

# Bad Examples from the Bible

## Study Guide: Lurking Thought

Genesis 4:1-17 | Cain & Abel

### Key Takeaways

1. **Faith determines the acceptability of our offerings to God** - Abel's sacrifice was accepted because it was offered in faith, while Cain's was rejected due to his lack of trust in God.
  2. **God deserves our best, not our leftovers** - True sacrifice involves giving something of value, trusting that God will continue to provide.
  3. **Sin is crouching at the door** - We have a choice to master sin or be mastered by it. God graciously warns us before we fall.
  4. **God extends mercy even in judgment** - Despite Cain's unrepentant murder, God showed common grace by protecting him.
  5. **Christ is the ultimate sacrifice** - God gave His firstborn so that we might live, demonstrating perfect sacrificial love.
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### Understanding the Text

1. Why do you think the sermon emphasized that Cain and Abel had no written law or Scripture to guide their sacrifices? How does this affect our understanding of the story?
2. The sermon offers five possible explanations for why God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's. Which explanation resonates most with you and why?
3. What does it mean that "sin is crouching at the door"? How does this image help us understand temptation?

### Personal Reflection

4. Pastor Andy said, "When we don't trust God, we live in fear and we go without." Where in your life do you struggle to trust God? What are you holding back from Him?

5. Think about your giving (time, money, talents, service). Are you offering God the "firstborn of the flock" or the "rotting fruit on the ground"? Be honest with yourself and the group.
6. Cain had a choice after God warned him. Can you think of a time when God warned you (through Scripture, conscience, or other believers) and you had to choose between mastering sin or being mastered by it? What happened?

## Application to Life

7. The sermon strongly addressed men about serving as elders and deacons, but the principle applies to all believers. What gifts has God blessed you with that you might be hoarding rather than using for the church?
8. The qualifications for elder (good reputation, faithfulness, self-control, hospitality, gentleness, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, manages family well) are described as blessings. How does viewing these character traits as blessings rather than burdens change your perspective?
9. What is one specific area where you need to sacrifice something of value to God this week? What step of faith is required?

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## Practical Applications

### This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

- **Examine your giving:** Review your financial giving, time commitments, and service. Ask God to show you if you're giving Him your best or your leftovers. Make one specific change.
- **Master a crouching sin:** Identify one area where sin is "crouching at your door." Share it with an accountability partner and create a plan to rule over it rather than be mastered by it.
- **Step up in leadership:** If you're a qualified man in the church, prayerfully consider serving as an elder or deacon. If you're already serving, reach out to encourage another qualified man to consider serving.
- **Practice sacrificial faith:** Do something costly this week that demonstrates trust in God's provision (increased giving, serving in an uncomfortable way, having a difficult conversation, etc.).

## Memory Verse

**Hebrews 11:6** - "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

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## Reflect

"In what ways am I like Cain (holding back, lacking faith, jealous, angry)? In what ways am I like Abel (trusting, giving my best, faithful)?"

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## Prayer for:

- Faith to trust God with our best
- Strength to master sin rather than be mastered by it
- Grateful hearts for Christ's ultimate sacrifice
- Willingness to serve sacrificially in the church
- Specific requests shared during discussion