

MULTIPLICATION & SACRIFICE // Genesis 3:22-4:16

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Series: Made to Multiply

Alright, church, that's what we're about. We make and we mobilize disciples in an environment of prayer and worship. If you're new, we're always asking that question. We're asking the question, how do we make more disciples and how do we make better disciples? But we can't make a disciple if we don't know what a disciple is. Let me just define for all of us what a disciple is.

First of all, maybe say what it isn't. A disciple is not somebody who listens to sermons, sings songs, and gets a free hour of childcare once a week. That's not what a Christian is. That's not what a disciple is. A disciple is somebody who's following Jesus and they're helping others find and follow Jesus. And you just heard about our DNA groups. Why would we talk about our DNA groups? It's because it stands for disciple, nurture, and accountability, right? Because you're a saint, so you need disciplined, and you're a sufferer, so you need nurture, and you're a sinner, so you need accountability.

So we created these groups of three to five men, three to five women, and one of our visions and goals and dreams and plans is for all of you to get in the DNA group through this, at some point in this, multiply initiative, okay? And let me talk, can I talk to parents just for a second? Hello, parents, just you guys. Parents are the pace setters, okay? You're the thermostat in your house. If you don't like the temperature, then change it because you're the thermostat.

And here's the thing. Parents, your kids will love what you love. If you love money, they'll love money. If you love sports, they'll love sports. If you love meaningful Christian community, they're gonna love meaningful Christian community. So guys, by the way, this is all, that video, DNA groups, it's all part of our multiply initiative. Grab your multiply journal, or what I like to call your multiply moleskin, okay? That was a type of journal back in the day that I used, okay, if you're like, what is that?

Whether you're down in Lexington or you're here, guys, we are multiplying, listen, disciples, leaders, groups, and churches, that's it. But it's less about our church as a whole multiplying, and it's a lot more about what would it look like for you as an individual, a married couple, or a family to multiply. And here's, guess what I'm saying, guys, listen. I was talking to this couple just two weeks ago, three weeks ago, whatever it was, and they said, "Hey, we know how we're gonna multiply." I was having lunch with them. They said, "We know how we're gonna multiply."

And they said, I didn't see this coming. They said, "We really want to, among other things, multiply vulnerability in our marriage over the next 16 months." There are so many different

things, guys, that you could multiply. You just need to start thinking about it. Here's maybe the challenge. What would it look like? Imagine this just for a second. Just for a second, let me. What would it look like if you took this seriously?

Like, not like, "I am my goofy church, and they gave me this journal, and maybe I'll come, maybe I won't, maybe I'll do this, maybe I don't." It's like, no, no, no, what if you just said, "Guys, this is unbelievable. The Bible says that we're supposed to connect our life to a group of believers, and I guess what we're all doing over the next 16 months is multiplying, and I gotta get in." By the way, if you're new, your next step is to come to our weekender, right? You can't multiply alone, obviously.

So October 25th to 26th, this is the last one of the fall. Okay, this is it. We have one in December, but this is the last one for the fall. And this is how you lock arms with us. This is how you get into the inroads and on-ramps of discipleship. Before you can take any other step to multiply, you need to take this next step to get more deeply connected to our church.

So with that said, I'm gonna pray for us, and then get ready, 'cause today we're in the story of Cain and Abel. Let's pray. Lord, I wanna just pray right now for more and more men and women to be raised up, to take younger generations, and to invest in them through discipleship, nurture and accountability groups, through DNA groups. Lord, I pray that if someone says, "I'm not in a DNA group," that that would be a sign that maybe they don't just need to join one, maybe they need to start one.

And I pray that everybody would take your word seriously, and would take this first blessing and first command to multiply seriously in their lives. In Christ's name, amen.

All right, it's been said that you can't spell families without the word lies. Isn't that the truth? I mean, I'm not gonna ask you to raise your hand if you're in a dysfunctional family. Every family, to some extent, at some point, is dysfunctional. I'll prove it to you. Are you looking forward to Thanksgiving and Christmas? Now, the more dysfunctional your family is, the less you're looking forward to those events, right?

Because with Christmas, I'll get into this in a few weeks, but what Christmas and Thanksgiving do is they're an amplifier and magnifier of your life. So if things are going well, you're super pumped about the holidays, because everyone's together and everyone loves each other, and everyone's getting along, and everyone wants to be with each other. It's amazing, right? But then we've all been to the Thanksgiving dinner, we're like, "Where's aunt so-and-so?" And it's like, "Oh, she wasn't invited." She's your sister, right?

It's like, this is what happens. It's like, "Well, why is grandpa always fighting with uncle so-and-so at the table? Why are all the conversations so shallow? Why can't no one get along? Why can't we talk about certain things?" It's like, "Ah, it's a dysfunctional family." See, here's the thing, and you know this too, that your family, when working well, will be the greatest place of pleasure in your life. You're like, "I really enjoy this."

And if your family isn't going well, oh man, there's no pain like a family that's not functioning the way God has designed it to function. So today, we're gonna look at the first family. We looked at the first person, Adam, and then we looked at the first marriage, Adam and Eve, and today we're gonna see the first family. By the way, guys, the first family is a dysfunctional family. It's actually hard to find a normal, well-functioning family in the book of Genesis.

But before we get to chapter four, we need to just step back to chapter three, verse 22, where we get kicked out of the garden. Okay, this is how this happened to us. Look at this, our first parents did. "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us.'" That's He speaking, I think, within the Trinity to Himself. He's saying, "Knowing good and evil," look at this, "Now lest each, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever."

Okay, so listen, in the garden there were many trees. There are two trees that are named. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They ate from that tree, they shouldn't, that's the bad tree. Then there's the tree of life. Now, this is interesting. We're told that we can't eat from the tree of life anymore. Listen, this is actually God being gracious to Adam and Eve. Why do I say that? Because if they were gonna live as sinners and still eat from the tree of life, then they would forever live in a sinful state.

And you and I were not created to live forever in a sinful state. This is why the apostle Paul, he's like, "Ah," you know, in Romans 7 and other places, he's like, "I can't wait to one day be free from my sinful nature, so that I wanna do only that which pleases God." But he gets kicked out and look what happens, or they get kicked out. It says, "Therefore, the Lord God sent him from the garden, sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man. And at the east of the garden of Eden, he placed a cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."

Okay, so a cherubim is a type of angel that was a guardian. You've heard of guardians of the galaxy. They were guardians of the garden. Okay, there you go. And they were a special type of angel, they protected. Now, from here, we're gonna go to chapter four. In chapter four, I'm only gonna cover 16 verses, and you're not gonna believe how much is in here. Okay, we now are gonna have the first family. I already told you that. Okay, we're gonna have the first siblings, okay?

Oh, we're gonna have the first ever worship service. What we're doing right now in here is ancient. It was happening when it was just Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, and they had this worship service. I'll show you in a few minutes. But most sadly is you have the first death. You have Abel. Abel is the first martyr. Why? Well, he was killed for his faith in part, was he not? You have Cain, the first murderer. You have the first death, and you have the first funeral.

So we're gonna get all there, but we gotta pick up with this story right here. Let's look at chapter four, verse one. Adam knew his wife, or knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.

So the Bible talks, when the Bible talks about sex, it does not talk about it in crude ways like our culture does, or in clinical ways like the medical society does. It talks about it, and not in intense ways like the culture does. It talks about it in very intimate ways.

The deepest way to know somebody is the Bible talks about sexually. This is why in a marriage that's working and functioning rightly, the sexual relationship gets better across time because you know each other more deeply. So what happens here is we're told, Eve, oh, this is another first in chapter four, the first pregnancy. This is unbelievable. You can see this. In the Hebrew, it's very clear. She's eating pickles, and she's eating ice cream. Okay, it's very clear.

And her animal skins are not fitting her anymore, but she doesn't care. No one else is around, okay? So basically, this is the first pregnancy in the Bible. And look what happens. And this is the second time Eve speaks in the Bible, saying, this is Eve talking, I'm in verse one, "I've gotten a man with the help of the Lord." Now, we don't know exactly what she means by that. Some commentators say, is she being very grateful to the Lord? Is she taking too much credit? Is she kind of taking half credit?

Here's what we think. We think, and this makes sense if you were here last week, that Eve thinks that Cain might be the Messiah. Now, why would she think that Cain could potentially be the Messiah? Well, she was right there when the serpent said, listen, woman, there's gonna be a battle between you and your offspring, but there's gonna be an offspring that comes from the woman and that offspring is gonna crush the head of the snake. She's like, she might be thinking, oh my goodness, it's gonna be, it might be my firstborn son, this is amazing.

There's gonna be redemption. Unfortunately, by the end of the story, and you know this right if you know the story, Cain is not just not the Messiah, he's a murderer. Okay, we gotta look at Cain and Eve. We're introduced to them both in verses one through four, but I'm gonna read you two through four, here it is. And again, she bore his brother Abel. Just an observation, there's only one conception talked about, two births, leading some commentators to think maybe they were twins, another common theme in scripture, and Cain is the older.

Now, Abel was a keeper of the sheep and Cain, a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions, and the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering. Okay, so don't worry, starting in verse five, we're told some negative things about Cain, and the rest from verse five on in chapter four is all negative about Cain.

But in the first four verses, we're told positive things about both Cain and Abel that I wanna just apply to us and to our church. Okay, let's just look at them. There's three positive things that we're told about both Cain and Abel right away. Number one, Cain and Abel were both hard workers, okay? In fact, this is really interesting. The Bible gives us pairs, by the way. The whole point of the Cain and Abel story is to see these pairs and compare them and contrast them.

I'm talking about pairs of people, right? So we get Adam and Eve. By the way, the comparing the good brother and the bad brother is a big theme in Genesis, right? So now it's Cain and Abel. Pretty soon it's gonna be Ishmael and Isaac. A little bit later, it's Jacob and Esau. At the end of the book of Genesis, it's Joseph and his brothers, and then finally it culminates in Mufasa and Scar, okay? But the idea that there's a good brother and a bad brother, and the bad brother wants to do something to the good brother, I mean, this is very ancient.

By the way, their names. Their names mean, Cain means to get or be given a gift, and Abel means breath. So if you take those two names, what is God telling us about humanity early on? It's a gift and it's very short. So these two brothers, there's three things, as I was saying, that are good about them. The first is they were both working. Now this is amazing. These men were young men and they were working hard, okay? We can all learn something from this.

And especially because last week we talked about how it's cursed and it's hard to work and all of that. Well, and they're doing the two main industries of the day. Now we can agree, there's four people on earth. It's not a very complex economy, okay? It's like, there's no need, there's no law, there's no medicine, there's no engineering, okay? There's no finance, okay? This is a bartering system. It's very, very basic, okay? And so what you have, and this is very interesting, think about this, Cain does what his dad did, or does.

So that was very common, and that'll be common for a very long time. It's like, well, what do you do? What do I do with what my dad did, and what did he do? Well, he's a gardener and he was a farmer, and so I guess I'll be a farmer. And then Abel comes along and says, well, maybe since you're doing that, maybe then I'll just do the other industry of the day and I'll be a rancher or shepherd. And so, one handles the fruit of the ground and the other handles the animals.

Oh, by the way, this is really good. The Bible is so positive about blue collar work and manual labor. We live in like a culture where it's like, for some reason in our culture, the people who build everything and make sure that everything that breaks works again. And everybody who grows and gets us our food, for some reason they're like forgotten and we don't appreciate them. It's like the Bible has a high value.

Okay, second thing, this is important. Let's go back, I want you to see this in the text. Verse two, "And again, she bore his brother Abel." Now, Abel was a keeper of the sheep, okay, that's one domain, "and Cain, a worker of the ground," the other domain. "In the course of time," look at this, "in the course of time," by the way, that means when it was time. "In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and their fat horses."

Okay, first thing that's great about Cain and Abel, they work hard, okay, that's great. Second thing, now this is interesting. Now we're gonna say something positive about Cain that we can't say about most or many professing Christians in America. Are you ready for this? It's gonna be weird to say something positive about Cain that we can't say about most professing Christians.

In other words, Cain's doing better than professing Christians in this area. Here it is. When it was time to go to church, he went to church. Unbelievable.

What a profound idea. When it's time to go to church, I go to church. When I'm in town, I'm in church. Now, here's what's interesting. So, you know, 50 years ago, whatever, the average person went to church like 3.5 times a month, and that's a lot, right? It's like, well, I'm almost always there, except I do get sick and I do have vacation, something does come up, but in general, I'm there. Well, according to my research assistant, chat GPT, okay, there you go. From the newest data I could find is the average American now goes to church 1.5 times a month.

Okay, let's just full stop on that for a second. So that means that the average American Christian is, and I'm gonna try to be generous with this, but the average American Christian is not in church 20 to 30 times a year. I mean, the keystone habit for the Christian faith, I mean, a keystone habit is a habit that leads to every other habit that you wish you had in a domain of your life. It's like the keystone habit is going to church. It's the keystone habit.

Like attendance does not tell me, this is important, attendance does not tell me you're doing well, but lack of attendance normally tells me you're not. So you can show up and like, "Ah, you just come 'cause you come," but if you don't show up, you're probably telling on yourself in some area of your life. Now, we're trying to figure this out. Follow me for a second, okay? We're trying to be good stewards as a church, and so we're trying to figure things out.

So here's what happens. While we're doing this, okay, while I'm preaching here at the nine and the 11 and the five, it's live streamed, right? And not, and I'm gonna tell you about that in a second, and I'm not talking about when we put the sermon on afterwards and people watch it on YouTube, or I'm talking about we went back and we've counted on average how many views does the live stream get just on YouTube on a Sunday. Answer, about a thousand.

So listen, then we use the most conservative metrics they tell us to use, which is 1.7. 'Cause there's one person watching, is it a family of five, is it a guy on his phone, is it a family of, it's like, so to be super conservative, you just take it and you multiply it by 1.7, you go at least this many people are watching. Here's what that means. That means 1,700 people are watching this from their home. That's, look around, that's bigger than this whole room.

Okay? And so, and it's, they're watching it when they should be in church. So I'm talking to you. No, it's like, if it's a supplement, if it's a supplement, okay, like if it's like, you know, we think of online church as a supplement, like online ministry to people. It's like, okay, you got sick, you're watching online. You're traveling, you know, you're gonna be back for your group meeting, you know, watch online. But you just, you can't, there's no such thing as online church.

There's online ministry, there's online content. You can't, what do you miss when you miss church? Well, the answer is you don't know. You know, how many conversations does, how many interactions does the average person have on a Sunday? Let's say 10. Okay, well, there's four of you in your family, so that's 40 interactions. Across a month, that's 160 interactions, and

you need those interactions. You know, can you come down for elder prayer? Are you like walking, trying to get up as close as you can to the screen for elder, I mean, it's like, you can't, you know, no one sings watching at home.

You're not gonna be encouraged by watching other people who maybe, maybe they're going through something and you watch them worship, and that ministers to your soul. There's nothing like being in the room when the baptism happens. And so that's the first thing, or that's the second thing. They, when it was time to go to church, they went to church. There's a third thing. I already read it, but you'll see it in the text, so I'm just gonna go back to it. When they came to church, they brought something in their hand.

So first we have people who don't even come to church, but then when they came to church, they brought something in their hand. So basically when you come to church, you don't just come to church to receive, you come to church to give. By the way, that's the number one problem with online church. It is all about receiving. Consumption, consumption, consumption. For example, I mean, just to run these three services here and to run our services at the Lexington campus takes a minimum, minimum of 500 volunteers.

So there's just no other way to do it. There's no other way to do it than to have 500 people show up to go, you know what, I'm not just here to receive today, I'm here to give. You know, it's interesting, 'cause we're trying to figure this out. I'll give you one other thing. It's a little bit of a state of the union just for a moment, okay? And so our church has grown year over year, year to date, I should say, by 35%, okay? That's a lot of new people, we're glad you're here, it's exciting, all that.

But then, and you want us to do this, you want us to be good stewards, so then we looked and we said, okay, well, of all the new people that are coming around, how many of those new people are giving financially? I don't know if this will be surprising to you. What we found out is that of all the new people coming around, even though they go through the weekender, even though I couldn't be any more clear up here from God's word, 36% of the new people give nothing.

Which means if there was a million of them, it wouldn't make a difference. And I'm not even sure, I'm not even sure what to talk about it, you know, 'cause it's like, well, I can try to encourage you. Here's all the reasons, you know, and then there's the other side of it, where it's like, hey, listen, if you're a Christian, this is called disobedience. So I'm like, I need to think about generosity. You need a theology of generosity, a theology. It's like, that's what we're building here.

It's like a whole theology of generosity. And it's like, I really believe, well, first of all, if you're new, I'm not talking to you. If you're like, you're brand new, it's like, I'm not talking to you. If you're not a Christian, I don't expect you to give, I'm not talking to you, okay? If you get angry when I talk about money, I am talking to you, okay? And the reason is, the reason is, you know, people get

mad, if you get mad when I talk about money, it's because money is your God, and I'm talking about your God in a way you don't like.

So that's why Christians get upset. If someone talks about Jesus in a way that's wrong, and I feel like I'm being attacked, because that's not who my God is, it's like, well, that's exactly what I'm doing with money with some of you. It's very hard on people, you know? But here's what I'm saying. And there's different ways we can talk about money. Here's the whole thing. I can't talk about multiplying unless I talk about money. And obviously at the end of the day, what did Canaanite bring? They brought the money, okay?

It's a bartering system. There was no money. What they're bringing is their money. And what I just want to say, 'cause it just needs, and then we're gonna move on, and we're gonna deal with a bunch of other stuff, okay? But if you are a part of our church, and you are benefiting from the ministries of our church, and you are giving nothing to the kingdom of God through Two Cities Church, it is disobedient to God, and it is disrespectful to every other person here who's doing that.

And so I'm gonna actually, at the end of this chance, at the end of this sermon, among with other things we're gonna talk about, you're gonna have an opportunity to repent. 'Cause that's where some of you need to get. It's like, no, no, no, no, no. I need to repent in this area. This isn't like a lifestyle decision. This is an issue of repentance. And you'll get a chance to do that at the end. Let's go back to Cain and Abel. Verse two, I gotta talk about why did God not accept Cain's offering?

So let's go back, there's a lot in here. Let's go to verses three through five again. "In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. "And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock," that's important, firstborn, "and of the fat portions," that's important if you underline, "and the Lord had regard," that means accepted, Abel's offering, "for Abel and his offering, "but for Cain and his offering, "he," that's God, "had no regard. "So Cain was very angry, and his face fell."

So this is the question that we have to ask. I tell you this all the time, a good Bible reader is a confused Bible reader. So then you would ask this question, God, why did you not accept Cain's offering? And there is two answers to that I can show you from the text. The number one is the lack of quality of the offering. I don't know what Cain did. If Cain's like, God, here's some bruised avocados and some bruised bananas and some wilted iceberg lettuce, and God's like, I'm not accepting that.

I will tell you this, it's not that God doesn't like vegetarians. It's like, I don't know, I only do meat, not vegetarian. It was the lack of quality. How do we know that? It's because the quality of Abel's offering is mentioned, both firstborn and fat portions. So what is that? Well, from that, we get this idea that when you give, you give your first and you give your best, and then sometimes you give your only, 'cause God did that. God gave his first, God gave his best, God gave his only.

So some of you have been taught that the tithe is 10%. That's actually wrong. The tithe is not 10%. The tithe is the first 10%. Very different. It's not like after everything else, we can not pay for this and move this over, and if I can save enough, then we give it. So think about this, and this is, 'cause money is a little more abstracted from giving vegetables, fruit and vegetables, and giving your first of your flock. Think about this. The reason God wants you to give your first and your best is because then you have to trust him with the rest.

The reason you give your first and your best is so you trust him with the rest. You know, think about it. It's like, all right, we finally have an animal, and we got, guys, we can eat. No, we're gonna give the first to the Lord. Oh, okay, great. Lord, you're gonna have to provide another animal, 'cause I just gave you my first. Guys, it's the first fruits. We finally got some fruits and vegetables. No, no, we give the first fruits to the Lord. Oh, okay, well then, I'm gonna trust the Lord.

This is an element of faith. So the first thing is, it was giving our first and our best. Now, Christians, sometimes what we like to do is we like to give God our last and our least and our leftovers, right? Someone calls the church, hey, we've got a 1992 Geo Metro. It has 400,000 miles on it. None of the mechanics can get it to work. Would the church like it? And could we possibly get a tax write-off? It's like, ah, no, right?

This is why every youth group in America has that old, ugly couch. Someone gave that to us, right? It's like, it's too expensive to have someone tow this away. I wonder if the church needs it. Call the church, see if they need it. This is classic. It's the lack of quality, right? A lot of people are what one pastor calls God tippers. Can I just give enough of something to ease my conscience that I'm doing something instead of doing nothing?

So the first is the lack of quality, but the second is, Abel gave by faith and came in. I'll show you this, not in the text, actually, but in Hebrews 11, verse four. I'll put it on the screen for you. By faith, look at this, by faith. Faith, by the way, is always a response to God's grace in your life. By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, and God commending him by accepting his gifts, and through his faith, mentioned twice, though he died, he still speaks.

So there was two problems. The problem initially is what was in his hands, but the bigger problem was what was in his heart. And what was in his heart showed up in what was in his hands, right? This is a big critique in the Old Testament, is God critiquing people who are bringing like the disabled animals as their sacrifices. And God's like, "What has happened in your heart?" That's the issue. "What has happened in your heart for you to bring something like that?" That's the issue.

And so Cain is the first person to fake faith. To use another biblical category, he's the first false worshiper. It doesn't take long to have false worship. Here's the hard thing. You have hard things about your job. I have hard things about my job. One of the hard things about my job is every time the church gathers, like right now, every service, okay? There are Cains in here and

there are Abels in here, and it's so hard to tell them apart because they both have really good jobs and they both give something.

And they both show up, maybe with their family to church, and you're like, "Ah." And one has a heart full of faith, and the other has a heart, we'll see in a minute, full of jealousy and bitterness and envy. In fact, another way you can preach this whole passage is some people go to church to worship God and some people go to church to watch others. The reason we know this is a public service is because Cain sees God accept Abel's sacrifice. And Abel sees God accept Cain's sacrifice.

That's why there's shame and embarrassment on Cain's part. In fact, here, I'll show you this. I want to read you verse five one more time here. It says this, "But for Cain and his offering, God had no regard." So look, "So Cain was very angry and his face fell." Cain is the first person to play the victim in the Bible. He has a pity party, I've told you before. Pity parties and self-pity are sophisticated forms of pride that say, "For someone as great as me, life should be going much better."

So here's what happens. This is maybe, in my opinion, the deepest thing we'll talk about today. Cain, why is Cain angry? By the way, anger and unbelief are not always, but are often connected. This is why you'll never meet a happy atheist. Because they are angry at the God they don't believe in. That's interesting. Why is Cain angry? He's angry at Abel, we'll get there, but he's angry at God. If you ever say life's unfair, it's basically to say the exact same thing almost.

If you abstract it, it's God's not fair. It's easy to say I'm mad at life, but I'm really mad at God. Here's what happens. Let me explain this. This is where I wanna go. Cain is angry for two reasons, and it's the two reasons we get angry. And you gotta watch this, 'cause it'll lead to, we'll see this, jealousy, then envy, then resent, then potentially revenge. Cain is angry because he's making sacrifices and God's not accepting them.

And that is so deep, I'm just telling you. People get, I mean, they go dark places because they feel like they are making some sacrifices and God is not listening. You know, it can look like, oh, it can look like a lot of things. It can look like this. And you know this when something terrible happens to you, you'll use this language with God. You'll say something, you won't exactly say it like this, but you'll say, God, wait a second, I was eating healthy.

And I don't smoke, drink, chew, hang with those who do, whatever it is. I'm taking great care of my body. I get lots of sleep and I get sick. I get cancer. I get to doctor's appointments. I've been making sacrifices and that feels like God, you're not hearing. People feel this all the time in their life where they are relationally. God, I read, I kissed dating goodbye and I got the purity ring and I committed to purity. I've been saving myself for a spouse and I'm not seeing one.

People feel this all the time with their work. It's like, I spent tens and tens of thousands of dollars on my student loans and I tried to get educated and I'm trying to work hard and I'm just trying,

and I can't get a decent job. You'll feel this and you'll, and you know, you need in those moments to remember, you need in those moments to remember, there's multiple answers to this, but ultimately we don't sacrifice for God. God does the ultimate sacrifice for us.

We don't sacrifice for God, we sacrifice from what Christ has already done for us. But there's something that will upset you even more. I'm just telling you how life is and you know this. You get mad because you're making sacrifices and you feel like God isn't answering them, isn't accepting them. But then this will really make you upset. Then you look to somebody else's life and you see that God seems to be blessing them and accepting their sacrifices.

And maybe it's someone that you're like, man, like, you know, I think what's so hard about this story is it's his younger brother. You know, they talk about like the first time you have a boss that's younger than you, or somebody in your life is more successful than you at a younger age than you are. It's hard on people. What do you do with the ables in your life, right? Because you're gonna have ables. If you're the smartest person you know and you're the best looking person you know and you're the wealthiest person you know and you've got the best marriage that you know and you've got the greatest family that you know, then you don't know many people, okay?

I've been on your Facebook page, you have like two friends. You and your wife, okay. It's like you need to, you look around and here's the thing. And the reason I'm talking about this is 'cause you're always gonna have to have ables, you're gonna have ables in your life. And you would like to be the kind of person that could see everything as a gift of God. And I think one of the, what's the word, one of the attributes of a very mature person is their ability to celebrate something in someone else's life, you know?

Like you wanna be the kind of person that someone can come to you and go, "Hey, it's unbelievable why we got this massive inheritance." And you wanna be able to tell that to someone who would go, "Yes!" But isn't there sometimes a temptation if someone tells you that news for you to go, "Okay, so I have to work and you don't have to? Must be nice to be from one of those rich families, you know, I gotta work for the next 30 years." It's like we go back to ourselves.

Okay, this is important. Cain struggles, and this is gonna explain the rest of the story. Cain struggles with both jealousy and envy. Jealousy and envy are different, okay? Envy is a deeper level of jealousy. Jealousy is, I want what you have. And by the way, this is such a big theme, guys, that two of the 10 commandments address this. Both do not steal and do not covet. And really by extension, do not commit adultery. So maybe three. So this is a huge deal.

So you've got jealousy. Envy is, jealousy is, I want what you have. Envy is, I don't want you to have it. Because I can't have it, no one can have it. And people go dark places there, 'cause then they start to resent. Which is a settled disposition of negativity toward a person. Then you begin to have some kind of revenge. Passive aggressive, cancel culture, whatever. And so what

happens, let me show you. We gotta pick this up, because it's gonna get bad, but you gotta see, God intervenes, okay?

In verse six, "The Lord said to Cain," hey look, "Why are you angry? "And why is your face fallen?" So God, again, this is the gospel, God pursues us in our sin. God pursues us before we give in to the sin. God pursues us after our sin, you'll see. By the way, he asked questions. Sometimes people are in such a state that you can't tell them things, you just have to ask them. "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" "And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at your door. "Its desire is contrary to you. "You must rule over it."

So look, verse seven, he says, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" In other words, that's another statement about the lack of quality in Cain's offering. When things are not going well, it's easy to start comparing, competing, and trying to conquer. But what God's saying here, and I think it's powerful, it's like, okay, if you're stuck somewhere, two things. Number one, God's like, he's asking him questions. Check your heart.

And then he says, "Do well." Basically what he's saying is, make the best sacrifice you can make right now. And I think that works. I don't know, your marriage is in shambles. It's like, okay, well, here's what you're gonna do. You're gonna be real honest about where you are. And you're gonna make the highest sacrifice that you could make right now, given all of the circumstances. And that will eventually make things better. But then he gives this illustration of warning. He basically says that sin is, this is the first illustration given to us in the Bible, and it's given to us by God.

And the illustration is that sin is crouching at the door. Now, crouching is not a posture that anyone wants to be in for very long. It's not a very comfortable posture. And you would wanna ask this question. So it's the imagery, by the way, of a lion crouching to pounce on its prey. So this is such an amazing illustration because God's telling us for the first time something we didn't know about sin. It's that sin is personified in the Bible.

Sin is talked about, the first time sin is really talked about in detail, it's described as a hungry animal ready to pounce and kill you. And it says, though, it says that what sin does is it crouches. Now, why does something crouch? Think about this. There's two reasons it crouches. It's such a beautiful illustration God gives us. Sin crouches to look smaller than it is. And that will always happen in your life. Sin will always look small until it isn't anymore.

And we rename it and we avoid it. We say we're not that bad. We say everything's okay. We say, well, other people do this and this isn't really what I'm doing and I'm doing something different and we rename it, okay? So that's the first thing we do. It's crouching. But then the other reason that sin crouches is it crouches to pounce on you, okay? So if you think about what is sin? Sin is that which crouches to conceal so it can pounce on you to consume you. That's what sin does.

And that's what it always, that's what it always has done. That's what it always will do. So how do you see crouching sin? Well, one, you have to be radically honest with yourself, which most people aren't, you know? So this is, I'm saying so honest, don't write it down 'cause someone could read it or burn it afterwards. I want you to be radically honest about some things in your life. Like, I love, this is a simple story, but I've always loved this story that I heard.

A guy, an older guy, wealthy guy, he had this big house. He tells this story. He said, "I bought a big house and I told myself I'm buying this house 'cause of the grandkids and I'm buying this house 'cause we host a community group and I'm buying this house because, you know, wanna be able to entertain and I'm buying this house because, you know, if missionaries come in and they need a place for a way, I mean, we have this wing that they could live in and it's really nice."

And he said, "There was this one moment where I just was thinking about my house." He said, "I'm sitting in my house alone and I just realized I said something I never said before." He goes, "I just told the Lord and I told myself I bought a big house 'cause I want a big house." And he's like, "I could then begin to ask all the other questions that you wanna ask. Is that okay and how do you use it and how do we steward it well and what's too big?"

And the point is not that it's a sin to have a big house, it's a sin to lie to yourself about why you have a big house or anything. So the second way that you see sin crouching is you have to be in community, right? Because everybody can see the sin that's crouching in your life better than you can, right? Just like you can see it in everybody else's life, right? Crouching sin is like bad breath. We're always the last ones to know.

Everyone else is like, "Can you give him a breath, man?" And then here's what's interesting. It says that sin's desire, did you see that? I think it's in verse seven. It says, "Sin's desire is contrary to yours." And that's good to know because we tend to think if I sin, I'll be happier, I'll be freer. And if you're in here and you're a born again Christian, you're a born again believer, you have the Holy Spirit inside of you, I believe that we all have basically the same desires for our lives.

We wanna be an influence for Christ, you know? We wanna work hard, we wanna honor the Lord, you know? We'd like, if we're married, we'd like to love our wives as Christ loved the church. We'd love to raise our family in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We'd love to be generous, whatever it is. And what it's saying here, I think it's important, is, okay, great, whatever desires that are good and godly and are in your heart, I want you to know sin has the opposite desire for your life.

You wanna have a good marriage, sin wants to tear it down. You wanna have a united family, Satan wants to divide it. You wanna be a man of integrity, Satan wants you to be a liar. So God warns Cain, but like us, oftentimes Cain doesn't listen. Verse eight, in one verse, we have the sin. Cain spoke to Abel, his brother, and when they were in the field, so like a lot of us, he goes somewhere else to sin.

Maybe, you know, mom and dad don't come out here, so let me get him in the field, then I can bury him and no one will know. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Now, I want you to know this, this is what sin wants to do. Sin would like to, in your life, I promise you, it wants to come to full expression and full manifestation. What lust, and remember, it's active and alive, what lust wants to become is adultery.

That's what it wants to become. And what anger wants to become is some form of murder. It could be cancel culture, it could be reputation destruction, it could be actual murder. What greed wants to become in your life is theft and bad business practices. I mean, it's really, I find it amazing. I don't know if you guys do, I find it amazing. I know we all know this story, but I find it incredible that murder shows up this quickly in the Bible.

I mean, don't you, when you, if you had to guess, like you never read the Bible before, hey, there's this book and it talks about the creation of the world and the first families and how the world grew and how cities were built and how long do you think it is until there's a murder? You'd probably think a long time. That's pretty serious. And then, you know, we read the 10 commandments and we're like, man, okay, you know, I'd probably break all these to some extent, you know, but not murder.

I would never murder. Well, here's what's interesting to think about how this works today. I believe that Cain is the first pro-choice person ever to live. He decides who gets to live and die in his family. And if somebody in his family is too inconvenient for him to have around, he kills him. Interestingly enough, it says that the blood of Abel cries out. I think this is the exact same thing that the blood of the newborn does today in our age.

And so even though he does this horrible murder, even though it's premeditated, God still pursues him afterwards. I want you to see this, verse nine. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" God comes again with questions. And he said, okay, this is interesting. This is the first direct lie in the Bible. Last chapter, there's, you know, blaming. This is the first time someone directly lies and they lie to God.

I do not know. And then here's the first question a human ever asked God. Am I my brother's keeper? Answer, yes. And the Lord said, "What have you done?" "The voice of your brother's blood "is crying out to me from the ground." Cain can never say it out loud what he did. It's interesting that he talks about blood crying out because a lot of commentators think this speaks to how the violent way in which Cain most likely took his brother's life.

Some type of sharp object or a rock, which by the way is interesting, and I was reading about this this week, that almost every time somebody is stabbed to death, it's by somebody who knew them very well because it's often in those situations much more than just a murder. It's an act of passion. So God comes to Cain. Cain can't even say out loud what he did. So God curses Cain. Look here. He says, "And now your curse," verse 11.

So we saw the curses last week, now Cain's cursed. "From the ground from which has opened its mouth "to receive your brother's blood from your hand. "When you work the ground, "it shall no longer yield to you its strength." Look at this, this is very interesting to me. It's repeated twice. "You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on earth. "Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. "Behold, you've driven me today away from the ground, "and from your face I will be hidden."

Look, he repeats it. This is interesting. "I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on earth, "and whoever finds me will kill me." Okay, so God says, and then Cain says about himself that going forward, he's going to be a wanderer and a fugitive. Now, what do those have in common? A restlessness. And I don't know if there's a better word to describe the average American than as a wanderer. Not tied and tethered to God's word, not tied and tethered to a local church, not tied and tethered to any kind of narrative of country or patriotism.

I mean, just wandering. Every once in a while, I find myself in a Home Goods. Have you ever been in one of those? Men feel very uncomfortable in Home Goods. How long are we staying and where do we go and what do I look at? And so I look around there and there's, and I've seen these all over, but there's a famous, it's actually a JRR token, quote is first to say this, but you ever see the things, you've seen them, you know, and it says, "Not all who wander are lost."

And I just wanna write underneath it, but most are. (congregation laughing) We don't want you to wander. We want you to be, so we want you to be a worshiper, not a wanderer. And one of the reasons that we talk about getting into the life of our church and particularly getting into a community group, if you get into a community group in this church, it's going to be very hard for you to wander.

In part, here's what you do. When you're healthy, you make decisions for when you won't be healthy potentially. So you're like, okay, how do I tie myself into all of the relationships that I'm going to need in case something, sin or suffering shows up in my life in a way that I'm gonna need it? And that's what you do. It's interesting, he goes from wanderer to more extreme fugitive, right? Fugitive is where certain people are, right?

Fugitive is I'm restless and I'm restless because somebody's after me. Now, some of us are old enough to remember the movie Fugitive with Harrison Ford. It's fun to watch the fugitive. It's not fun to be the fugitive, okay? And there are people, I mean, and if you have a conscience, you would say, man, I have done things wrong. And some people are, you meet them, you're like, what are you running from? A lot of times people are running from a bunch of things they never dealt with, like most commonly, their relationship with their dad and the dysfunction that was there.

But here's the amazing thing, and this is where I wanna end. I wanna show you this, that God is gracious even to Cain. And I think when we read this story, we go, when we read last week, we're like, okay, Adam and Eve, I mean, all they did was eat, and it's way worse than this. We

think, I ate fruit of the tree they shouldn't have eaten then, and you know, I would have probably done the same thing, you know?

But then we get to Cain and Abel and we get the story of Cain, we're like, can God forgive the first murder? Can God be gracious to a man who kills 25% of the population? The answer is yes. I want you to see the grace of God, even in the Old Testament. Because a lot of times people go, oh yeah, that Old Testament God, he's judging, judging, judging, and the New Testament is mercy, mercy, mercy. It's like, no, it's both judgment and mercy.

I want you to see this. Verse 15. Then the Lord said, remember he said, I can't wander all over the earth because people will kill me. Then the Lord said to him, not so. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord put a mark on Cain. Many people think this is the first tattoo in the Bible. Not that tattoos are bad. Jesus, actually, if you don't know this, has a tattoo in Revelation 19. It says, "King of kings, Lord of lords on his thighs."

The Lord Jesus himself has a tattoo when he comes back. But our best guess is some type of physical marking that the Lord put on Cain. Look here. And the Lord put a mark on Cain. Lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. How can God not just immediately take Cain's life? And the answer, if you're around for a while and you're a Christian, you know this.

The answer is the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to read you the last place where Abel is mentioned in your Bible. It's in Hebrews 12, 24. I have it on the screen here. It says this, "And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant into the sprinkled blood." Look at this. Last mention of Abel in the Bible. That speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

So what he's doing in the book of Hebrews is he's talking about how Jesus is the truer and better Moses and all these other things. And he gets to Abel and he says, here, his blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. And you go, well, why would that be? Well, think about what did the blood of Abel speak? It spoke that there needed to be revenge. It spoke that there needed to be judgment. It spoke of death.

What does the blood of Jesus Christ speak of? It speaks of the opportunity to experience the grace of God. The blood of Jesus says that you can have a second chance because Jesus was your substitute. The blood of Jesus says that there's never anything you could do bad enough that God could not forgive you and transform your life. See, Jesus is the better Abel who offers his first, his best, and really himself.

He is the better Cain, not just the better Abel, because why? Because what would Cain do? Well, Cain was the older brother. Cain asked the question, am I my brother's keeper? Jesus answered the question, I am. I am my brother's and my sister's keeper. And I am going to live and die and rise on their behalf. And then see, I believe that what happens when you're a Christian is the mark of Cain comes upon you.

It's not the mark of Cain. It's the mark of the Holy Spirit in your life. It's the Holy Spirit inside you and say, this, this, it's the righteousness of Christ on you and saying, listen, I am gonna be able to be safe now from the wrath of God, not because he put a mark on me like he put on Cain, but because I stand in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. When you realize all of that, guys, the whole point of this story is, what's the heart of all this story?

This heart of all this story is about making the right sacrifices. And when you realize that, oh my goodness, God made the right sacrifice for me in giving his only son, then you sacrifice from those sacrifices. Here, what does this have to do? Let me close with this. What does this have to do with our multiply initiative? Well, if we're going to multiply, we're gonna have to make sacrifices, that's it.

And the reason that some of you won't multiply like you could is you're unwilling to make the sacrifices you need to. Here's what a sacrifice is. A sacrifice is this, I give up something I love for something I love even more. And I wanna just encourage you to make the sacrifices in your heart and in your hands, to make the sacrifices you need that God's calling you to do that you might multiply.

Because here, and you know this is true, there is nothing more powerful, I really believe, I cannot think of anything more powerful than when someone comes up to you and says, you know, when you made that sacrifice, it made a difference in my life. There is, I don't think there is a more rewarding thing someone can say. I think that is what every parent would one day like to hear from their adult kids, that's it.

Hey, mom and dad, thanks for all the sacrifices. It made a massive difference in my life. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ made an eternal difference in every Christian's life. And the sacrifices that we make here, flowing from that sacrifice, that's how we're gonna multiply into the future. Let's pray.

Lord, we just wanna take a moment right now and we wanna thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that we are so grateful that we don't have to enter a sacrificial system anymore. We know in the Old Testament, the Jewish people again and again and again had to make sacrifices and we are thankful that you are the one sacrifice for all time that covers sin. It's the sacrifice that can forgive people, that can cleanse people, Lord.

And all over here, Lord, I wanna pray for people. There's certain people in here right now and sin is crouching at their door and they need to rule over it and they need to stop trying to do sin management and they need to put sin to death. Lord, I wanna pray for other people in here who today you're calling them to obedience and to repentance in the area of generosity, stewardship and finances.

And I pray that they would no longer come before you empty-handed, but would understand that we come to receive and we also come to give, Lord. Lord, would you create a church here at Two Cities where we are willing to sacrifice because we understand that you sacrifice for us.

And we understand that when we sacrifice, we give up something we love, but we do it for something we love so much more.

Christ, amen.