the LORD.”² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ...

¹ Adams, Jay E. 1988. [*Sibling Rivalry in the Household of God*](#). Denver, CO: Accent Books.

Cain and Abel's Birth.

Both children were very different in how Eve viewed her _____ [labor] during their births, the meaning of their names, professions, temperaments, and attitudes about devotion and the worship of God.

Eve said, "I have _____ [gotten] a man from the Lord"—that is, "by the help of the Lord"—an expression of pious [devout] gratitude—and she called him Cain, that is, "a possession," as if valued above everything else; while the arrival of another son reminding Eve of the misery she had brought on her offspring, led to the name Abel, that is, either weakness, vanity (**Ps 39:5**), grief, or lamentation.

Cain and Abel's Worship.

Both Cain and Abel brought offerings to God indicating that they were taught to _____ God by their parents—though they did so in very different ways. God's response to Cain and Abel was based on the integrity of the giver, rather than the nature of the gift itself. The narrative emphasizes that God considers the worshiper and the offering. Thus, Abel found favor with God due to his _____ (**Hebrews 11:4**). Cain's offering fell short because he withheld the best for himself. The quality of the offering improves the faith and righteousness of the giver. Unlike a human observer, God values the _____ of one's _____ and the purity of one's motives in worship (e.g., **1 Sam. 16:7**). Elsewhere Scripture shows that the Lord requires of the giver an _____ and upright heart (e.g., **1 Sam 15:14; Hos 6:6; Matt 5:24**).

C. Pain as a result of Sibling Rivalry (4:5-8)

⁵ ...but He [God] did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. ⁶ So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?" ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him.

Evolution of the Sinful Nature.

The **Pattern** of original sin was established in Genesis Chapter 3:1-21 by the "First Married Couple—Adam and Eve: 1) desire, 2) deception, 3) disobedience, and 4) death (See **James 1:14-16**). Sin disrupted relations between God and human beings and between husband and wife.

Chapter 4 shows sin destroying the bonds of brotherhood—Sibling Rivalry between the “First Children”—Cain and Abel. Cain is portrayed as a more hardened sinner than his father Adam. Killing one’s brother (Gen. 4:8) is more wicked than eating a protected fruit (Gen. 3:6).

Unrepentant Sinful Nature.

Cain was unconscious of his **sinfulness** and consequently **unhumbled** (even somewhat arrogant), and his offering was not accompanied by faith and a sacrifice for sin as was Abel’s offering. Therefore, Cain did not receive God’s respect as did Abel.

Cain became very angry. Instead, the displeasure that should have been directed towards his unhumbled heart was turned against his innocent brother, Abel. Although Abel was not more highly privileged than Cain, he made much better use of the advantages he shared with his ungodly and unnatural brother. Cain’s father Adam had to be persuaded to sin (Gen. 3:6); Cain could not be persuaded against sinning, even by God himself (Gen. 4:6–7). Sin is personified as an animal waiting to pounce (Gen. 4:7; cf. **1 Pet. 5:8**).

Understanding the Text (Genesis 4:1-8)

1. How did the author describe Cain and Abel? (4:2)
2. What did Cain and Abel offer to the Lord? (4:3-4)
3. How did the Lord react to Cain’s and Abel’s offerings? (4:4-5)
4. What did the Lord tell Cain he needed to do? (4:6-7)
5. What did Cain do? (4:8)

Explore the Text

D. Pridefulness in Sibling Rivalry (4:9-10)

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

He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰ And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.

Under the pretense of _____ familiarity, Cain concealed his _____ purpose until a convenient time and place for the murder **(1 John; Jude 1:11)**. When questioned by God about his sin, Cain’s father Adam, at least told the truth (though he blame shifted to the “woman” that God gave him (Gen. 3:9-11); Cain outright lied and then made a sarcastic remark about it (Gen. 4:9).

Bible commentator, Adam Clarke paints a disturbing picture of Satan’s first triumph since the introduction of sin in the Garden of Eden—the murder of an _____ man caused by Sibling Rivalry. It is not merely a death that Satan has instigated, but a violent one because--

- 1) It is not the death of an ordinary person but of the holiest man living at that time.
- 2) It is not brought about by the providence of God, or by a gradual failure and destruction of the earthly fabric, but by a violent separation of body and soul.
- 3) It is not done by a common enemy, from whom nothing better could be expected, but by the hand of a brother, and
- 4) It reflects the despicable nature of sin, as demonstrated in the first act of murder driven purely by **envy** (Sibling Rivalry) towards someone more righteous.

E. Punishment for Sibling Rivalry (4:11-14)

¹¹ So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.” ¹³ And Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear! ¹⁴ Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.”

Cain's father Adam accepted God's _____ in silence (Gen. 3:17-19), but Cain protested fiercely (Gen. 4:13-14) and was dispatched even further from Eden (Gen. 4:16).

God states two parts of Cain's punishment:

1. The ground was cursed, so it was not to yield an adequate return for his most careful cultivation.
2. He was to be a fugitive and a vagabond, having no place to dwell with comfort or security.

To these Cain himself adds others.

1. ***Cain being hidden from the face of God;*** which appears to signify his being expelled from that particular place where God had manifested his presence in or contiguous to Paradise, whither our first parents resorted as to an oracle, and where they offered their daily adorations. So in Genesis 4:16, it is said, that Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and was not permitted anymore to associate with the family in acts of religious worship.
2. ***The continual apprehension of being slain,*** as all the inhabitants of the earth were at that time of the same family, the parents themselves still alive, and each having a right to kill this murderer of his relative. Add to all this,
3. ***The terrors of a guilty conscience;*** his awful apprehension of God's judgments, and of being everlastingly _____ from the heavenly vision. St. Paul probably alludes to this part of the punishment of Cain in **2 Thessalonians 1:9**: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

F. Protection Despite Sibling Rivalry (4:15-16)

¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

The text highlights the unusual interaction between the offender Cain and the judge [God] (verses 13-15). Initially condemned to a life of wandering on barren land (verses 11-12), Cain pleads for _____ out of fear for his own life. God's response

(verses 15-16) includes marking Cain, as a symbol open to diverse interpretations. This **mark** simultaneously signifies Cain's _____ and God's protective mercy. The narrative effectively illustrates the dual nature of human existence, emphasizing both the consequences of _____ and the availability of _____ **grace**.

Did Cain deserve God's grace and mercy?

Understanding the Text

6. What two rhetorical questions did God ask Cain? (4:9-10)
7. What was Cain's response to God asking about his brother Abel? (4:9)
8. What consequences did Cain receive from God? (4:11-12)
9. What were Cain's responses to God's consequences for him? (4:13-14)
10. How did God show grace and mercy to Cain despite his monstrous sin? (4:15)
11. God sent Cain out from His presence. Where did Cain go? (4:16)

G. Sibling Rivalry in the Home and the Household of Faith

Rivalry occurs in the home when parents vie for their children's affection or loyalties; or when grandparents lavish attention and gifts on one grandchild while ignoring another. All too often, such things also occur in the household of faith.

Jesus addressed the problem in the parable of the day workers; all received the same amount of money for an unequal amount of work (**Matthew 20:1ff**). Those who worked longer complained bitterly, accusing the owner of unfairness (verse 11). But the owner (Jesus) replied: "Take what is yours and go your way, but I want to give this last man the same as you. Is it not lawful for me to

do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?’ ” (Matthew 20:14, 15).

Again, here are the same elements: the occasion, the disappointment, the anger, the rivalry out of envy, jealousy, or bitterness. Jesus makes the point that even the goodness, generosity, and grace of God can be turned into an occasion for sin in one who has an envious heart.

How many times have you heard such complaints in the church? “Why would they pick him to do that job instead of me? He’s only been a member for a year while I have been here from the beginning.” To react that way is a constant temptation for all who belong to the “charter member club.” In some congregations, the old guard has been known to round up a crew of delinquent and decrepit members (persons who have not been in a worship service for years) to vote in their favor at business meetings.

Life Application:

- What lessons can we learn from Cain’s action and subsequent punishment?
- As we prepare to participate in the Lord’s Supper this week, consider any fractured relationships you may have and make plans to heal them right away.

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