

HUMANITY HATES

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 4:1-12



CONTEXT

Adam and Eve, the first image-bearers of God, created by Him, sinned and were banished from the garden of Eden. Exiled from the garden, Eve gave birth to two sons, Cain and Abel. As their story unfolds, we find the consequences of sin continue to spread from Adam and Eve's decision to take of the forbidden fruit, not trusting in God's good character and instruction. Thus begins the long story of humanity's pride and sinful ways, revealing our full need for a Savior and Redeemer who will forgive us of our sins and make us new.

KEY CONCEPT

Sin leads us to disordered feelings and responses, and to hateful actions.

As you examine Genesis 4:1-12:

- Reflect upon parts of your life in which you fail to give your all or your best to God.
- Contemplate how sin derails our sense of purpose and productivity.

TIMELINE

The Eternal God Creates Everything, Chiefly Humanity (Genesis 1:1-2:25)

SESSION STUDY: The Effects of Sin Spread to Adam and Eve's Children (Genesis 4)

The Fall of Humanity and Its Consequences (Genesis 3)

God Judges Sinful Humanity with the Flood (Genesis 5-9)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** Genesis 4:1-5

☐ **Day 2:** Genesis 4:6-8

☐ **Day 3:** Genesis 4:9-12

☐ **Day 4:** Genesis 4:13-16

☐ **Day 5:** Genesis 4:17-26

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 75



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

Notes

SIN LEADS US TO DISORDERED FEELINGS AND RESPONSES (GENESIS 4:1-7).

Highlight words and phrases that define Cain’s emotions. Note how each emotion feeds off the other.

1 The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the LORD’s help.” 2 She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the LORD. 4 And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent? 7 If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

Cain and Abel, the first brothers in all of history, presented offerings to God. Moses, the Spirit-inspired author of Genesis, noted that Abel’s offering was from the firstborn and their fat portions, the most precious animals and the most flavorful parts. Cain made an offering as well, but it appears to have been less than his best.

LEADER NOTE: Abel gave the first of his harvest, the initial tithe, and gave above and beyond. We see this from the fact that Abel’s offering is mentioned as the “firstborn of his flock” as well as the fact that Abel added “their fat portions” (v. 3). Beyond this, the Spirit-inspired author of the New Testament book of Hebrews declares that Abel’s sacrifice was distinct and better than Cain’s on account of Abel’s faith (Heb. 11:4).

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

STEWARDSHIP: God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others.

Notes

The rejection of Cain’s second-rate offering made him furious and downhearted. In effect, he was upset about being called out for simply going through the motions. His worship lacked heart, which is the most important thing God weighs when it comes to worship of Him.

WORD STUDY

DESPONDENT: The Hebrew phrase used for “despondent” literally means his face fell. It carries the idea of one who expresses publicly his sense of dejection or lost hope.

In what parts of your life do you not give your all or your best to God?

God approached Cain as an act of grace—redemption was possible for Cain. God clearly defined the pathway and its destination if Cain remained angry and jealous. God was calling Cain to consider a different pathway that would lead him away from the sin that was ready to pounce.

LEADER NOTE: Our God is a God of second chances. He is full of patience and grace. But so often we choose poorly, choosing more sin and evil over repentance and forgiveness. As it was with Adam and Eve, and now Cain, it is pride that rears up in us and causes us to fall toward sin and away from God. Recognizing the pride in our lives and giving it over to God in confession and submission will lead us on the right path.

God has provided the Bible as the means of defining the sinful pathway we are on today and the results of that pathway. The psalmist contrasted the end results of the righteous and the wicked: the righteous will be planted by waters while the wicked are blown away like chaff (Ps. 1:3-4).

Through Scripture, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and even our consciences, to a degree, we have been warned, just like Cain, about the pathway toward sin. We would be wise to heed God’s warnings. Cain, however, ignored the real issue, which was his halfhearted worship, and focused instead on his brother. His misguided focus would be his downfall.

When you sin, how do you tend to respond if not in repentance?

Notes

SIN LEADS US TO HATEFUL ACTIONS (GENESIS 4:8-12).

Note the depth of Cain’s fall and the results of that fall.

8 Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s guardian?” 10 Then he said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! 11 So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood you have shed. 12 If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

Though God had warned Cain against further sin that would pounce on him, Cain didn’t heed the warning and took the next step by murdering his brother. God knows all things, so by asking about Abel, God provided an opportunity for Cain to confess and repent of his spiraling sin. Instead, Cain tried to minimize his responsibility. As if the murder weren’t bad enough, he tried to absolve himself of all guilt.

LEADER NOTE: Cain’s answer to God’s question reminds us of our own responses to sin: denial and deference filled with lies. “I don’t know where my brother is. I’m not supposed to be the one taking care of him.” We tend to lie to cover our sin and not take responsibility, sometimes blaming others or the situation. God wants us to own up to our sin and repent so we can come back into fellowship with Him.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul commented on a person’s conscience being seared (1 Tim. 4:2). The Greek word translated “seared” points to scar tissue that is no longer sensitive to touch. Similarly, Cain was no longer sensitive to the guilt of his sin. The more steps we take into sin, the greater the searing until we eventually lack any sense of guilt and are no longer spiritually sensitive.

When have you seen sin lead to more sin as a general example or from an example in your own life?

Notes



God saw through Cain’s attempt to divert blame as He heard Abel’s blood crying out from the ground. Instead of finding a person willing to admit his wrongdoing and be reconciled, God encountered an indifferent person who was obstinate and rejected God’s offer.

Abel’s blood rightly cried out from the ground for justice. Righteous Abel had been betrayed and murdered by his wicked brother, and Cain would face the consequences of his sin. But judgment for sin need not be the final word against us. Jesus, betrayed and murdered by sinful men, shed His perfect blood to cleanse from sin any and all who will repent and believe in Him (Heb. 12:24). God deals justly with sinners, and He deals graciously with those who come to Christ in faith.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Abel’s blood “cries out . . . from the ground” for justice, and rightly so (Gen. 4:10), but Jesus’s blood declares those who believe in Him to be covered with His righteousness, cleansed from sin, and justified before God (Heb. 12:22-24).

God placed a curse on Cain, making the ground produce nothing of value through Cain’s efforts. Cain would also become a wanderer, lacking direction and purpose. Humans thrive when they have purpose and are productive; Cain would have neither. One wonders what might have been had Cain been willing to turn from his anger and jealousy. Unfortunately, Cain chose to stay on the destructive path fueled by his jealousy and hate (1 John 3:10-12). He was unwilling to trust God, which only produced more heartache and pain.

LEADER NOTE: When we sin, we only see the perceived benefits of our actions and never the negative consequences. When we don’t stop to think, we make rash decisions that lead us down the wrong path. Whether major sins or minor sins, in our estimation, we should take to heart the words of Paul “to take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5), unlike what Cain did in his jealousy and rage.

How does sin derail our sense of purpose and productivity?

Notes

ARRIVAL

ASK: As the group arrives, ask: What steps in your favorite cooking recipe must be done in a specific order? How does the order impact the outcome?

CONTEXT

SUMMARIZE: Present an overview of the first two sessions, highlighting God’s creating the world and placing humans in the garden to oversee His perfect creation only for them to listen to the lies of the serpent and bring sin into the world. Their sin resulted in their exile from the garden, but the hope of redemption would come through the future Seed, who would crush the serpent’s head. Summarize the Context paragraph on page 18 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG) and point to the timeline on page 19 of the PSG to assist you in presenting the summary (see Leader pp. 22-23).

TRANSITION: As we arrived, we shared the importance of following certain steps in a recipe, knowing that the progression impacts the final product. The wrong order can become a recipe for disaster. In today’s study, we look at the ingredients that led to a sinful disaster.

RECAP

LIST: Lead the group to share key words or phrases they circled or highlighted in preparing for the group time, as well as any questions that arose as they looked at the passages prior to group time. Write responses on a board or large sheet of paper for everyone to see.

TRANSITION: From here, based on the two Scripture passages for our activity, let’s chart out how sin progresses.



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Notes

GROUP ACTIVITY

DEFINE: Call attention to the Progression of Sin chart (PSG p. 24). Ask a volunteer to locate and read James 1:12-15 in his or her Bible. Lead the group to identify the progression of sin found in James (tempted, dragged away/focus changed, enticed, desired, conceived, birthed, full grown/matured, death). Clarify the progression as needed as the general development of sin.

Progression of Sin	
List the progression of Cain’s sin using James 1:12-15 as a model.	
JAMES 1:12-15	GENESIS 4:1-12

PAIR UP: Direct pairs to review Genesis 4:1-9 to discuss the actions taken by Cain and pair them with the progressive actions listed by James. After allowing time for pairs to work, invite volunteers to share the actions they identified and any correspondence with the actions identified by James. Come to a consensus on those actions and record them on the board.

ASK: How is sin so cunning as you look at the progression? (it seems logical; it starts with something small; it skews our beliefs; it works on our primal desires; it gives us half-truths)

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 4:10-12.

CHART: On the board, write under the Genesis 4 column “Lost Purpose” and “Lost Productivity.” Lead the group to express how the losing of purpose and productivity relate to death (the final item listed under the James 1 column).

CLARIFY: Review the words and phrases and questions listed earlier in the session from people’s highlights of the Scripture passage in Genesis. Invite the group to offer insights to answer the specific questions, adding insights from your personal study.

Notes

DEBRIEF

What have you learned about sin’s power and pull from this exercise?

What does this progression comparison reveal about our struggles with temptation and sin, and how can repentance stop such a progression?

SUMMARIZE

REVIEW: Call attention to the key concept for the session (PSG p. 25). Ask: How does the progression chart support the statement?

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG. Specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: All humans are created by a holy God, but we are marred by sin because of Adam and Eve’s choice to disobey. From there, our sinful nature and our own choices cause us to stray from God and His commands to love Him and others. This usually stems from our doubts about God’s good character and from our own pride.

How might misunderstanding God’s character lead you to sin?



HEART: One function of a local church is holding one another to the gospel’s standards of living in a loving community. The church functions as a means for breaking the progression of sin by correcting and encouraging, admonishing and teaching. Receiving correction when confronted is the responsibility of each believer. Valuing being corrected, comforted, and caring for each other, stirring up one another to love and good deeds is part of the Christian life (Heb. 10:24).

How can you commit yourself to being a loving keeper of your brothers and sisters in Christ?



HANDS: Believers are to be salt and light in a decaying and dark world. We can do so by encouraging people trying to escape the sin spiral to turn to Jesus. Jesus commissioned His followers to make disciples, which includes engaging with people who are far from God and those struggling to remain faithful to Jesus. Mentoring, teaching, being an accountability partner are all part of the process of spiritual maturity, taking thoughts captive and letting the Holy Spirit steer you away from temptation.

How can you assure someone this week that the gospel can help break his or her progressive spiral of sin?

Notes

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week’s session.

- Develop a list of people who are far from God for whom the group is praying. Lead the group to pray daily for each person listed by name.
- Review your response to being called out for actions that lead to sin, determining how the gospel enables you to break out of sinful patterns.
- Memorize passages that focus on repentance. Invite others to hold you accountable for memorizing the passages you identified.

Call attention to the Praying Scripture section on page 25 of the PSG. Direct the group to complete the actions with a partner (married couples can be partners). Read Psalm 75, circling words and phrases that point to God’s role. Write a summary of how Psalm 75 describes God. Identify how the psalmist responded to the revelation of God in this psalm.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 75:1-7, praising God for His justice and for the provision of salvation found in the gospel.