

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

August 9, 2026

Heros of the Faith

“Abel: Offering God Our Best”

Hebrews 11:4

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Have you ever wondered how long footprints will last on the moon? The first footprints put on the moon will probably be there a long, long time—maybe almost as long as the moon itself lasts. Unlike on Earth, there is no erosion by wind or water on the moon. Nothing gets washed away. Since the Moon has no atmosphere, it is exposed to the solar wind, a stream of charged particles coming from the sun, and over time this acts almost like weather on Earth to scour surfaces on the moon, but the process is very, very slow. The footprints left behind by astronauts on the moon could last 10 to 100 million years. *We all leave behind lasting “footprints” in life. Where we go, what we accomplish, the influence we have on others, these are the permanent legacy that we leave behind us. As Christians, what legacy are we leaving in this world as a result of walking by faith in God?* Today, in our look at the Heroes of the Faith, we go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible, and meet Abel, whose faith still speaks to us all these years later about what a life that has a heart of faith looks like in action.

HEBREWS 11:4

It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

ABEL WORSHIPED GOD BY GIVING HIM HIS BEST

We first learn from Abel, a hero of the faith, that ***Abel Worshiped God by Giving Him His Best***. In **Genesis 4**, we learn that sometime after Adam and Eve were sent away from the Garden of Eden by God for their sin, they began a family. God blessed them first with Cain and then with Abel. Cain grew up to be a farmer whereas Abel became a shepherd. Evidently, there was the expectation between humanity and God at that time that humans were to give God offerings from their livelihood, which in the case of the brothers, would be from their crops and their flocks. God obviously didn’t need the offering, but it was meant to be a way to worship, show gratitude and love for God through giving a portion of their blessings to God. A quick reading of Genesis tells us that both brothers gave an offering to God. Sounds good until we slow down and look a little closer at the passage and consider what the rest of the Bible says about these two brothers, we then realize that the two of them gave very different offerings.

Genesis tells us somewhat matter-of-factly Cain presented some of his crops to God. On the other hand, Genesis goes out of its way to tell us Abel gave the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flocks. What makes this significant is that by God's different response to each brother's offering we realize the brothers gave two entirely different offerings which had little to do with whether the offering was from crops or flocks. God was so upset about Cain's offering that God not only rejected Cain's offering of his crops, God also rejected Cain. On the other hand, God was so pleased with Abel's offering that He accepted Abel and his offering of the best of his firstborn lambs. Apparently, Cain gave his offering to God out of his excess, his leftovers maybe after he fed himself and his family. Cain's offering was convenient, easy to give, something that Cain would never miss. Cain's gift to God required no sacrifice. On the other hand, Abel's offering to God was not only from among his first lambs, but the best, the healthiest of his lambs. This was a step of faith that took great sacrifice. He gave to God first and his best before he took for himself. What if something happened to the other lambs and Abel's flock were hurt by giving his best lambs that could produce a bountiful, healthy flock? These were his strongest and best that would ensure future equally strong, healthy flocks. This could impact his future flocks and his family's wellbeing. Abel's gift to God required a sacrificial step of faith that God would take care of him and his family when he gave God his best. Cain's gift to God was a stingy gift, whereas Abel's gift was full of generosity and sacrifice.

This is the first time we have this concept in the Bible of giving God an offering of the first fruits of our livelihood, and not only the first fruits but also the best of our first fruits. Eventually, God made this kind of giving a clear expectation as He said in *Leviticus 23:10*, "*Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. When you enter the land I am giving you and you harvest its first crops, bring the priest a bundle of grain from the first cutting of your grain harvest.*" The Israelites would give their offering to God by giving it to the priests at the sanctuary at the beginning of their harvest and the births of their newborn lambs. This became a tangible means by which God's people were to worship God, show their appreciation, gratitude and love for God. *Proverbs 3:9* instructs God's people to "*Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce.*" Giving to God in this way honors God first, acknowledging Him as the true provider before using our income and our possessions for ourselves.

WHAT ARE THOSE AREAS OF OUR LIVES WHERE WE CAN GIVE TO GOD OUR FIRST FRUITS AND OUR BEST?

Abel offered God the best of his firstborn sheep. ***What are those areas of our lives where we can give to God our first fruits and our best?*** The most obvious answer is bringing our offering to God by giving it to our church. When we follow this same Old Testament pattern, we then give to God as soon as we receive our income, before we use it for ourselves. For Missy and I, last year in October, we looked at our income and estimated what 10% of that would be and we then lost our breath by how much it was, and we took a step of faith to give that amount this year. 2 times a month, after we receive our income, we have 10% automatically sent to the church from our bank. We set it up at the beginning of every year to give first and sacrificially to God. There are times that we feel it and would like to have some of that for ourselves. But in the end, we have experienced the truth that it is a much greater blessing to give than to receive.

Another way we can give God the first of our best is to build a habit of spending time with God in prayer and Bible reading first thing every morning. As J.D. Walt often says on his morning, email Wake-Up Call devotional, "If you win the morning, you win the day." For those of you parents who have children who demand the first of your day and most, if not all of your energy, this is a much greater sacrifice than those of us without children at home. It will require you to either go to bed earlier and get up earlier or carve out time somewhere each day on your calendar for God. Another sacrificial offering we can make is to give up a precious week of vacation to go on a mission trip in Nicaragua, or on a work team providing relief for those impacted by natural disasters through Faith Responders, or you can give a week of your time to serve as chaperones for a youth week. We can also give God a sacrificial offering by giving our time, money, or food to our Food Bank to feed the hungry. Another way to give God our best is to give up a portion of our Saturdays to build bunkbeds for children who do not have beds. For some of us, a sacrificial offering we give to God is giving God every Sunday morning to meet with His people and worship Him here in person in this place, instead of just coming on Sundays when we feel like it or don't have anything else better to do. Another great way to give God an offering of our best is to offer God our homes every week for a couple of hours to be used for a small group meeting for youth and adults for fellowship, prayer, and Bible study. Another great way to give God an offering of our time and energy is to occasionally give up being in worship in the sanctuary to serve our children during the church service in Killearn Kids Ministries. These are just a few simple examples, but every one of these require sacrificing something precious to us, such as time and money, for the One who is the giver of our time and money, God. In doing so we are showing God that He is more important to us than the things of this world. We are walking in the faith footsteps of Abel. On the other hand, when we only give God our leftovers, that which is convenient, we are walking in the footsteps of Cain with whom God was not pleased. Mother Teresa famously taught, "Love, to be real, must cost; it must hurt; it must empty us of self." Abel gave this kind of worship and love to God in giving sacrificially of the best of his flock. Showing God love and worship happens as we daily live sacrificial lives modeled after Jesus Christ giving His life on the cross. This is what faith in action looks like and why Abel is still talked about today as a hero of the faith.

ABEL GAVE HIS BEST TO GOD OUT OF A HEALTHY HEART OF FAITH

Why then did these two brothers handle their gift to God in two different ways? ***Abel Gave His Best to God Out of a Healthy Heart of Faith.*** God's different response to Cain and Abel's gift can be a little bit perplexing and especially God's response to Cain may seem a little harsh to us. Yet it is important for us to remember God sees the heart of a person. The Bible tells us in *1 Samuel 16:7* about what matters most to God as it says, "***But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'***" Evidently, there was something in Cain's motivation and heart that God saw, out of which led Cain to give his gift to God out of convenience and not a worshipful, loving, sacrificial gift. All of this made his gift, his offering unacceptable to God. Cain not only gave in the wrong manner but also for the wrong reason. Cain did not give out of faith in God, but out of a heart

that was not walking close with God which led him to not do what was right and to do it for the wrong reason. On the other hand, Abel's heart was right with God. Abel gave his gift out of a heart of true faith in God. Hebrews says Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man. There are two ways which God considers us righteous. The first is that God makes us right with Him, which is another way of defining righteous, by forgiving us of our sins. We then can have a close, intimate, personal relationship with God. Then out of that faith relationship with God, God then transforms our hearts, our desires, our actions, our thoughts, our wills, our words to line up with God's will, God's way of living a right life, a righteous life that slowly but surely looks more and more like how Jesus lived His life in this world. As we walk closely in a faith relationship with God, God's grace makes us right in every way. The Bible basically describes a person who is righteous as one who wants to please God and over time, they begin to do everything in their lives to please God. Christians who are righteous do what *Ephesians 5:10* says, "*Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.*" Also, *1 Thessalonians 4:1* says, "*Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more.*"

When we live to please God, we experience great joy in sacrificially giving God the first and best of everything we have and are. As a matter of fact, in everything we strive to give God our best. We then do what *Colossians 3:23-24* teaches us to do. That is, ²³ *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,* ²⁴ *since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*"

One of my all-time favorite movies that I have mentioned numerous times before in my sermons is that of *Chariots of Fire*. The 1981 movie depicts the true-life story of Eric Liddell, affectionately called the "Flying Scotsman", who shocked the world by refusing to run the 100 meters in the 1924 Paris Olympics, a race he was favored to win. He withdrew from running the qualifying heat because it was on a Sunday, and he believed God didn't want him to run on the Lord's Day. Liddell then went on to win a gold medal—and break a world record—in the 400 meters, which wasn't his strongest event. One of the most memorable scenes for me in the movie, occurs as Eric's sister, Jennie, wants him to leave competitive running to join the family on the mission field in China. Jennie feels Eric is putting running ahead of serving God, and she questions his commitment. In one scene, Eric attempts to help his sister see his point of view. Eric announces with a smile, "I've decided I'm going back to China. The missionary service has accepted..." Jennie interrupts him. "Oh, Eric, I'm so pleased." Eric continues, "But I've got a lot of running to do first. Jennie, you've got to understand. I believe that God made me for a purpose, for China. He also made me fast, and **when I run, I feel his pleasure**. To give it up would be to hold him in contempt. You were right; it's not just fun. To win is to honor him." The movie doesn't tell the rest of the story of how after the Olympics, Eric did then go to serve as a missionary in China where almost 20 years later, at 43 very young years of age, in 1945 he died from a brain tumor in a filthy Japanese prison camp in occupied China at the end of WWII. Eric gave his best in running, as a missionary, and in a military prison camp. Why did he do all of this? He lived to serve God and loved more than anything else to feel God's pleasure in

everything he did for God. That is the example that Abel has given us and that God calls on us to emulate, that in everything we do, we do so to please God. As *1 John 3:12* says, “We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because **Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous.**”

At the end of *Hebrews 11:4* it says that even though Abel’s life was tragically cut short by his brother, his example of living by faith is one that teaches us the way we are to walk by faith as children of God. We will naturally worship, show gratitude and love to God through sacrificial giving of our best to God when our hearts are right with God. God is graciously calling on us to yield ourselves to His miracle grace that longs to transform our hearts and in so doing, the direction of our lives.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *Be Confident: Live by Faith, Not by Sight*, Warren W. Wiersbe
- *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer
- *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn

Icebreaker Questions

1. What is something you willingly spend your best time, energy, or resources on because it is important to you? What makes it worth the sacrifice?
2. If someone looked at your calendar and your spending, what might they conclude are the things you value most?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Hebrews 11:4 says Abel's offering demonstrated his faith. What was different about Abel's offering compared with Cain's, and what does that teach us about the relationship between faith and sacrifice?
2. The sermon asks, "What are those areas of our lives where we can give to God our first fruits and our best?" Beyond financial giving, where might God be asking you to give Him your first or best—your time, abilities, relationships, service, attention, or something else?
3. What is the difference between giving God our "leftovers" and giving God our best? Are there areas of your life where convenience may have gradually replaced sacrifice?
4. The sermon emphasizes that God looks at the heart and that Abel's generosity flowed from a healthy heart of faith. How can we tell whether we are serving or giving out of genuine love for God versus obligation, recognition, guilt, or habit?
5. Eric Liddell famously described experiencing God's pleasure when he used the ability God had given him. What would it look like for you to live this week with the question, "What would please God?" What is one specific area in which you could intentionally offer God your best?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?