Small Group Guide

Cain and Abel: Offerings, Sin, and Faith

Based on Genesis 4

Overview

This session explores the story of Cain and Abel and what it reveals about the nature of sin, God's faithfulness to forgive, and what it truly means to bring God our best. Through this ancient account, we will examine patterns that are just as relevant in our lives today as they were at the beginning of human history.

Key Takeaways

1. Keep Your Sin in Check Sin rarely stays small. What begins as a small act of disobedience or a wrong attitude can escalate quickly if left unaddressed. God warned Cain before things went too far, and He does the same for us. Following God is not a one-time decision but a daily choice, as described in Luke 9:23, where Jesus calls his followers to deny themselves and take up their cross every single day.

2. God Is Faithful to Forgive Even after Cain committed murder and lied about it, God did not abandon him. God placed a mark of protection on Cain, not because Cain deserved it, but because God's love does not depend on our behavior. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that salvation comes by grace through faith, not by anything we have earned or deserve.

3. Bring God Your Best Abel brought the best portions of the firstborn of his flock. Cain brought what he could spare. God was not interested in leftovers. The same principle applies to how we approach God today, with our time, our finances, our attention, and our worship. As Hebrews 11:4 notes, Abel's offering was acceptable because it was brought in faith.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. The sermon opened with a lighthearted illustration about dogs and kids doing something wrong and then trying to make it up. Can you think of a time in your own life when you tried to cover up a mistake or offer a quick fix rather than genuinely owning it? What happened?

2. The pastor described the Old Testament as feeling like a constant cycle of people turning toward God and then turning away. Where do you see that same cycle in your own life or in the world around you?

Digging Deeper

On Keeping Sin in Check

3. God warned Cain that sin was "crouching at the door" before he acted on it. Have you ever felt a clear warning, whether from God, from Scripture, or from someone you trust, before making a decision you later regretted? What did you do with that warning?

4. The pastor described sin as a slippery slope, starting small and escalating. Can you think of an example, without naming anyone else, where you saw a small compromise grow into something much more serious? What does that pattern reveal about how we should respond to "small" sins?

5. Luke 9:23 calls believers to take up their cross daily. What does that look like practically in your everyday routine? What makes it difficult to make that a daily practice rather than an occasional one?

On God's Faithfulness to Forgive

6. After everything Cain did, God still protected him. What does that tell you about the nature of God's love? Does that surprise you, challenge you, or encourage you?

7. 1 John 3:15 says that anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer. That is a strong statement. How does it change the way you think about attitudes and feelings you might be tempted to dismiss as "not that serious"?

8. The pastor said, "We don't deserve to be free from our sin. We don't deserve to live in a life of freedom. But because of God's grace, we are free in Christ." Is there an area of your life where you are struggling to accept that grace, either because you feel too far gone or because you have not fully acknowledged the sin itself?

On Bringing God Your Best

9. The pastor asked a pointed question: "How often do we spend the best, most attentive parts of our day on things that really don't matter and give the few scraps that are left over as our time with God?" How would you honestly answer that question about your own life right now?

10. Abel's offering was made in faith, not just in obedience. What is the difference between doing the right thing out of habit or obligation and doing it out of genuine faith? How can you tell which one is driving your own actions?

11. The pastor reflected on a worship song he used to lead and asked himself whether he truly meant the words. Are there areas of your faith, whether in worship, giving, prayer, or service, where you are going through the motions without genuine faith behind it? What would it take to change that?

Reflection and Application

12. Of the three key points from the sermon, which one resonates most with where you are right now?
- Keeping sin in check
- Accepting God's forgiveness
- Bringing God your best

What is one specific, practical step you can take this week in that area?

13. The pastor described faith as something that requires practice, like a doctor practicing medicine. What spiritual disciplines or habits help you practice your faith? What is one you want to be more intentional about?

Practical Applications

This Week, Choose One:

- **Daily Surrender:** Each morning this week, before checking your phone or starting your routine, take five minutes to consciously choose to follow God for that day. Acknowledge one area where sin might be crouching at the door and ask for God's help.

- **An Honest Inventory:** Set aside time to honestly evaluate where God is getting your leftovers. Is it your time, your finances, your attention in worship, or something else? Write it down and bring it to God in prayer, asking Him to help you reorder your priorities.

- **Receive the Grace:** If there is unconfessed sin or a weight of guilt you have been carrying, use this week to bring it to God. Meditate on Ephesians 2:8-9 and allow the truth of grace to replace the weight of performance.

- **Intentional Worship:** Before attending your next worship service, prepare your heart. Consider what it means to join with something much larger than a Sunday morning routine. Come ready to give God something, your focus, your voice, your posture, your honest engagement.

Closing Prayer Prompts

Close your group time by praying together. You may want to pray through these themes:

- Gratitude for a God who warns us before we fall
- Honesty about areas where sin has been left unchecked
- Receiving God's grace and forgiveness freely
- A renewed commitment to bring God the best of who we are

Scripture references: Genesis 4:1-16, Luke 9:23, 1 John 3:11-15, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 11:4