

## GENESIS 4:1-16 | EAST OF EDEN

This guide is designed to be used for community group discussions, but can easily be adapted for personal reflection and application.

### ENGAGE (15 MINUTES)

*Real Biblical community involves people “doing life together.” As much as we can, we want to create an atmosphere where people get to know one another, and feel comfortable sharing the ups, downs, and in-betweens of life. So take some time for people to get acquainted. A possible icebreaker question: Share a high and a low from the previous week. Or, rate your week 1-10. Or, make up one of your own.*

### REFLECTION AND STUDY (30-35 MINUTES)

The sad story of Cain and Abel gives us insight into the nature of sin. Sin spreads. It advances. It metastasizes. It spreads out from the first parents to their son, Cain. And it intensifies. Eve was talked into sin by the serpent. Cain couldn't be talked out of it, even by God. The relationship between Adam and Eve becomes uneasy. Cain murders his brother Abel. Adam and Eve shift blame when confronted by God. Cain outright lies to God when confronted. Things are getting worse. Sin is on the move.

*Read Genesis 4:1-16*

- 1.) Why is Abel's offering met with God's favor while Cain's is not?  
*(If you're stuck, read Psalm 51:16-17 and Hebrews 11:4 to help with your understanding)*
- 2.) What stands out to you about God's words to Cain in verses 6-7? How does Cain respond?
- 3.) What happens after Cain kills Abel? What is Cain's response? How does God treat him?
- 4.) What does this text tell you about the nature of sin?

*Read the short article on the next page*

- 5.) Did anything stand out to you as helpful, challenging, or confusing?
- 6.) John Owen said, “Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.” How can you make repentance a regular part of your life?  
*(Josh mentioned the importance of God's Word, accountability relationships, and receiving criticism as helps to our repentance)*
- 7.) Have you made the Bible an important part of your life? If not, why not? How can you get started?
- 8.) For every one look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. How does this text point you to Jesus?

### PRAYER (15-20 MINUTES)

Break into men and women for prayer. Take some time to talk through the notion of repentance. Is there anything you need to repent of right now? Where do you need accountability to do so? How can our community group help encourage you in this? Pray for one another.

## EAST OF EDEN

### The Sin of Cain

*Sin is a heart issue.* Cain didn't wake up one day and decide to kill his brother. Sin grew in his heart. Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel came to worship in faith. Evidently, Cain did not, and this is why his offering was not met with God's favor. What other reason could Cain have come to worship, if he didn't come in faith? Some people come out of habit. Some come to get God off their back (I can live the way I want as long as I make an appearance at church). Still others worship to get something from God (God will owe me a good life, success, a relationship, if I worship him). It's unclear which of these best describes Cain, but it is clear that his heart does not match his worship.

*Sin hides.* God tells Cain that "sin is crouching at your door." That's the way sin works in all our lives. Even now, your most dangerous flaws are crouching down, presenting themselves as much smaller than they are. You need other people to help you see the sins hiding in the corners of your life. Accountability relationships are crucial in this. Also, when you receive criticism, rather than being defensive, remember that sin hides. This is an opportunity to see your sin and repent. Even if the other person is way off base, there is usually at least a kernel of truth in what they are saying.

*Sin grows.* Unchecked, sin always grows. God tells Cain that sin wants to dominate him. James explains "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (James 1:13-14). As John Owen said, "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you."

### The Grace of God

"Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20). God intervenes and calls Cain to repentance (v.6-7). God's words to Cain are a paradigm for how God's Word works to help you do battle with sin. The Bible helps diagnose what's really going on with us. As we read the Bible, the Bible reads us (Heb 4:12). God's Word encourages us with promises of what God has done and will do for us. God warns us of the dangers of sin – "sin is crouching at your door." And God exhorts us to act – "put to death therefore what is earthly in you" (Col 3:5). *Have you made God's Word a priority in your life?*

Unfortunately Cain does not repent, so this is a cautionary tale. God gives him a chance to confess to the murder, but he lies. And then when confronted with judgment, rather than mourn his sin or have compassion for his brother, he cries out because of the punishment. He's not sorry for his sins. He's sorry that he got caught. *Do you mourn your sin, or do you mourn its consequences?*

### The Crying Blood

It's good to examine ourselves and repent of our sin. But we cannot stop there. Robert Murray M'Cheyne wisely counseled that for every *one* look at self, take *ten* looks at Christ. Hebrews 12:24 says "The sprinkled blood [of Jesus] speaks a better word than the blood

of Abel.” Abel’s blood cries out to God for *justice* (v.10). But Jesus’ blood cries out to God for your *forgiveness*. Jesus took your place and died for your sins, so that you could be forgiven. What Cain feared actually happened to Jesus. Cain worried about being a restless wanderer. “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). Cain worried he would be killed. Jesus was mocked, beaten, and crucified. Cain worried he would be abandoned. Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34).

Take heed of the cautionary tale of Cain. Repent of your sin and run to Jesus, whose blood will bring cleansing and forgiveness.