

## GENESIS 4:17-26 | TWO CITIES

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)

C.S. Lewis once wrote, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” This is true of Christianity in general, but also more particularly of the early chapters in Genesis. Genesis gives us a light to see by in order to make sense of who we are, what we’re supposed to be up to in this world, what’s gone wrong, and what God has done about it.

*Read Genesis 4:17-26*

- 1.) The description of the human society that grows from Cain is a remarkable mixture of darkness and light. Where do you see each in this passage?
- 2.) Look at verses 20-22. John Calvin writes “*It is truly wonderful that this race, which had most deeply fallen from integrity, should have excelled the rest of the posterity of Adam in rare endowments... Let us know then, that the sons of Cain, though deprived of the spirit of regeneration, were yet endowed with gifts of no despicable kind.*” What do you think Calvin means?
- 3.) How do we see the advance of sin in the life of Lamech? (v.19, 23-24) Lamech was the seventh in the line from Cain. Enoch was the seventh in the line from Seth. Read Genesis 5:21-24. How do these two differ?
- 5.) What is the significance that Jesus is born in the line of Seth (Luke 3:38)?

*Read the short article on the next page*

- 6.) How does this passage help you better understand the city of Cincinnati?
- 7.) How can our community better be an outpost of the city of God?
- 8.) If you really believed this passage, what would be different about your life?  
*(Possible answers: more likely to praise and affirm good gifts – even in the lives of non-Christians; repent of our own tendency to self-absorption manifest in how we talk, spend, act toward others; take seriously engaging with the people of the city of man per Matt 5:14-16)*

### PRAYER (15-20 MINUTES)

Break into men and women for prayer. Is there anything you need to apply? How can our community group help encourage you in this? Pray for one another.

## TWO CITIES

### The City of Man

*Cities and the Bible.* God does not condemn human cities per se. Some have thought this because Cain is the first city-builder according to verse 17. But God commands cities to be built in Numbers, he calls the people to go in and seek the welfare of the city of Babylon, and he rebukes Jonah for his lack of love for the city of Nineveh. And, of course, in Revelation the coming kingdom of heaven is described as a city. So God doesn't condemn cities out of hand. Rather, this text tells us that human culture is a mix of light (people are still made in the image of God) and darkness (sin has touched everything). Because of the density and diversity in cities, both of these factors are intensified.

*The Good.* “A biased account would have ascribed nothing good to Cain. The truth is more complex: God was to make much use of Cainite techniques for His people” (Derek Kidner). Verses 20-22 tell us of people in the city of man living out their calling to make culture.

*The Bad.* Luther defined sin as *homo curvatus in se* (“man curved in upon himself”). This is Cain's story, and that of those who come after him. Cain begins by naming the city after his son – conjuring up images of Genesis 11:4 – “Come let us make a name for ourselves.” Culture and cities are meant to be for the glory of God and the good of others. Instead, sin warps them so that our lives are aimed at making a name for ourselves.

*The Ugly.* Lamech is the worst expression of this. Rather than trust God's design for marriage, he is the first polygamist. This becomes a disaster in the rest of Genesis, especially for women. We see the beginnings of a culture of oppression. Lamech's taunt song in verses 23-24 reveal a culture of violence. Lamech brags about killing a small boy for giving him a scratch. The evil of sin is on full display.

### The City of God

*Another line.* Thankfully the story does not end there. God gives Eve another child, Seth, and it is through his line that the deliverer will come (Luke 3:38). In Seth's line we see people “calling on the name of the Lord” and Enoch, who is Lamech's contemporary, “walks with God” (Gen 5:24). A contrast is being drawn between the city of God and the city of man.

*Jesus and the city of God.* Jesus comes in the line of Seth, and he begins to call a people to himself. The church is to be a “city on a hill” (Matt 5:14), and will be characterized by a people who love God and serve other people. Jesus told Peter that inhabitants of this new city would forgive seventy-seven times (or 70x7) – a direct reversal of the way of Lamech. Lamech lived “your life for me,” but Jesus called his followers to live according to the principle “my life for you.”

*Already / Not Yet.* Jesus calls the church to be an outpost of the city of God here on earth. We are to demonstrate the values of the city in the way we do everything (Matt 5:16). But,

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like Abraham, we wait and hope in the coming of the full expression of the city of God (Heb 11:10).