

Lesson One: Abel, The Man With A Right Heart

If someone were to ask you, “What do you know about Abel?” how would you answer? Most of us would probably say the obvious: he was Cain’s brother and was murdered by Cain. However, would you be able to say much more than that? There is very little written about Abel in the Bible, and yet, there is much that we can learn from the story of Cain and Abel. This is a story of what is in a man’s heart and how that affects his life. As you look at Abel’s life, look to your own heart. Do you have a heart that is righteous and pleasing to God? Is your motivation for doing “spiritual things” right? How would you know if your motivation is wrong? Ponder these questions as you study the life of Abel and contrast his life with that of his brother.

“Lord, clear away the distractions and open my heart to hear what You have to say to me through Your Word. Show me my true heart motivation. Give me a heart like Abel’s, one that is right and pleasing to You.”

DAY 1: Introduction to Faith

LOOKING TO GOD’S WORD

HEBREWS 11:1-3

1. Put verse 1 in your own words.
2. Who are the “men of old” in verse 2 and what does the author mean when he says, “by faith they gained approval”?
3. What is the difference (if any) between the faith of the Old Testament characters and the faith of believers after the death and resurrection of Christ?

4. What does verse 3 mean?

LOOKING UPWARD

5. How would you define “faith”?

6. What is the difference between positive thinking and Biblical faith?

LOOKING DEEPER

JAMES 2:14-20

- What is the relationship between faith and works?
- If you do not see good works in someone’s life, does that mean he does not have faith in Christ, or vice versa? Explain your answer.

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

“Faith begins where man’s power ends.”¹– George Mueller

“Faith is not simply one way to please God; it is the only way... No matter what else we may think, say, or do for or in the name of God, it is meaningless and worthless apart from faith.”²

How would you describe your faith in Christ? (Strong, wavering, small...)

How is faith evident in your life?

When is the last time you stepped out in faith?

What can you do to increase your faith? What step of faith can you take at this point in your life?

DAY 2: “By Faith, Abel...”

LOOKING TO GOD’S WORD

HEBREWS 11:4

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. (NASB)

1. What do you learn about Abel and his sacrifice from this verse?
2. Scripture does not tell us specifically why Abel’s sacrifice was more acceptable or “better” than Cain’s, but what are some possible implications from this verse as to why?
3. What does it mean that God “testified about his gifts”?
4. What does it mean that “through his faith, though he died, he still speaks”?

LOOKING UPWARD

5. What is the hardest thing for you to bring before the Lord as an offering or sacrifice? (Your money, your time, your gifts, your talents, etc.?) Why?

6. How would you know if God is pleased with your offering or “sacrifice” to Him?

LOOKING DEEPER

- Abel was a righteous man according to Hebrews 11:4. What is true of a righteous man according to Hebrews 10:38?
- How does Romans 14:22-23 relate to Abel and Cain’s story?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

Your heart attitude is more important than your outward actions.

- Do your outward actions reflect what is in your heart? If not, what needs to be done?
- What are you struggling with letting go of and offering to Him?
- Take some time to be honest with God and ask Him to show you if you are holding anything back from Him. Ask Him to show you where your faith is weak and to strengthen your faith.

DAY 3: The Offering

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

GENESIS 4:1-5

1. What were the respective “vocations” of Cain and Abel?
2. How do their offerings differ and how did God’s response to their offerings differ?
3. We are not told specifically in this account why God had no regard for Cain’s offering. However, what insight does 1 John 3:11-12 give concerning these two brothers?
4. How did Cain respond to God’s lack of regard for his offering? What does that indicate about Cain’s heart?

LOOKING UPWARD

5. What does God’s response indicate about the way He views our “offerings”?
6. Give an example of someone doing a right action with a wrong attitude or motive.

LOOKING DEEPER

- According to these passages, what is most important to God in relation to our sacrifice and offerings?

1 Samuel 15:22

Hosea 6:6

Micah 6:7-8

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

God knows what is in our hearts. We cannot hide our true intentions and heart attitude from God.

- Is there something that you are offering to God with a wrong attitude or motive? If so, what should you do?

DAY 4: The Attitude

Even though the emphasis this week is on the character of Abel, the story would not be complete without also looking at the heart of Cain. So today and tomorrow our focus will be on Abel's brother, Cain. Notice the contrast in the character of these two brothers.

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

GENESIS 4:6-10

1. List the questions that God asked Cain.

2. What are some possible reasons why God questioned Cain when He obviously knew Cain's heart and actions?

3. In verse 7, God told Cain that if he does not do well, “sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you (NASB).” What does that mean?

4. How does James 1:14-15 relate to this? What is the process of sin?

LOOKING UPWARD

5. God exhorted Cain in Genesis 4:7 to master sin. How do we do that?

6. What would be some warning signs that your heart attitude is wrong toward God?

7. How and why does your heart attitude affect your countenance?

LOOKING DEEPER

EPHESIANS 4:26-27

- How is it possible to be angry without sinning?
- What are some ways we “give the devil an opportunity” in relation to anger?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

To be honest, I have struggled with anger all my life. I have a volatile temper, and it doesn't take much to get me angry at times. As I have yielded this area to Him, He has worked greatly in my life; and anger has become a rarity now, instead of the norm. However, my "old self" still rears its head from time to time, and anger arises before I realize it's there. I speak before I think, and I wish I could take back words spoken in haste. Each time, I have to come before the Lord with a repentant heart and confess my sin. I am clearly reminded that sin is definitely crouching at the door, just waiting for the right opportunity to overtake me.

If you do not master sin, it will master you.

- Is there an area of vulnerability where sin is "crouching at the door," waiting to attack you? If so, how are you handling it?

- How have you seen sin take you by surprise?

- What do you need to do to master sin in your life?

DAY 5: The Consequences

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

GENESIS 4:9-16

1. What do Cain's responses to God in verses 9 and 13 reveal about his heart attitude?

2. What is meant by the phrase in verse 10, "the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground"?

3. What was the price of Cain's sin (Vv. 11-12) and why would this punishment be especially tough on Cain?

4. What do you learn about God from the narrative of Cain and Abel?

LOOKING UPWARD

5. Cain thought God was unfair to him by rejecting his sacrifice. Abel was murdered, even though he lived a pleasing life before God. That seems unfair. Are there any present situations in your life that you feel are unfair?

6. How does one keep a right perspective and attitude in an unfair situation?

LOOKING DEEPER

- Hebrews 12:24 tells us that the “sprinkled blood” of Jesus” speaks better than the blood of Abel. What does that mean and why is it true?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

Life is not always fair, but God is.

“Those who worship God must have as their goal to please Him rather than letting envy and hatred ruin their lives.”³

- Is there anyone toward whom you have envy or jealousy or strong dislike? If so, take it to the Lord and confess it. Ask God to love that person through you.

- Meditate on Psalm 139:23-24. Ask Him to show you where you need to change in heart attitudes and motives.
- Does life seem unfair to you? He knows. Trust in His sovereignty.
- Take some time to praise Him for His attributes as evidenced in this narrative.
- Be on guard. Don't be like Cain whose anger and jealousy ruined his life and fellowship with God. Follow the example of Abel, a man whose heart was right before God.

1 Bruce Barton, Dave Veerman and Linda Taylor, *Life Application Bible Commentary: Hebrews* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1997), 180.

2 John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Hebrews* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 289.

3 Thomas Constable, "Genesis" in *The Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas L. Constable* (CD-ROM), May 2004 Edition, 63.