

The First Family Relates to God

What is so good each week to be reminded corporately of both our great need as well as God's great provision for us in Christ, and to feed our souls with those truths. I invite you to take your Bible this morning and turn with me to Genesis chapter 4. Genesis chapter 4, and I've entitled this morning's message, A Glimpse at Life After Eden. A Glimpse at Life After Eden.

Here where we begin to see really the impacts of the implications of what has taken place in the garden. We're going to see this start to play out in family life. And so this story, of course, in Genesis chapter 4 really gives us kind of the beginning of what this first family began to look like.

And if you were to kind of step back for a minute and just think about kind of what you might like to read regarding a new family, I mean we think of things like playdates, and babies, and giggling, and laughter. So many things that could have been recorded. The family reunions, the Sunday lunches together, time down by the lake.

Who knows? But we're kind of a bit hopeful here, maybe coming outside of the garden, that there'd be a bit of a new beginning of sorts. Kind of a turning over of the leaf of all that's just happened. Turning over a new page.

A bit of a new beginning. And it's hard sometimes for us if we've read the Scriptures through many times because we're no longer surprised by things that are actually somewhat surprising. And so if you've read the Bible for a number of years, then it's easy to kind of jump into chapter 4 and miss the drama, I think, just a little bit.

I mean, murder is drama. So I think we understand there's a measure of drama. I do consider that dramatic.

But there's a sense in which coming out of the garden, I think we'd be longing to see some kind of a do-over. Some story of personal redemption. We all like a good rags to riches or a moral reform.

Some kind of big transformation and maybe a turnaround of sorts. And I'm sure that you're not alone in that. Adam and Eve would have wanted that.

Adam and Eve would have wanted that as well. I mean, what parents do you know that don't want to see their kids do even better than they did? That's the heart of every parent. I want to give my my kids perhaps a better opportunity than I had.

I had whatever upbringing the Lord gave me and I want to take that and build on it and now pass that on to the next generation. It's instinctive. I remember even a man that discipled me early on in my married years used to say, when you raise your children, think of it as though you're raising your grandchildren's parents.

This idea that you want to be thinking long-term and you want to see God's grace extend. Extend beyond you to the next generations. And part of that is there's the desire to see our children not learn the lessons by hard knocks the way we had to.

Is that not true of every parent in the You just look back on your life and you can attest. Well, here's the the pain and suffering that I underwent and others underwent due to my sin and I would love to somehow warn and preserve you from making the same mistakes. I'd like you to be able to learn the lesson without having to learn it the hard way.

Maybe to heed wisdom and to avoid that and then on top of that as a parent we have the challenge of, see, not just a general reflection of our sin but sometimes our children being the very parent reflection of ourselves. Ready? You had that experience? I think, man, I just want to wring your neck right now. Like, this this is so out of control.

And then as you're as you're counseling your child, struggling to keep your own self under control, you realize, oh boy, I'm hearing my parents telling me the exact same thing. And as much as we don't blame our upbringing, I'm recognizing that part of why you struggle the way you do is because we're cut from the same cloth. And so there's spiritual components and there's genetic components and then there's family upbringing components.

And so we look at the next generation and we desire to see somehow, some way, a turnaround. A spiritual passing of the baton where they excel us in their faithfulness. And I'm sure after Adam and Eve had experienced what they lost in terms of fellowship with God, they'd conveyed that message to their children.

Right? I mean, what parent wouldn't have told the story? I mean, they just had an interesting story, right? Mom and Dad, how'd you guys meet? Well, it's a little unusual. And yet, we come to Genesis chapter 4 and find that things are not better. They're really only getting worse.

And as we read the text this morning, what I want you to be to be thinking about as we begin to read it, is that this is very selective information. Adam and Eve had had many sons and many daughters, we learn later in chapter 5. There's only two of them that are highlighted here. Two of their sons, of all their kids.

And all of what life looked like after Eden for Adam and Eve and for their family, this is what the Spirit of God intended for us to primarily understand and focus on. It's very select details and very select people. Chapter 4 begins this way.

Now, Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord. Again, she bore his brother Abel. Now, Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a worker of the ground.

In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard. So Cain was very angry,

and his face fell.

The Lord said to Cain, why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. Cain spoke to Abel, his brother, and when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel your brother? He said, I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, what have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you work around, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me. And the Lord said to him, not so.

If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. The Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

This account, if it's one that you've read before, is somewhat familiar and yet the details are shocking and disturbing. Shocking and disturbing. I'm going to outline this morning just follows the events very simply in the first seven verses.

It's the first family relating to God. Okay, we're seeing how the first family relates to God. That's really the driving focus of this passage.

To understand what worship looks like. And point number one in our message this morning is, we meet the brothers. We meet the brothers.

And this comes to us in verses 1 and 2. So our outline this morning, the first family relates to God. Point number one, we meet the brothers. And this here is really the wonder and the miracle and the grace gift of procreation.

It's an absolute marvel. It is astounding. The text says, now Adam knew his wife.

Adam knew Eve, his wife. And she conceived and bore Cain. Sounds very simple.

She conceived and then she had a baby. So it kind of sounds like it's written by a man. Step one, you get pregnant.

Step two, you have the baby. That's all there is to it. But Adam and Eve here are obeying God's instruction to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth and to subdue it, to rule over the

creation.

And the language there is translated beautifully from the original, Adam knew his wife. Now there's other expressions in Scripture given for the sexual act. And he lie with her.

And he went into her. And he took her. You know, the Bible is very dignified, very careful.

It says Adam knew his wife Eve. It speaks of the wonderful language of intimacy. Even how we use the word intimacy in our language, to intimately know and be known.

Now ultimately, even if you remember in the high priestly prayer when Jesus would describe what it is to have eternal life and possess it, he would say it's to know God. It's to know the Father. It's to have fellowship with God.

It's speaking there of intimacy. And so here the language is very specific and careful that Adam knew his wife Eve. And in that consummation, she becomes pregnant.

Now you just think about what this would have been like for Eve. For all of you who've experienced and walked through this, all of the physiological changes that a woman's body goes through, suddenly Eve is finding things are different with her body, and her emotions, and her energy, and her appetite, and probably her nausea. And who knows? All of these things begin changing.

And unlike the grace that we have, she doesn't have a mom to go talk to about it, or an older sister. She doesn't have chat GPT or WebMD. She's really just experiencing both the excitement of what's coming, and then also the fact that she's going where no one has yet gone before.

So for most women, it's common to be anticipating that day and a bit concerned. I'm sure for Eve, she was no different, and yet perhaps even the added concern that she didn't have anybody to go talk to about it, other than Adam, who obviously wouldn't have been able to shed a whole lot of light on the situation. And this right here is the grace of God, as we looked at last time, that Adam and Eve would still be given the gift of procreation.

And so certainly there's biological issues, there's aging issues that would prevent procreation in marriage. At times there's conceptions that don't go to full term, or they end in miscarriages or stillbirths. But the common design in God's grace is that men and women come together in marriage, and that God most commonly gives them the ability to procreate.

And yet it is always a miracle. It is always a wonder. And so this first conception results in a birth.

And so Eve conceives, and she bears Cain. It appears that Adam let her name the baby. So I don't know if that was worked out ahead of time.

Maybe Adam had a name picked out, and then after seeing what she went through, he said, you know what? You earned it. Why don't you name this one? But Eve, it appears, selects the

name, and she says, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord. Literally, I produced, or I gained a man, the Lord.

That's all that's in the original. And calling a baby a man kind of sounds like a weird thing. We don't see that anywhere else in Scripture.

She certainly would have had a word for infant or for baby, but she says, I just gave birth to a man. And I think for her, it would have been the fact that she gives birth, and she looks down, and she just says, it's a little man. It's a boy.

It's got the parts like you. It's one of yours. And that's the first thing that gets expressed when a baby's born, is it not? Sometimes we knew what we were having ahead of time.

Sometimes we were surprised. And with our third born, we decided not to know. And yet, we told the doctor the names, and so we just said, all right, the baby comes out, and you announce it.

And so the doctor said, meet Griffin. And then we knew, hey, we just had a little boy. It's the first thing that comes out of everyone's mouth.

That's what they want to know. Nobody really cares a whole lot about the pounds and ounces or the length that they want to know. Did you have a boy, or did you have a girl? And so Eve just expresses, this is a little man.

This will be a future head of household. He's gonna be built like my husband. He's gonna be able to work.

He's gonna be able to provide for a family. He's not like me. And she's just an on.

So she gives this expression, I've gotten a man, really, the Lord. So with the help of is added to try to make sense, and that's an interpretive decision. It's a decent decision, but really it could mean one of two things that Eve is expressing here.

One possibility is that she is just recognizing, this whole thing is blowing my mind. It's an absolute miracle. I mean, it's a strange thing, particularly when you start hitting like that seven, eight, nine month range, you know, and you can see the baby like put its hand and just move it across the stomach, and it starts to get almost creepy that there's like a little person inside of another person.

And so I think Eve is just marveling. She could just be expressing, I had a baby, and this is like, this is mind-blowing. It's from the Lord.

The Lord did this. It's just a miracle. It's a wonder.

It's also possible that when she gives birth, she's thinking back to the promise that God made when he was cursing Satan back in Genesis 3:15 when he promised an offspring that would

crush the serpent's head, and she's thinking, here's the Messiah. I just gave birth to a man. This man came from the Lord.

This is the man who now will fix what we broke back in the garden. That was Luther's view. If that was Eve's view, then obviously Cain would have been a massive, massive disappointment.

We don't know. Either translation is possible, but we know that certainly when she had this child, the Lord is on her mind. The Lord is on her mind, and she just exclaims, I have a man.

The Lord has been involved in this, and now these first-time parents are welcoming a third person onto the face of the planet, and it doesn't happen just once, but it happens again. Verse 2, and again, she bore his brother Abel. Now, text is not clear about whether Abel came immediately after Cain in the birth order, whether there were any children between them, but first she names Cain in this way.

She's giving testimony to the Lord. She has Abel, and his name means breath, vanity, fleeting. It's kind of a weak name, really, and whether she knew Abel means fleeting, and in some way I'm gonna name this son that idea, or whether Abel didn't have that meaning, and then after his life got snuffed out prematurely, that became the meaning, we don't know.

The name means fleeting. She named him not knowing what was coming. It likely would have just been her considering already the recognition of the brevity of life, already starting to feel the effects of the fall on her own body, and she's just recognizing, hey, this second one, this life is fleeting, but look at the way that Moses expresses the story.

Verse 2, and again, she bore not another one of her sons, not Adam's boy, but his brother. Immediately, the relationship there is emphasizing the brotherly component. Instantly, it's emphasizing and highlighting sibling dynamics from the get-go, that although Abel was Eve's son and Adam's son, Moses is highlighting he was Cain's brother, and a brother is designed by God to be a gift, someone who has your back, someone to rely upon, someone who you can trust in and confide in and grow up alongside and enjoy the grace of life with.

God is the one who designed those relationships, and yet already in that emphasis, there's something looming to recognize that Abel here is described as being Cain's brother. So right off the bat, we begin to see these typical sibling dynamics. Think about it, verse 2, now Abel was a keeper of the sheep and Cain a worker of the ground, and so we're getting to meet these brothers a little bit.

Two brothers, two different career paths. Both of them are basically farmers, but one is into the livestock and one is into the agriculture. I remember when I was in college, we would have career fairs, and so you'd have all the different employers come and they would set up booths and you could kind of go around and ask about jobs and take a little trifle brochure and get a business card and maybe put your number in or email so you get some more information and find out about internships.

So you picture right now the number of people on the earth, what the career fair looks like outside of the Garden of Eden, and it's like, well, you could work the crops or you could work with the animals. Those are like the two options right now that we have at the career fair. It's very limited, and certainly in short order there would have been industry, metalworking and manufacturing and tools and clothing and kind of the diversification of gifting and skill sets and trade, but at the beginning here these boys have roles that look different.

One of the questions that always comes up is how old Cain and Abel are, and I can't answer that with any certainty, we just don't know. Oftentimes it seems we picture them as youths, maybe like 14 and 16, Cain being the older and he kills Abel while they're teenagers. The challenge with that view is it would seem just by reading the text that it'd be better to assume that they're actually significantly older than that.

There are several reasons. Adam and Eve are fertile, okay, they're fertile, and they've been commanded to reproduce on the earth. And so the idea that they would have two boys only and then not really having any other children until Seth comes, who's the next mentioned son when Adam was 130, seems like a long gap, seems like a very long gap for people who are blessed right now with fertility.

And so these boys of course are gonna be born and they're going to take wives for themselves, their wives are going to be their sisters. That's how this starts out. That's not wrong yet, it's not forbidden by God, that will come in the Decalogue when God gives the covenant to Moses after Israel comes out of Egypt.

For now the gene pool really hasn't been contaminated a whole lot, there's not a lot of people on earth is what it looks like here, and then again in after the flood you're marrying your very close relatives, perhaps even siblings. It's possible then that these boys are even married, perhaps even with children. I think there's a few clues for this.

If you look down at chapter 4 verse 15, excuse me, verse 14, Cain says, I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth and whoever finds me will kill me. If it's just Adam and Eve and two boys and Cain just got rid of Abel, that would mean mom and dad are gonna kill me, which is probably a logical thought. You kill your brother, you'd express that, mom and dad are gonna kill me right now.

But obviously there's population on the earth at that point. There's some kind of people around, there's cousins and nephews and nieces, younger siblings, people who are gonna find out I killed my brother and they're gonna want to rise up against me on his behalf and kill me. That fear, that concern is nonsensical if there's only two brothers on the earth.

Verse 17, Cain knows his wife and she conceives and bores Enoch. And so again that would be kind of odd if he was just a young teen and then he's kind of got to wait for a sister to grow up and he takes his sister and then moves away. Rather it would seem that he was already of marriageable age, he would have had sisters who are marriageable age, likely already having a

wife, we don't know for sure.

And now we would understand that then when Seth comes along, if you look at the end of chapter 4, excuse me, chapter 5 verse 3, when Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image and named him Seth. That boy was appointed as a replacement for Abel. Chapter 4 verse 25, Adam knew his wife again and she bore a son and called his name Seth for she said, God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel for Cain killed him.

So normally when we read the account, we read okay the first kid named is Cain, second kid named is Abel, 130 years after Adam has been on the earth, Adam gives birth to Seth who replaces Abel and then maybe all the other kids come after that. We need to understand that, it would seem better to understand we're just getting a selective view here of the named children. And so most natural way to understand this, what I think probably took place is Cain is born, Abel is born, brothers and sisters and brothers and sisters, that death occurs of Abel and then the next baby born to Eve is Seth and Seth then is the one who replaces Abel.

We don't know for sure but that seems to make the most sense of the data here. And so we see the diversity of these two brothers and you can kind of picture them then settling into adulthood in their careers. Abel was a keeper of the sheep and Cain a worker of the ground.

So this highlights their diversity. Adam would have done both of these things, he would have needed to. The boys could have worked together as a team on each and yet they chose to be separated, they chose to focus on different areas.

And so we understand immediately that children are often unique, even in the same family, are they not? My mom called her firstborn, fast-forward, and her second, pause. They have one kid and they want to be outside all the time with people and then the next one wants to be at home without people. How do we even make this work? And that's this wonderful uniqueness of the strengths and the weaknesses and the gifts and the preferences that God designs to bring together in family life and yet very often what happens, children, if you have a sibling in the room? It's annoying, right? Those differences can be a source of frustration.

Not just that you do things differently than me but you do them wrong. I think about life the right way, I approach it the right way. And so no doubt Cain and Abel would have been just like any other siblings growing up with their differences.

All the challenges of family life would have been a great blessing from God, designing their uniqueness, each of them excelling. And so Abel is the keeper of the sheep, would have been involved in clothing production, probably milking the animals. They weren't eating them yet but they would have needed them for clothing.

There would have been piece of bird in there that would have been used to cultivate the fields. Meanwhile, Cain would have been concerned with cultivating the land and dealing with all of

the thorns and the weeds, how to make maximum production and yield of the crops so they could eat. All normal in a family.

Out of all the kids, we meet two brothers and now we move to our second point which is we watch the worship. We watch the worship. We're seeing here the first family as it relates to God outside of Eden.

First we meet the brothers and now we watch the worship. What we begin to see here is not merely those superficial differences in personality and preference and makeup and gifting the way God designed it but we actually begin to see a contrast in the boys spiritual condition. Verse 3, in the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering.

Okay, in the course of time. This might have been the annual harvest season, could have been weekly. We know Job was going before the Lord with an offering daily at one point so that the frequency is not stated here but in due time would seem to indicate probably that it was on the calendar, it was something that they were all looking toward as a family.

There was the date that they would go and they would present something to the Lord. When you read this, an offering, I think it's best to understand it just generically as an act of worship. Moses doesn't elaborate on where this idea came from, whether the Lord taught the boys specifically or whether this was conveyed from Adam and Eve or exactly even how they conceived of it when it was prescribed.

But at its most basic level, an offering would be coming to God, excuse me, coming to God to demonstrate His worthiness. It was to be an act of worship. And we understand this, this is the ultimate purpose for mankind.

It's why you're on earth. It's to glorify God, to worship God, to enjoy Him, to love Him. And so this offering then was to serve as an act of worship, a demonstration that we believe God is worthy of praise.

Probably wasn't viewed as a sacrifice for sin. It's certainly possible, but there's a different word for that. That really isn't established until later Revelation.

This is just that general idea of an offering, sacrifice of praise. God is good, He's worthy, He's blessed us, He's been gracious to us. And so now we want to bring part of what He has blessed us with and give it back to Him.

Humans, of course, owe God worship. God is worthy of it. He's due our worship.

He requires worship. And so these boys, probably men at this time, bring their offerings. We read that Cain brought to the Lord, verse 3, an offering of the fruit of the ground.

And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock, and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering. But for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

I mean, you can instantly feel the relational tension of that moment. Some of you might be only children, maybe you haven't experienced this personally. For those of you who've had a sibling, and in particular, usually if it's close in birth order, same gender, you know something of this sibling rivalry dynamic.

And I'm astounded at the kinds of things that can become competitive. How much food we ate, how much food we didn't eat, how fast we went, how slow we went. Over and over, competition.

And so for these brothers, they come. And certainly in Abel's heart, there was not a dynamic of competition. We don't know really what was in Cain's heart.

But they come and they present their offerings to God, and God is saying, yes, I'm pleased with one of you, and I am not pleased with the other. And instantly this introduces, in Cain's heart, a significant source of anger with God and bitterness and resentment toward his brother. Those of you children in the room, when you read that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, this was most likely some type of a grain.

It wasn't like a fruit basket, but the fruit of the ground being like a grain. So when you think of things like wheat or barley, things that you could eat, oats, he's bringing really a cereal offering to God. The text says that God looked upon Abel, and he did not look upon Cain.

And so this picture of looking is to look with favor. God smiled at Abel. He didn't look and smile at Cain.

And the text doesn't tell us exactly how the two brothers knew this, but obviously they showed up, they brought their offerings, they go through the motions, and then it's apparent to both of them, God's favor is only bestowed upon one of us. Perhaps the Lord burned up Abel's offering, and he didn't burn up Cain's. Maybe it was the other way around.

We don't know exactly, but it was evident to them. And the question, of course, is, does God accept Abel's offering and not Cain's? And the typical answer, at least what I grew up thinking, is obviously Cain brought the wrong stuff. We all know God likes animal sacrifices, and so Cain should have traded some fruit, gotten an animal from his brother, and then they both brought an animal.

But look at what the text says. It says, the Lord had regard, what? For Abel. He had regard for the man and his offering.

Verse 5, but for Cain, the man, and his offering he had no regard. That's not an accident. The point is not the content of the offering that was brought.

Now, that might have indicated the posture of the heart. We'll look at that in a moment. But ultimately, God's regard is for the man, and God's rejection is of the man.

How is it that we understand this? Well, keeping your finger in Genesis 4, turn with me to Hebrews chapter 11. We begin to see what's happening behind the scenes. We have a commentary in the New Testament to help us.

It's short, but it's insightful. Hebrews chapter 11, beginning in verse 1. Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith is believing that which is not seen, trusting God.

Verse 2, for by it, the people of old received their commendation. By faith, we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Verse 4, by faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. Jump down to verse 6, and without faith, it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Go back to Genesis 4, what characterized Abel and Cain's sacrifice and the differences? Abel's sacrifice was made by faith and Cain's was not. It's that simple. Now, there is a clue in the text that that demonstration of faith in the heart probably began to work itself out in the offering itself.

If you notice, it says, Abel, verse 4, brought of the firstborn of his flock. What does that mean? He brought the best of the best. Isn't it hard to part with the best of the best? I can't get away from this all the time.

My wife made pizza last night. There's four pizza breads and there's a knife. And as I go back for seconds, what am I doing? Okay, how much chicken do I want? Which one has the right layer of cheese and the sauce content? I'm sizing up the very best.

Why? So I can give it to someone else? No way! Because I want another piece and I want the best for myself. It's human nature. And so Abel here, because he loves God and he believes God is worthy, takes of his flock something of value to him, something that will personally cost him.

He says, I'm gonna bring the best of the best because God is worthy of it. We read about Cain and Cain here, it simply says that Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. Guess what? There's a word for firstfruits and it's not being used here.

And so it would seem that it's likely a clue, an indicator that Cain brought what he had to because he needed to. And so he quite possibly found something that was a bit moldy or stale or that he didn't really want anymore because he knew this is what I'm supposed to do. And so he came and he brought it to the Lord.

And the Lord smiles at Abel and he does not smile at Cain. See, for Cain, worshiping God was a ritual that he had to do. It was something he was obligated to do.

I mean, I think it's fascinating here to understand the text doesn't say Abel went to worship at the appointed time and offered his sacrifice and Cain stayed home because he didn't believe God. Now Cain's there, he's gathering it up, he's preparing, he's getting ready, he's going through the motions, he's making sure he's there at the appointed day, at the appointed time. And so one of the most perplexing realities about humans is that rather than walk away from the practice altogether, at times we find gratification going through the motions, continuing the practice, and meanwhile our heart is not in it at all.

So we don't know what was in Cain's heart. The Scripture is silent on his motives. We don't know whether it was because he feared his parents.

We don't know whether it's because he wanted to appear well before his siblings and his nieces and nephews. We don't know, maybe he just felt guilty by not going or maybe he just felt like somehow he still needed to stay in God's good graces and not have God be upset with him. But Cain comes to God and the core issue is that he comes to God and he comes on his own terms.

Cain decides that he has the right to define worship, self-styled worship. So this is a tremendous lesson for us because the Lord has regard for Abel who comes in faith, but for Cain in his offering, he has no regard. Children, I want you to think about this for just a minute with me.

The issue is not that Abel always obeyed his mom and dad and never sinned. The text doesn't even say that Abel was a better kid, necessarily. Some of you might even wear that in your home.

You're like, you know what? I think this is sober-minded self-assessment. In our family, there's some good kids, some not-so-good kids, there's a bad kid. Maybe you even think you're the bad kid.

The issue here is who comes to God in faith. Abel's worship was not perfect worship. You understand that? The quality of his worship, the intensity of his worship.

It wasn't that he was able to come to God and say, I'm clean and Cain is a sinner. Rather, he said, I believe you. I trust you.

This is what the Lord requires. He doesn't really care as much about the form. Rather, the form is an expression of what is in the heart.

I was thinking about the quality of our worship a lot this week. I thought, I sure am glad that the Lord accepts our worship on the basis of faith. I mean, you know what it's like? You come to church on a Sunday morning to sing, and what happens? Well, it depends.

Some weeks, you're so burdened by the cares of what's going on in life. That's primarily what you're thinking about. You're singing, but your mind really isn't on the words you're singing.

Sometimes you come and you've got a thankful heart, and then, I don't know, there's like a microphone buzzing or something. You still want to be thankful, and you want to have a worshipful attitude, but you're just distracted. Maybe you come to church, and you're way down because you've got an unresolved or semi-unresolved issue between you and another brother or another sister.

So, you kind of worship, but your heart's not really in it. You're wrestling with that in your own conscience. Or maybe you come to church on a Sunday morning, and you're just feeling guilty because you're up late Saturday night sinning, doing things you ought not to do.

So, what do you do? You grade your worship. God accepts a B, a B-, a C. How do we evaluate those things? Scripture is very clear that those who would worship God are to believe that he is, and that he's the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. So, that means that we come, and we worship in faith, and many times it's mixed.

And then, what do you do when your worship is mixed, and you find it? Lord, help me right now, because I want to worship you truly. Do you understand that was not Cain's prayer? Cain walks away from this, as we will see, and he says, you know what? I hate the way you've orchestrated this. It's like a rigged system.

You ought to have accepted me on my own terms and my own merits, and frankly, I don't think you're the kind of God that ought to be worshipped. So, we're gonna explore this next week, this self-styled worship that exists in the human heart. But here we see such marvelous wonder in this initial worship service.

We see God graciously showing favor. He's gonna be patient with Cain, and yet we see him accept Abel only because Abel comes offering trustingly. He offers dependently, and this is the very same way that God calls us to worship in Christ, is it not? It's not, come and bring your righteousness.

It's not, come and present the case of your worthiness. Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Will you pray with me? Lord God, what an astounding, astounding record this is.

Lord, to see something that frankly is unthinkable, the tragedy, the heartache of murder taking place within a family, and yet, Lord, this is the lesson you chose to present us with up front, first and foremost, coming out of the garden. And so right off the bat, you're teaching us the lesson that no one can stand before you on their own terms, and all those trust in you. In Abel's case, it was just trusting the promise of your word.

For us, it's trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ that you accept those on the basis of faith. We're gonna look at this more in coming weeks, but I pray that already you'd begin to identify, help us identify, Lord, where we're insistent on you doing things our way, accepting our terms of agreement, or even where our view of you is something that we would sit in

judgment of you over, clinging to our own perspective of who you are, wrestling with you. Lord, thank you so much that you accept the offering from imperfect people who simply trust in your merits.

We love you and praise you. Amen.