

Bible Study
Genesis 4:1-12
Cain and Abel

1. Sibling rivalries. Giving compliments example. Struggle to rejoice at the blessings of others example.

Why do you think sibling rivalries are so prominent in families and in literature?

2. Read Genesis 4:1-12. What are some themes, ideas, or details that stand out to you?
3. Verses 1-2. *Cain* sounds like the Hebrew for *gotten*. Abel means *breath* or *vapor* (as in Ecclesiastes 1:2, “All is vanity (vapor)”). Eve’s remark after the birth of Cain seems odd. No one says when a baby is born, “I have gotten a man.” Considering everything that’s happened in Genesis 1-3, why do you think she says this?

What expectations do you think were attached to this firstborn?

Which son went into his father’s business? How do you think this would impact expectations?

Do you know any examples (personal or otherwise) where a firstborn was expected to take over the family business, and it did or didn’t happen?

4. Verses 3-7. Where do you think Cain get the idea he needed to make an offering to God?

We are not told what kind of offering is being given—eucharistic, works righteousness, or year end. We don’t know. But it is interesting. Cain’s offering would have been a reflection of his work while Abel’s offering was something given. Plus, Abel’s sacrifice reflects the way God’s people live outside of the garden—we kill something and take its life into our selves, so we may live. This is true physically but also spiritually! How do these observations foreshadow Jesus? See John 1:29-31.

In verses 4-5, we see the term “regard.” This is a justifying word, as in “God looked with favor on.” See Psalm 138:6 and Luke 1:48. What does this tell us about both the relationship of Cain and Abel to God and each other?

Do you think Cain, as the firstborn, was used to being rejected? How does Cain’s response reflect the sibling rivalries we spoke about earlier?

In verse 7, we encounter the word “desire.” In the 9th and 10th Commandments, we are warned about coveting, which is sinful desire. How does the 9th and 10th Commandment apply to Cain and Abel’s situation?

5. Verses 8-12. Instead of asking Abel for a lamb, Cain responded with murderous rage. Why do you think Cain’s response was so intense?

Hierarchy, rivalry, and sin analysis.

Instead of coming to the life offered in his place and finding favor there, Cain goes further down the road of sin even though God warns him.

6. Read Luke 18:10-14. How do Cain and Abel reflect this parable from Jesus?

Now read Hebrews 11:4. How do we make sense of this verse in light of Jesus’ parable?

How is Abel a kind of foreshadowing of Jesus?

Abel’s blood cries out for _____. Jesus blood cries out for _____. John 20:19-21.

Abel is a _____ who lays down his _____.

Jesus desires brotherhood over rivalry.