

CAIN AND ABEL

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GENESIS 4:1-16



Our actions reveal the true motivation of our hearts

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

True worship comes from the heart – Cain went through the motions of offering a sacrifice up to God but it became clear he was not celebrating God's goodness by giving up the first or the best of what he had. His heart was revealed in his actions when the Lord looked with favor on Abel's offering.

Unrepentant sin will bring destruction – Galatians 6:7-8 tells us that we reap what we sow. Here in this story of Cain and Able we see how true that is as we observe the consequences of Cain's anger. Cain had the opportunity to repent of his sin when the Lord warned him, but instead, Cain's anger burned so much that nothing, not even God's warning, could stop him from killing his brother.

God's grace extends even to those who are disobedient – God could have judged Cain immediately after his offering was found to be unacceptable but Instead, God allowed Cain to live. When Cain became angry, God could have judged Cain's anger immediately, but instead God warned him. When Cain rebelled against God's warning and killed his brother and was driven away, God could have abandoned him immediately, but instead, God placed a mark on Cain's head for protection. Psalm 103:10 describes God as not treating us as our sins deserve or repaying us according to our iniquities. God's grace and patience are evident again and again in Cain's life.

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WHERE IS JESUS?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Though Abel's innocent blood was shed by a sinful man, it did not reverse the curse or reconcile man to God. A more perfect sacrifice was needed. Jesus is that sacrifice. Hebrews 12:24 says we have come "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." (See also comments under "A Little Theology.")

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 2:1-2

Connecting the passage to Christ:

In Acts 4:25-26, Peter and John quote the first two verses of this psalm, revealing that the anointed one described in these verses is actually Jesus. It is important to note that David wrote this psalm nearly 1000 years before Christ's birth. Peter and John also go on to say that Herod and Pontius Pilate met to conspire together against Jesus. They also said that Pilate and Herod only did what God's power "decided before hand should happen" (Acts 4:28).

Questions for reflection:

- Does anyone know what English word means "Anointed One?" (Messiah)
- How do you think Peter and John learned the prophetic meaning of this psalm? (After Jesus' resurrection, He taught His disciples the meaning of the Old Testament passages and how they pointed to His ministry.)

WORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the WORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

FAKING WORSHIP

Supplies:

- walkman™ radio, overly stylish costume (leather jacket or gaudy jewelry, etc.)

The following skit is designed to help the children see that our worship, in order to be pleasing to God, must be genuine.

Dress up in your “cool” outfit and alter your voice so that the children easily understand you are acting as a fictional character. (This skit can be done ad lib. Use the following thoughts to guide your comments to the children.)

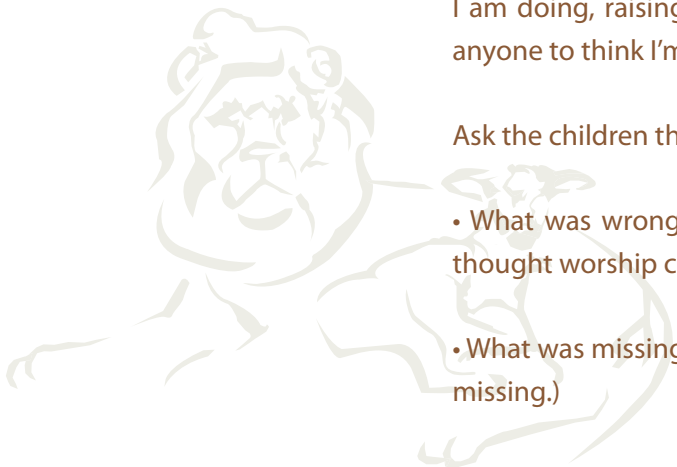
“You know, (speaking half to himself, half to the class), I got this great idea for church on Sunday. You see, I started going to a new church where everybody is radical. Everyone is raising their hands and shouting and stuff. I thought if I bring in this little portable radio, I could listen to the game and then, because I love to cheer my team on, I would feel more comfortable raising my hands. When I see everyone else raise their hands, I’ll just pretend that my team got a touchdown and raise mine. That way I will be worshipping just like everyone else.

“I do have one problem that I haven’t worked through. I don’t know what I will do if the opposing team scores a touchdown when I am supposed to be raising my hands. That would be a problem. Or what if everyone starts raising their hands and my team fumbles the ball?

“Nah, I guess this whole thing won’t work. I guess I’ll just have to keep doing what I am doing, raising my hands when everybody else does. After all, I don’t want anyone to think I’m not religious. Well, see you Sunday.”

Ask the children the following questions:

- What was wrong with the character’s attitude toward worship? (The character thought worship consisted of simply raising your hands.)
- What was missing from the character’s worship? (A genuine passion for God was missing.)



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- Why was the character worshipping? (The character was really worshipping self by giving into the fear of man and being concerned about what other people would think of them.)
- What clues do we have in the scripture that Cain's worship was not motivated out of a love for God? (Cain only gave some, not the first or the best. Also, Cain didn't respond to God's warning. We will obey those who we love.)

MASTERING SIN

Supplies:

- a light wooden chair (a plastic folding chair will do in a pinch),
- a whip
- a lion tamer's outfit (safari hat, khaki shirt and pants).
- An imitation whip can be made by attaching a length of rope to a 12" wooden dowel.

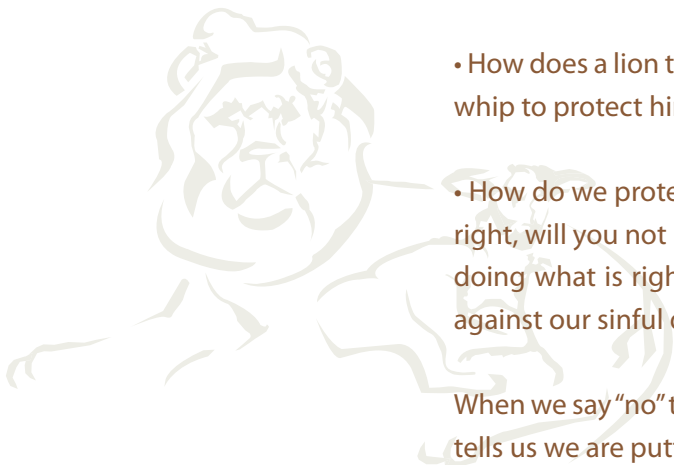
This little skit will introduce teaching on mortification of sin.

"Hello, I am a lion tamer. Let me tell you a little about lion taming. First, just because we can get lions to jump through rings of fire and place our heads in their opened mouths doesn't mean they are really tame. In fact, when we first get the lions we need to be very careful. Lions are used to hunting for their prey. We start them on a diet of pig's legs. The pigs are dead of course. People don't like to watch lions kill things. The problem with feeding them dead things is that they can't use their killer instincts. Then, when they get into the ring with a tamer like myself, and see my legs moving, they start to get itchy for a good kill. They crouch down and hide behind one of the barrels.)Act as if you are the lion.) And then, if you are not on your guard ... that is why lion tamers always carry a chair to hold up against a lion. Where was I? Oh, yes, and then, if you are not on your guard, they will jump out and devour you! That means eat you. So, you've got to always be on your guard. Well, I hope that is helpful."

Read Genesis 4:6-7 to the children again and ask them the following questions.

- How is sin like the lion described in the skit? (Both the lion and sin are looking to get you when you are not looking.)
- How does a lion tamer protect himself against the lion? (He uses the chair and the whip to protect himself against the lion.)
- How do we protect ourselves from sin? (The Lord said to Cain, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" If we do what is right sin, cannot attack us. In fact, doing what is right is like sticking a chair in the face of sin and whipping a whip against our sinful desires.)

When we say "no" to sin and "yes" to righteousness, goodness, beauty, etc., the Bible tells us we are putting sin to death.



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THE KING'S SEAL

Supplies:

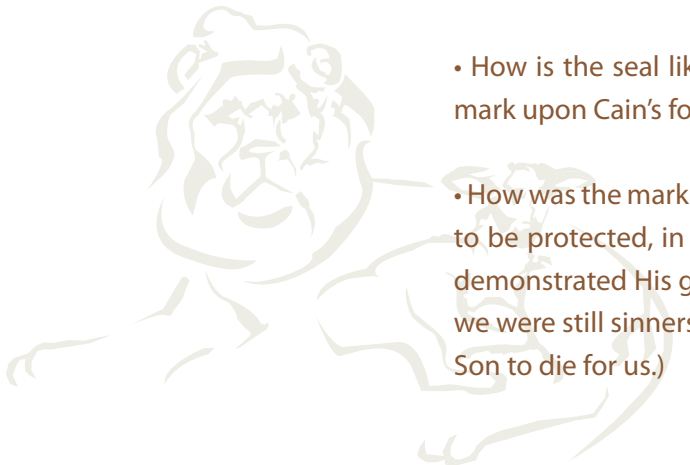
- bowl of freshly popped popcorn
- a gold star or seal

Place the popcorn out on a table in front of the class and let its fragrance fill the room. If anyone in the class asks if they can have popcorn tell them no and say it is not for them. While this is happening explain to the class that you have a very special gold seal. Tell them that the person who wears the seal will have special authority. Then, walk around the room and pick someone to wear the seal. (Try to pick a person who will not take advantage of the situation as an opportunity to draw attention to themselves by acting immature.)

Explain to the class that the person selected is the only person who is allowed to get up from their chair to get a handful of popcorn. This person can get up whenever they want as long as they are wearing the special seal. Offer the popcorn to the selected person and welcome them to come and take as much as they want. They may choose to give it away, but they may only take one handful at a time.

The class at this point should get the picture that the person with the seal can go up and get them some popcorn. The class should begin, in mayhem, requesting popcorn. Let the activity play out and encourage the person to pass out the popcorn. When everyone has had popcorn and the bowl is empty (this should take all of five minutes), ask the children the following questions:

- Why was the person with the seal so special? (They were the only person able to go to the popcorn bowl for popcorn.)
- What did they do to deserve the seal? (Nothing.)
- What do we call it in the Bible when a person gets something they did not work for as a free gift? (We say it was given out of grace.)
- How is the seal like the story of Cain after he killed his brother? (God placed a mark upon Cain's forehead so that no one would kill him when they saw him.)
- How was the mark on Cain's forehead a sign of God's grace? (Cain did not deserve to be protected, in fact, he deserved to be punished for what he had done. God demonstrated His grace to Cain. In fact, Romans 5:8 in the Bible tells us that while we were still sinners and enemies of God, God showed us His grace by sending His Son to die for us.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions.

Have the older children draw a picture of Cain and Abel and their two sacrifices. Give the kids some help, suggesting they draw a large fire for Abel and draw a smaller fire for Cain. Abel's hands can be raised signifying his worship while Cain could have a frown on his face signifying his displeasure.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

FOR THE OLDER CHILDREN

Supplies:

pen and paper for each child

Have the children write two questions on their paper with space enough under them to write a list. The headers should read, "How am I like Abel?" and "How am I like Cain?" Encourage them to think of ways that they are like each of Adam's sons.

You might spark their thinking by asking, "What was Adam like?" "Do you worship the Lord?" "Who was jealous?" "Are you ever jealous?" etc.

When the kids have had an opportunity to do the exercise, draw them out regarding what they have written. Explain to them that we can all identify with the sin of Cain, the grace of God to Cain, and that we should all want to be like Abel, giving God a pleasing sacrifice.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

First fruits – Abel offered the fattest and firstborn in his offering to the Lord. When we offer our first to God, we are communicating to God that we recognize He is more important than any other of our needs. God repeatedly

asked Israel for the firstfruits of their labor. Firstfruits touches the heart of God. One of the reasons is that in offering the first and best to God, we are following his example and walking in His image.

Colossians 1:15 tells us that Christ is the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1:18 tells us he is the firstborn from among the dead. Christ is the firstfruit of the resurrection. So, when we give to God the first and the best we are celebrating the truth that He offered up His first and His best.

Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to God, not because of Abel's work, but because it reminded God of the firstborn Son he would one day offer to us.

