

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

May 26–June 1

Monday	Proverbs 3:1-10 (Honor God With Your First Fruits)
Tuesday	Hebrews 10:26-34 (Struggles of Faith)
Wednesday	Hebrews 10:35–11:4 (The Righteous Will Live by Faith)
Thursday	Acts 5:1-11 (Half-hearted Giving)
Friday	Luke 20:45–21:4 (Give Your All)
Saturday	Revelation 6:9-17 (The Martyrs' Cry for Justice)
Sunday	Genesis 4:1-15 (Acceptable and Unacceptable Worship)

Cain and Abel Offer Sacrifices

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 4:1-25

Focus Scripture: Genesis 4:1-16

Key Verses: The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?" Genesis 4:6-7a

GENESIS 4:1-16(NRSV UE)

1 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced a man with the help of the Lord."

2 Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.

3 In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground,

4 and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,

5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

6 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 is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

9 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"

10 And the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen, your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!

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

12 When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

13 Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is

GENESIS 4:1-16 (KJV)

1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8 And 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 slew him.

9 And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13 And Cain said unto the Lord, My punish-

greater than I can bear!

14 Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.”

15 Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.

16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

ment is greater than I can bear.

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15 And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

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

KEY TERMS

- **Countenance** – A person’s facial expression.
- **Fugitive** – A person who has escaped from a place or is in hiding, especially to avoid arrest or persecution.
- **Vagabond** – A person who wanders from place to place without a home or job.

INTRODUCTION

Just as God sought to commune with Adam and Eve in the Garden, he desires communion with their children, Cain and Abel. The tale of the two brothers leads to the irony that sin continues to manifest in the next generation with more severe consequences. The relationship that humanity develops with God evolves, leading to the first occurrence of an offering. Based on their unique skills and work, each son presents their gift to

God, possibly a token of gratitude, but also as an appeal for favor. Offerings were unlike burnt sacrifices which would appear later in the historical narratives. But the story of Cain and Abel is the classic saga of sibling rivalry which will reoccur throughout

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Israel’s history, including patriarchal heritage and kingships. God’s reaction to Cain’s offering would ignite a vengeful jealousy that can be found even among the disciples in the New Testament. The sin that besets the characters found in this early historical narrative presents the constant struggle among humans that still besets us to this day. It confirms our constant need to pray for

God’s grace and mercy for our sins.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The story begins as an extension of Adam and Eve’s banishment from the Garden of

Eden. Given the responsibility to procreate and build families throughout the earth, the couple experience the blessings of two sons. Cain, the first born, is named to signify and acknowledge God's blessing of a male child, traditionally recognized as confirming the continuance of the family legacy. However, the meaning of Abel's name is not recognized. Most narratives focus on the importance of the first-born son as the key recipient of a larger inheritance, signifying favor and a superior and more promising future. Although this text is presented as the first family of earth, it more accurately reflects the cultural norms and traditions of the writer and the earliest Hebrew beliefs and traditions. Therefore, based on tradition, Cain would be expected to receive the highest honor of the sons, and Abel's destiny would already be questioned simply based on birth order. But the story incorporates a more significant theme,

God's sovereignty to determine favor. Cain discovered his gift as a farmer (tilling the land), while Abel herded livestock. The distinction is notable that animal sacrifices would be far more significant in Jewish traditions and rituals. The vocation of shepherd is considered a humble service, requiring love and devotion, as well as

strength and endurance to protect the sheep. God expresses disappointment towards Cain's sacrifice, which does not appear to be unacceptable due simply to the type of the sacrifice (fruit of the ground). Instead, the quality of the sacrifice is questioned. Abel gave his best (firstling), indicating possibly a lamb or other young animal. Cain provided only what was on hand. The lack of diligence and personal effort by Cain was noted by God. Throughout sacred texts, including

the book of Proverbs, the lack of personal interest, effort, and diligence into any project will likely lead to failure. The rejection by God led to the sins of envy, jealousy, anger, and, ultimately, the act of violence and murder. God warned Cain to control his emotions of disappointment and frustration which, ultimately, led to hatred for his brother. Cain's feelings of rejection overshadowed any form of repentance, leading him to the fateful act of

premeditated murder.

The book of Genesis quickly draws the reader into recognizing the cost of disobedience and failure to heed God's instruction, as was illustrated with the banishment of Adam and Eve. There is a common thread of weakness found in the

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next generation. With the story of Cain and Abel, Cain becomes tempted by his own weakness for a need of approval. Like his parents, Cain had everything he needed and was positioned to be favored by God because of his position as the firstborn son. Yet, Cain was not satisfied. Cain experienced the sin of jealousy which turned to a violent rebellion against God. Like his parents, Cain attempts to hide his sin. And just as God sought out his parents in the Garden, God questions Cain about his actions.

He avoids accountability by stating, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The human characteristics demonstrated by Adam to blame Eve, and then Eve to blame the serpent, continue as Cain rejects any need for responsibility for his brother.

Finally, the blood that cries out is also an indication that blood represents a life force, speaking beyond the grave. The theological underpinnings of the shedding of blood becomes the primary component of determining the fate of humankind. Cain’s sentence for his crime was reduced, showing God’s continued mercy. Yet, he followed his parent’s footsteps of being banished. His life was still valuable in the sight of God, thereby, leading God to hear Cain’s plea for mercy and mark him as protected from others. This

unknown mark does not suggest a form of a curse or penalty. God continues to offer a form of redemption for God’s children, which will be revealed in due season through God’s Son.

SANKOFA

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” What is understood from the Bible verse is that Cain’s question to God was not an inquiry as to what he needed to do in God’s

eyes. The response is understood as sarcasm and indifference to the thought of caring for someone else, or considering another person’s needs over his own.

However, this phrase has become a reminder of every human being’s responsibility for the potential welfare of others. The Hebrew translation of Genesis 4:9 is “ha shomer.”

This verb’s definition is to keep, guard, watch, preserve, protect, or have charge of someone or something.

Traditionally, this phrase suggests that those who have the means and resources that others don’t will have some level of responsibility for the safety, health, and benefits of others. It is also a mandate to avoid harming others, such as acts of

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exploitation and abuse. It suggests a spirit of compassion and empathy and taking some responsibility for another person's life. Accepting the role of a brother's keeper means to look out for others, even without a personal connection or relationship.

The questions God continues to present to the people of God is the same. Where is your brother? Where is your sister? In today's modern society, there is a call for a more altruistic philosophy that recognizes the need to care for the welfare of others,

whether we have a relationship with them or not, or share a common racial, ethnic, or national bond. The philosophy of all human beings as interconnected and interdependent suggests that the suffering of one person impacts the welfare of the greater body. From a biblical perspective, God did not call Abraham to simply provide a finite blessing to one household. Nor


did Moses select his family and bring them solely out of bondage. The prophets did not speak of one tribe or family to repent back to the law and be made holy. Nor did Jesus come as the Messiah to save only the Jews. The Bible teaches that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We are reminded that we all must guard, watch, preserve, and protect as many of our brothers and sisters

as we can.

CASE STUDY

There has been a large growth of black Americans living in the United States over the last two decades. The black population in the U.S. has grown by 32% since 2000, rising from 36.2 million to 47.9 million in 2022. Notably, the number of people self-identifying as another race in addition to black has increased nearly 254%. With the increase of black Americans in the U.S., there

remains concerns of racial injustice, bigotry, and inequities particularly with marginalized populations. The primary strategy to overcome these inequities since the time of black emancipation has been educational attainment, community development, business acquisition and sustainment, and community activism. This requires addressing the systemic concerns of the high rate of the



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incarceration of black males. According to the latest research, the large growth of the United States' criminal legal system in the late 20th century brought a widening racial gap in incarceration. By the year 2000, black people made up almost half of the state prison population but only about 13% of the U.S. population. Although a wave of changes to sentencing and corrections policies over the past two decades have

been helpful to lessen disparities in federal and state prisons, in 2020, black adults were still imprisoned at five times the rate than white adults.

Health disparities also still exist among black people. Black women are four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes, such as embolism and pregnancy-related hypertension, than any other racial group. In addition, there needs to be a focus on the health and economic inequities experienced by black people.

However, there have been positive strides in educational and vocational advancements. African American women, who make up 13 percent of the female population in the United States, are making significant strides in education, participation, health, and other areas. The gap still exists with African American female representation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. Recognizing the work that needs to be done to reduce the gap in racial disparities requires advocacy and financial support in the area of education. Many colleges in the U.S. have historically struggled to retain and graduate African American students, especially first-generation students from low-income families. Historically Black Colleges

and Universities (HBCUs), on the other hand, see some of the most impressive numbers when it comes to African American students' success. This shows the importance of HBCUs in the growth and success of future generations. Whether in improving access and success in education or reducing the rate of incarceration, there is a strong need for African Americans to intervene, advocate, and support efforts to promote better outcomes for black people in the U.S.

LIFE APPLICATION

This tale of Adam and Eve's growing family continues to warn the reader of the various emotional responses that can lead down a road of destruction, not simply for the individual, but to the family and community at large.

The book of Genesis is a significant set of chronicles in the Bible. It establishes a set of traditions based on a conceptual historical scenario that leads to the basic theological foundation for Judea-Christian faith. It characterizes an all-powerful and encompassing God of the Jews, who not only is the creator of the universe but the emotionally attached deity of love, who

provides and cares for created beings called humans. This tale of Adam and Eve's growing family continues to warn the reader of the various emotional responses that can lead down a road of destruction, not simply for the individual, but to the family and community at large. Jealousy is a dangerous emotion

that must be curbed and acknowledged as harmful to oneself and others. Another lesson is one of accountability. The benefits of giving your best may not be recognized. However, there are alternative responses to disappointments in life. There are greater consequences to wrongdoing, which are often far more burdensome to marginalized groups. Cain's story is a reminder that God sees all things. Judgment will occur in God's time. Showing regret and remorse and showing repentance brings healing and future spiritual growth.

QUESTIONS

1. How can the church help change and/or defy past statistics on incarceration rates or other social concerns.
2. How does the advancement of marginalized groups in your area help to benefit other people like yourself?
3. Discuss with others your feelings about accountability and holding people

responsible for their crimes. How does this align with the word of God?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn or Song of Praise:

"Your Grace and Mercy" – Hymn #270,
African American Heritage Hymnal

CLOSING PRAYER:

Precious Lord, I am eternally grateful for your continued grace and mercy that gives us the gift of salvation and spares us the condemnation of death for our sins. Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Touch me with your love, and remove all malice and envy that I may hold against another. Reveal each opportunity where I am able to show mercy to others. I pray for a sanctified soul that sees the blessing of others as a gift to the entire body of Christ. May my heart be made right through the power of your Spirit. In the precious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

June 2-June 8

Monday	Genesis 6:11-22 (Obedience to God's Command)
Tuesday	John 6:15-20 (Jesus Joins Us in the Storm)
Wednesday	John 14:18-27 (Peace Through the Word)
Thursday	Genesis 7:11-24 (God Protects)
Friday	2 Peter 2:1-9 (A Herald of Righteousness)
Saturday	Psalms 77:1-2, 7-19 (A Cry for Deliverance)
Sunday	Genesis 8:13-22; 9:11-13 (A Covenant of Peace)