



## NG Study Guide: Genesis 4:1-26 :: “The Beginning of Worship” [3.23.25]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** Being able to worship God freely without fear of death or condemnation because of the work of Christ is a wonderful privilege; however, God still desires that He be worshipped in the way He deserves, and so we should seek to worship Him in that way. When we do, He promises that whatever we sacrifice will be nothing compared to what we gain in return.

**Subject:** The Beginning of Worship

**Object:** Worship God Rightly

#### Context:

This passage immediately follows the fall of man, where Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What we are reading are humanity’s first actions following their removal from the Garden of Eden and the beginning of worship.

#### 1. Worship with your best [1-7]

##### a. Worship God Respects [1-5]

*1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”*

*2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

*3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.*

*4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering,*

*5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.*

This passage starts with Adam and Eve obeying God’s commandment to multiply and fill the earth by conceiving and bearing Cain and Abel. All we are told about them is that Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer. Eventually Cain brings an offering “of the fruit of the ground” and Abel brought “the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.” We read that God respected Abel and his offering, but not Cain’s. While not immediately obvious, it’s clear that the issue was not the nature of the offerings being livestock vs. agricultural produce, but rather the quality of the sacrifice. Here, Abel displays his faith in God’s provision and instead relinquishes his best to express his adoration and praise to God.

Cain, on the other hand, seems to have just brought an “offering of the fruit of the ground”. There was nothing inherently wrong with his offering, but there was also nothing inherently good about it either. Even though Cain was apparently the first human being to worship through sacrifice, the nature of his sacrifice revealed what he really thought and believed about God.

We shouldn't be surprised at the notion that God does not accept every sacrifice that comes His way; to accept anything less than our best would be a disservice to the worshipper, as it would wrongly affirm that our flawed sense of His worth, and we would go on with an improper misunderstanding of His worth and glory.

God respects our worship when it comes from our best.

### **a. Worshippers God Accepts [6-7]**

*6 So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?  
7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”*

Cain's response to God not respecting his offering is less than appreciable, to say the least. In spite of Cain being visibly upset, God initiates a conversation with Cain and asks him why he is downcast. At the same time, He reveals the key to worshiping in a way that will lead to Cain's acceptance: “doing well”. Along with this wisdom comes a warning: if you do not do well, the alternative is sin, which brings death and destruction. God is not saying that we are accepted by Him by our own merit, but that when we “do well” and worship rightly, it is a result of our faith in His glory and worth.

If we want to be accepted by God, He promises that when we believe in Jesus, that we do well and fulfill His desires (John 6:29). Abel's sacrifice showed this belief in God, and thus Abel and his sacrifice were respected by God, because Abel's response to God's goodness was to give Him his best.

God accepts worshippers who offer their best.

## **2) Worship through Repentance [8-16]**

### **a. Rejection of Conviction**

*8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*

*9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?”*

*He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?”*

*10 And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.*

*11 So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.*

*12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”*

Unfortunately, Cain fails to heed God's advice or warning and gives into sin, namely the sin of murdering his brother. God then initiates an attempt to allow Cain to confess his sin, which Cain defies and instead doubles down on his sin by lying about his knowledge of his brother Abel's whereabouts and omits the fact that he murdered Abel. As a result, God informs Cain that the ground will no longer bear proper fruit when he attempts to harvest, and that he will be a wanderer his whole life.

The consequences for not seeking to please God and give into sin are deadly; while we may

never murder someone outright, Jesus makes it clear that unrighteous anger is like murder in that it is a sinful act of the heart against God. Even though we have all fallen short of the glory of God and have chosen sin over worshipping Him rightly, the blood of Jesus speaks on our behalf as opposed to Abel's blood which testified against him (Hebrews 12:24). We can only worship God rightly when we accept His initiation of the restoration process through the confession of our sins.

God initiates the restorative process between Himself and man through conviction of our sins.

## **b. Intention of Consequences**

*13 And Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!*

*14 Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."*

*15 And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.*

*16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.*

In response to God's declaration, Cain laments that is more than he can withstand. He repeats what God said back to Him, with one important difference: Cain claims that God has cast him away, something which God did not say. Cain perceives the consequences of his own actions as God rejecting him, when in reality God's punishment and the consequences of our sin are meant to point us back into a right relationship with God (Hebrews 12:5-6). Cain valued the fruit of the ground more than the One who provided the fruit of the ground, and so God rendered Cain's idol useless out of love for him. On top of that, even after Cain decides to reject God and flee His presence, God still mercifully grants Cain physical protection in the form of the mark and the promise of vengeance for anyone who would seek to destroy him.

When God disciplines us or allows us to experience the consequences of sin, it can be tempting to feel that God is rejecting us; in reality, He is actually doing the opposite; He is lovingly allowing us to experience a taste of what life is like apart from Him and worshipping Him rightly. There is truth to the saying that the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. God is the opposite of an indifferent, distant deity who is unconcerned with wooing those who reject Him.

God's punishment is the loving discipline of a Father who wants the best for His children; namely, that they would worship Him rightly.

## **3. Worship in God's name [17-26]**

### **a. Living for the name of man [17-24]**

*17 And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.*

*18 To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.*

**19** Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah.

**20** And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

**21** His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute.

**22** And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

**23** Then Lamech said to his wives:

*"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;*

*Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech!*

*For I have killed a man for wounding me,*

*Even a young man for hurting me.*

**24** *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,*

*Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."*

After suffering the loss of the strength of the fruit of the ground, Cain attempts to make a reputation, what the Bible calls a "name", for himself. He built a city so that he could rely on the labors of others who are not cursed to provide him sustenance and names the city after his firstborn son, Enoch (different from the Enoch of Genesis 5:21-24). Subsequently we are presented with Cain's genealogy up to Lamech; it's actually quite impressive, and includes individuals who are called "the father of all those who play the harp and flute" and "an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron". However, the genealogy ends with Cain's descendant Lamech, who jokes about his own murderous nature. As impressive as Cain's legacy in the sense that it was filled with individuals who achieved great worldly success, it also produced individuals who were even more wicked and evil than Cain himself.

When we reject worshiping God rightly and seek to glorify our own name and reputation, the result is that we draw attention to ourselves and draw people away from God.

When people lift up their own name instead of God's, the result is death and destruction.

## **b. Calling upon the name of God [25-26]**

**25** And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."

**26** And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.

In contrast to Cain and his successful but ungodly lineage, Adam and Eve conceive for the third time and give birth to Seth, who Eve recognizes as a "seed", harkening back to God's promise to send a Savior in Genesis 3. Seth's son is named Enosh, which is hardly a name, and is never repeated in the Bible. While we know nothing of this person's accomplishments, his legacy is so much greater than all of Cain's heritage combined; because of Enosh, people began, seemingly for the first time, to call upon the name of the Lord. While Enosh himself was no person of renown, the result of his life was the ultimate fulfillment of a life lived worshiping God rightly through calling upon His name.

To call upon the name of the Lord means to seek Him in all things; not just when we "need" Him. God gets the glory and His name is glorified when we openly declare our dependence upon Him. When

we do this, people are drawn to God and the gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings life and hope into the world around us.

When people lift up God's name instead of their own, the result is life and hope.

### **Summary:**

God desires that we believe in Him and His worth which actually translates into sacrificial worship which seeks to give Him our best in all things. If and when we fail to give God our best and fall into sin, He is gracious and merciful to initiate the process of our restoration. And when we seek to lift up his name instead of our own, the world and those around us experience the love of God and are drawn into restoration through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Study Guide Qs**

*Q1. What did you think of when you heard the word "worship"? How has that changed as a result of the study?*

*Q2. What does it look like for a follower of Jesus to worship God with their best?*

*Q3. What does God's conviction look like? How is it different from guilt and shame?*

*Q4. How do we worship God by calling upon His name instead of living for our own name?*

### **"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)**

1. Here is a short video from pastor Francis Chan where he discusses the meaning of "worship".
2. Here is a video from Bible Project where they discuss what it means to love and worship God with "all your heart."

### **Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

### **Disciples who make disciples:**

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:  
**Offer to pray with (or for) a neighbor where you live, work, study, play or worship.**

### **Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

## Notes:

**1. Preparation and participation:** Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

**2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?**

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

**3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

**4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better.** As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

**5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples.** Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.

## Next week's passage:

Genesis 5:1-32 :: "Beginning the Family of Faith"