

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class

Popular Proverbial Phrases Inspired by Bible Passages

Genesis 4:1-16 “*Am I My Brother's Keeper?*”

Verse 1: The Hebrew verb translated “I have gotten” is related to the name of the child, Cain. The Hebrew wording is abbreviated, literally, “I have gotten a man, the Lord.” Some, including Luther, have interpreted this to mean that Eve believes this child is the fulfillment of God's first gospel promise of Genesis 3:15, that the Savior already has arrived. If so, this illustrates the impatience of our human natures. God's timetable is much different from ours. Most interpreters believe, as is translated, “with the help of,” that Eve recognizes that this first physical birth is a miraculous gift of God seeing her through the pain of childbirth (3:16) and fulfilling her role as a mother and agent of life. **Did Eve have a Lamaze coach?** _____

Verse 2: Time passes quickly in this passage as we go from the birth of a second son, Abel, to the adult years and livelihood of these two men, Cain being a worker of the ground and Abel being a keeper of sheep. **Were both vocations good and valued in God's sight?** _____

Verses 3-5a: At the end of the growing season Cain brought an offering of his harvest to the Lord and Abel brought an offering of his flock. There is no indication that God had commanded such an offering from them but His response to their gifts is different.

Why might God have had “regard” (favor) for Abel's offering? _____

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Verses 5b-7: **What is Cain's reaction to God's response to his offering?** _____

Is Cain's anger itself a sin? _____

How is God's response an indication of what Cain was lacking in his offering?

God speaks of sin as if it were a wild animal ready to strike and pounce on us in an attempt to control our lives. God's Holy Spirit working through His Word and Sacraments gives us the ability to resist such temptations and to rule over sin.

Ephesians 4:26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

1st John 3:12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

Verse 8: Cain does not listen to God's warning and allows sin to conquer him. The NIV includes a textual variant which the ESV does not, "let us go out to the field." The additional words come from ancient translations of the Hebrew. Perhaps what Cain said accidentally was omitted from the Hebrew translation over years of copying it.

How might Cain have killed Abel? _____

Verses 9-10: As he did with Adam and Eve in the Garden after their sin (3:9), God gives Cain the opportunity to confess what he has done by asking him a question about his brother even though God obviously knows what has happened.

How does Cain respond? _____

In what ways do we use this proverbial statement in our lives? _____

Verses 11-12: The very ground from which Abel's blood cries to the Lord will no longer be fruitful in response to Cain's tending of it even more so than the curse God placed on Adam's working of the ground (3:17). Cain will not earn a living as a farmer but will have to live as a scavenger.

What is God's description of Cain's future living condition? _____

Verses 13-14: **Does Cain's response to his punishment show any sorrow or repentance?** Instead of realizing what he has done in the killing of his brother, Cain is only thinking of himself. So it is with many who sin against God and commit crimes against their fellow man.

What is Cain's two-fold punishment? _____

Separation from God's presence and His blessings is the worst of His judgments.

What does Cain think will happen to him? _____

Who would these people be? _____

Verses 15-16: God assures Cain that he will not be killed for what he has done.

How might this verse be used in today's discussion of capital punishment?

This "mark" is not described and is not important. As God cared for Adam and Eve when they left the Garden of Eden, so He will provide for Cain to protect his life. The place name "Nod" is a play on the Hebrew word for "wanderer." It does not occur elsewhere in the Bible or in any Near Eastern literature as a place name.