

**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**DAY ONE**

**Read Genesis 4:1-4**

1. As we begin our lesson this week, we learn how life continued after the first humans were expelled from the garden. Complete the phrases below that describe the dramatic event that occurred in verse 1.

Now the man knew his wife Eve

I have produced a man

2. Eve acknowledged help from God in bringing about the birth of her first son. In what way do you consider the birth of a child to be a divine blessing?

3. The first human couple added to its family when Eve had a second son, Abel. In the course of time, what occupations did the brothers engage in and what offerings did they take to the LORD (verses 2-4)?

Cain

Abel

4. We read in the second part of verse 4 that the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering. As you consider the brothers' offerings, note any differences you see between the content and quality of their gifts.

5. Look up one of the following verses from the Old Testament that describe sacrifices and offerings to God.

Numbers 28:9-10

Jeremiah 7:22-23

Amos 5:22-24

6. **CONNECTION:** In the first act of worship, Cain, a farmer, brought the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel, a shepherd, brought the firstlings of his flock. In every day and time, God's people give him their offerings which are not confined only to monetary gifts. In your day-to-day work, profession or activities, what works of your hands or gifts could you offer the Lord? Share some ideas with your group.

Read and record Mark 12:33. With this thought in mind, consider the offerings you can make to God this day.

## **DAY TWO**

**Read Genesis 4:5-7**

7. Yesterday we read that Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the LORD, and he had regard for Abel and his offering. What did the LORD think of the sacrifice of Cain according to the first part of verse 5?

8. We are given no reason why the LORD preferred Abel's offering over Cain's, and it has been the subject of much speculation among commentators. Explain why one of the theories below makes sense to you or propose another.

Is the external act of worship a reflection of the interior disposition of the worshiper? *Ignatius Study Bible*

The giving of favor to Abel is an example of the unequal success that people experience in life. *The Book of Genesis, William T. Miller, SJ*

The motif of the preferred younger brother will occur time and time again in the Bible. *NABRE*

9. When Cain learned that Abel's sacrifice was preferred by the LORD, he was so angry "his countenance fell" (second part of verse 5). At whom do you think Cain was angry and what emotions might have caused this reaction?

10. Even though the LORD rejected Cain's sacrifice, he did not reject him. With the words of a tender father, the LORD continued to speak to Cain. Record two questions he asked in verse 6.

11. God continued to offer further encouragement to Cain as he set before him two alternatives. Complete the following phrases from verse 7 using your own words.

If you do well

And if you do not do well

its desire is for you

12. CONNECTION: In today's readings the LORD did not explain the decision he made that caused Cain so much pain. Like Cain, when we are confronted with the unfairness of life, we may get angry, perhaps even with God or try to blame the situation on someone else. This often leads to more unhappiness. As with Cain, God is there to guide us toward another path. What are some ways we can choose to respond when we encounter failure and disappointment? Record some thoughts or a personal example to share with your group.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 and record a verse that gives you hope in the face of disappointment. Let that thought lead you into prayer.

### **DAY THREE**

**Read Genesis 4:8-10**

13. Despite the LORD's words of counsel, Cain turned his attention to his brother, Abel, asking him to go out to a secluded field. When they arrived there, Cain rose up against him and killed him (verse 8). What do you think Cain hoped to accomplish by this act?

14. In verse 9 the LORD asked Cain where his brother was. Cain responded first, with a direct lie and then, with a hostile question of his own. Record Cain's response in the second sentence of verse 9.

15. Compare what might have been Cain's responsibilities towards his brother in his culture with what being "my brother's keeper" looks like to you today.

**THINK:** Compare Cain's attitude with the reaction of the man and Eve when the LORD uncovered their sin in the garden in Genesis 3:10-13. Think about the symbolism in the similarity of these passages.

16. In verse 10 the LORD asked Cain another question, "What have you done?" Then, in contrast to Cain's defiant attitude, how did the LORD respond in the second sentence of that verse?

17. From the viewpoint of the Old Testament, life was contained within blood, and life and blood belong to God alone. Look up one of the following verses and record a phrase that reflects this belief.

Leviticus 17:11-14

Deuteronomy 12:23

Isaiah 26:21

18. CONNECTION: Cain's act against his brother represents the worst violence that human beings can inflict on one another. It reveals how rivalry and dissension exist within families. We can be at our worst with those we love the most. Also, like Cain, we might hesitate to admit we are wrong and resist reconciliation with each other and God. With your own family in mind, think about the following questions: Where is your brother? What have you done? Are you your brother's keeper? Record some ideas to ease tensions and improve relationships within your family.

Matthew 12:50 states that "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Let that thought lead you into prayer today.

**DAY FOUR**  
**Read Genesis 4:11-15**

19. Today we read that the LORD gave Cain three consequences for his murderous actions (verses 11-12). Complete the phrases below that describe his punishment.

now you are cursed

When you till the ground,

you will be a fugitive

20. Cain was not killed in retribution for the murder of his brother. Explain how you think he was justly punished for his crime.

21. In verses 13-14, Cain responded to the LORD. Summarize his reaction to the verdict and state how you would characterize him from these remarks.

**NOTE: This story contains anachronisms. Civilization is well developed (verse 2), sacrifice has been instituted (verses 3-4), and the existence of other people is supposed (verses 14-15). But these inconsistencies fade before the religious truths: Man's revolt against God leads to his revolt against his fellow man (verse 8); the crime of murder confirms the fallen state of man; God is just in the punishment of sin, but merciful in its application (verse 15); sin must be, and therefore can be, mastered by man (verse 7). *Jerome Biblical Commentary***

22. The LORD in his great mercy told Cain that he would protect him with a mark and whoever killed him would suffer a sevenfold vengeance (verse 15). In other Old Testament stories, we also read about the LORD's mark of protection. Choose one of the following passages and summarize what you learn.

Exodus 12:13

Ezekiel 9:4-6

23. List one or two other practices of marking or signing that are used by the Church today or in your life and comment on its significance to you.

24. CONNECTION: Today we read that God, who mourned the loss of Abel and justly punished the violent, unrepentant Cain, also protected him from harm. Cain is hardly an endearing character as he moves from anger, jealousy and murder to resentment and cowardice. Yet, God, seeing value in Cain's life, continued to love the unlovable. Our God judges with mercy, not vengeance. Is there someone in your life whom you find difficult to love and are tempted to judge harshly? What lessons can you learn from this story about mercy and unconditional love?

In 1 John 4:7 we are taught that "everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." Today, write a prayer for a person you find hard to love and ask God for the grace to love unconditionally.

#### **DAY FIVE**

**Read Genesis 4:16-22**

25. As today's lesson begins, Cain was banished and dwelled in the land of Nod (verse 16). Summarize what you learn about his new life in verse 17.

26. As with Adam and Eve, the consequence of Cain's sin was exile or banishment from the presence of the LORD. From our Commentary this week on page 21, comment on why the theme of exile was important in the Book of Genesis.

27. In verses 18-22, the first of many genealogies that appear in the Book of Genesis is recorded. The line of the descendants of Cain's son, Enoch, is given. Write down a few details about the following family members (verses 18-22).

Lamech

Jabal

Jubal

Zillah

28. Why do you think Cain and his descendants prospered after he was cursed, banished, and lived in a civilization away from the presence of the LORD?

29. Read Matthew 5:44-45. How might this verse relate to Cain's prosperity?

30. CONNECTION: The descendants of Cain lived outside the presence of God, yet they prospered. They made cultural and technological advances that enriched the lives of their people and enhanced their quality of life. This passage is a reminder that God is in control and works through everyone to accomplish his will. What are some ways that faith in God has benefited from advances in technology and culture? In what ways does technology help your spiritual growth and in what ways should we be cautious in its use?

Read [Isaiah 55:9-11](#). Even though we may not understand God's ways, we can be thankful that he works through all things and all people to bring his blessings into the world. Let this thought lead you into prayer.

#### DAY SIX

Read Genesis 4:23-26

**NOTE: The descendants of Cain were technologically advanced and yet morally debased. To their credit, they were pioneers of urbanization, pastoral culture, music and metalworking. To their shame, they were the first to engage in murder, polygamy and vindictive violence. The point of presenting this genealogy is not to say scientific progress is evil or incompatible with religion. Rather, it shows that advances in material civilization come with the danger of moral and spiritual decline. *Ignatius Study Bible***

31a. Today's lesson begins with what has been called the Song of Lamech. In verse 23 Lamech, Cain's descendant, boasted to his wives of a murder he committed. What was Lamech's reason for doing this?

b. In [Romans 12:19](#) St. Paul tells us to, "leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." If you have ever felt the need for revenge, in what ways do you find this verse meaningful?

32. Lamech referred to the LORD's promise to protect Cain with a sevenfold vengeance (verse 15) by boasting that he would be avenged seventy-sevenfold (verse 24). Contrast Lamech's words with the conversation between Jesus and Peter found in [Matthew 18:21-22](#).

33. Compare Lamech's personality and actions to his ancestor, Cain. What does this suggest about the values of their newly developed culture?

34. Cain, murderer, city-builder and father of civilization was *not* to be the ancestor for all humanity. His story ends and we return to the story of the first human parents when Eve bore a third son with Adam and named him Seth. What did she say at his birth (verse 25)?

**NOTE: In verse 25, *Adam* ( the Hebrew word for "the man"), is used as a proper name for the first time by the storyteller. *Genesis, John Scullion, SJ***

35. According to verse 26, a son who was named Enosh was born to Seth. What began at the time of that birth and what do you think that means?

**NOTE: The third and climactic birth story in the chapter shows that this birth, unlike the other two, will have good results. The name Seth (from the Hebrew verb *shat*, “to replace”) shows that God has replaced Abel with a worthy successor and a favored line, Enosh (“human being”), a synonym of Adam. *NABRE***

36. **CONNECTION:** Chapter 4 of Genesis and the story of Cain and Abel is a story of contrasts. Human beings could both create life and destroy it. While immorality continued with Cain’s descendants, new life and hope were created with the birth of Seth. The truly important work of the beginning of civilization has begun, yet with it comes the danger of moral and spiritual decline. Name an aspect of our modern world that could be used for both good and evil purposes. Discuss with your group ways it can be used or is being used for the glory of God.

Read 1 John 2:15-17 and begin your prayer today asking God to help you put him first in your life always.

Read pages 21-23 in *The Book of Genesis* by Lawrence DiPaolo, Jr., Ph.D. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

©Copyright 2021. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study

[thecornerstonescripturestudy.org](http://thecornerstonescripturestudy.org)