

# “Are We Our Brothers’ Keepers?!!”

*Genesis 4:8-9*

**Intro.** – We know all too well the background to this text. This question uttered by the first murderer is one you and I have asked as well. You see, Cain was in essence saying, “Am I responsible for my brother?”

Illus. – Living Bible = “... ‘Where is your brother? Where is Abel?’ How should I know? Cain retorted. Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?”

This matter of responsibility to others is a major principle recorded in Scripture. And in spite of its prominence, we all continue to struggle with it.

Illus. – Mary and I continue to teach our kids to be responsible... e.g. Marah and Jason asking about cars... Adam taking on the job he presently has... I’m convinced we older ones also need constant improvement and growth in this area. Irresponsibility is one of man’s common sins today. How common/universal is this sin?

Illus. – UPI reported from Munich, W Germany: “For seven years, the 28 neighbors of Gerhard Koenig kept their noses out of his business. Friday, they decided to find out why he was so quiet. Police said they found him, dead. They said they found the mummified skeleton of Koenig in bed at his home... They said the 68 year-old pensioner had died seven years ago... The dead man’s bedroom was said to be littered with empty beer and whiskey bottles. Police said a lighted cigarette stub apparently had caused a small fire in the bedroom and Koenig had suffocated. They appealed to relatives or acquaintances to come forward.”

Men, women and young people everywhere appear to be indifferent being responsible to each other. The Bible is filled with examples of this principle. Are we guilty of irresponsibility toward others? Do we react in like fashion to that of Cain in our daily lives...? What are we doing to be more responsible to those around us? Are we really our brothers’ keepers?

*Purpose: to answer the above questions from a Biblical perspective*

## **I The GENERAL Responsibility**

- the principle of man being responsible to/for fellow mankind is clearly taught in our text

### **A. God’s Question**

1. Note with me this was not God’s first question (Genesis 3 after man’s sin “Where are you?”)
  - Cain now murders Abel (Question asked: “Where is your brother?”)
2. We would do well to concern ourselves with this question and how it relates to us:
  - a. to those near and dear to us (family/friends... inner circle of friends) – it is a bit easier to fulfill this mission given to each of us...
  - b. but what about those neighbors, business associates and other acquaintances?
    - 1) where are these people morally... spiritually?
    - 2) how has your influence/example affected them?
    - 3) what opportunities have you identified being given to you?
3. What a searching question – “Where is your brother?”

### **B. Cain’s Answer**

1. First part was a lie – “I don’t know.”
  - a. most selfish actions/motives are lies – most lies are based in this sin, sin irresponsibility.
  - b. all of us at one time or another have sought this as a refuge... a way out...
  - c. such is done in an attempt to say – “I’m not responsible... Who, me?!”...
  - d. if we really think we’re not responsible then why give excuses?
    - “Conscience doth make cowards of us all.” – Hamlet by Shakespeare I.e. we know when we’re responsible, but often lie in an attempt to declare no involvement/responsibility.
2. Second part of this answer was simply snooty/rude
  - a. Cain obviously cast away an reverence or respect/fear to God = ready to defy God!
  - b. in like fashion – when we’re snooty/rude you can bet we’re ready to defy God also!
  - c. not a matter of “I haven’t done him any harm” instead, it’s a matter of what could we have done that would have been best, but just didn’t do it!

- d. Illus. – like those who give you the sense they don't want you around: Dee McColly tells of her husband who is a forester. He often has to consult property owners to determine boundary lines. Walking up a dirt road to question one of these land owners he encountered signs that read: "No Trespassing" "Beware of Dog" "Keep Out – This Means You" etc. Arriving at the door, he met a congenial, cooperative landowner. When the forester was ready to leave, the man said to him, "Come and see me again sometime. I don't get many visitors up this way."

Point: we each have a general responsibility to each other simply because we're the crowning glory of God's creation!

## II The SPECIAL Responsibility

- as "blood bought, Spirit renewed" people it is utmost important we realize our added responsibilities:

### A. Christians' Added Responsibilities

1. We have the same responsibilities as other men, women and young people...
2. We have the added responsibility for our brothers/sisters in the Lord.
  - a. Galatians 6:1-10 (v 10) *"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."*
  - b. truth must run *thicker* than physical blood relatives... commend the church here for making strides in this area – for growing more into what we ought to be – a FAMILY!

### B. Christians' Added Satisfaction

1. Illus. – shipwreck in northwest coast of Ireland. A mother tried in vain to persuade her son not to go. He had volunteered to go help rescue the sole survivor from a burning ship. The mother reasoned saying the boy's dad and older brother had recently been lost at sea. They had not returned; so, she appealed to this son saying, "If I lose you, I'll be left alone." The boy resisted her pleas and went anyway. When his boat returned, the crowd that had gathered shouted, "Did you get your man?" Reply came back, "Yes, and tell mother it is brother William!"
2. When we serve strangers (Hebrews 13:2) *"...for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."*
3. In serving the brethren – we also serve Christ! – Matthew 25:40 *"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for Me."*

Christians have the added responsibility/satisfaction... they have a "new family" = brothers/sisters in X!

## III The SOLE Responsibility

- to be our brothers' keepers

### A. Win the Lost

1. Evangelism must flourish... It must be our watchword for now and to eternity!
2. Urgency of lost souls must continuously grow within us... May God burden us with those who are lost and in need of His grace!
3. May this burden be at home... May this burden be abroad (missions)...
4. Unlike Cain, our concern must be for men, women and young people who are lost...

### B. Build the Won

1. I have hit on this already – idea of caring for others, but especially for the brethren!
2. We are to worship and serve ONE Lord, Who alone has given us our common purpose and goal...
3. Encourage one another "in the Lord"
  - Illus. – preacher in So. Bend treat brethren as a stranger in public... When we see each other in public, I pray we greet and treat each other like family!
4. Those no longer here – we need to go and inquire as to why... I'm convinced it is not becoming of family to let its own "wander around doing their own thing" without loving accountability taking place...

I trust we see and understand the sole responsibility of the Church is to be our brothers' keepers!

**Conclusion:** Several years ago I was traveling from Bloomington, IN to Marion, OH to pick up a '57 Studebaker Silver Hawk. I was in a borrowed pickup (it was a Ford). I had a minor problem happen with the alternator belt breaking. It left me stranded on I 465 between I 65 and Emerson Ave. in Indianapolis. It was a cold, snowy, January day. I didn't walk 200 feet before a car stopped, picked me up. I expressed my appreciation and introduced myself... He said something in response I'll never forget. He said, "Glad to help. No bother... I'm just doing what I'd want somebody to do for me if I was in your predicament."

Cain asked a vital question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" God has given us His answer. Yes, we really are in a General Sense... a Specific Sense... a Sole Sense... Keepers of our Brothers!