

Genesis 4:1-16

Pray for you time together in God's Word!

Study Summary: In this passage we look at two offerings given to God: the offering of Abel and the offering of Cain. We look at these to understand what God asks of those who would be right with Him, both in the initial offering and then our response to God's direction.

Read passage out loud as a group. Option: Give group 5 minutes to look at the passage on their own.

Genesis 4: 1-7 (NIV)

¹Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man." ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. ⁴ But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

⁶ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

Ask the group: What is an offering?

Leader's Note: Encourage the group to think about what they offer to God or what they see offered to God in OT and NT passages.

Possible Answers: A thing offered, especially as a gift or contribution, a thing offered as a religious sacrifice or token of devotion.

- **Ask the group:** What are some ways that people make offerings in our society today?

Possible Answers: People volunteer time or give financially to causes they believe in; they offer their time and money to go to sporting events and other entertainment; a person may offer themselves at the club or in a relationship.

Ask the Group: Why are Cain and Abel making these offerings?

Possible Answers: To worship God; to acknowledge His provision; as an outward expression of their love for God.

- **Ask the group:** What do you think is the difference between Cain and Abel's offerings?

Possible Answers: Cain's heart was proud.

Optional Discussion: Look up Hebrews 11:4 and 1 John 3:12 with your group and discuss what these passages show us about how Cain's and Abel's offerings reflect a heart level difference between them.

Read to the Group: Scripture teaches us a lot about how we offer worship to God. Read Mark 12:29-30.

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Ask the Group: What does this passage teach us about worship?

Possible Answers: He demands all of us, not just what we want to give; worship is a heart issue, not just an outward act.

- **Ask the Group:** What are some ways you worship God?

Ask the Group: From the Genesis passage, what can we infer about Cain's attitude?

Possible Answers: He was stubborn, resistant to God's direction, focused on himself in his offering.

Ask the Group: Look back at verses 6 and 7. What is God revealing to Cain about his offering?

Possible Answers: He's showing him how to be accepted, telling Cain he can be accepted; He's illuminating Cain's pride in what he chose to offer; that Cain wants to give to God what he wants, not what God asks.

- **Ask the Group:** Can you think of a time when you identified a difference between what you were offering God, and what He was asking of you?

Optional Question: Look at God's response in verse 7 in light of Romans 2:6-11 and 1 Peter 5:6-9. What further insights do these passages give us about God's response to Cain?

Possible Answers: Note the language of humility- there is a connection to the type of worship Cain/we are offering to God and the pride in our hearts. In some sense Cain is pissed that his offering is not good enough- that's pride- wanting what we want to give to be what God wants. We are called to resist and repent of sin/the work of the enemy, and we are empowered to do this through faith.

Tell the Group. At this point in the story, Cain still had an option to turn his heart to God and be accepted. We see in the next passage how God responds to Cain's offering and Cain's heart/attitude/rejection.

Read passage out loud as a group. Option: Give group 5 minutes to look at the passage on their own.

Genesis 4: 8-16 (NIV)

⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

¹⁰ The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

¹³ Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Ask the Group. How does Cain’s response to God show his true heart, and the consequences of unrepentance?

Possible Answers: A proud/wicked heart; leads to deeper/more sin, separation from God, missing out on God’s blessing.

- **Ask the Group:** How do you respond when convicted of sin in your life?
- **Ask the Group:** Are there changes God may be prompting you to make in order to grow in a Gospel-centered response?

Ask the group: What is our community application of this passage?

Leader’s Note. You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.

Possible Applications: Rightly worshiping God and the attitude of our heart in our offerings to Him; how we respond to God showing us how to be right with Him and/or His correction/rebuke/reproof.