

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER? • by Orlan Koehn and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know, am I my brother's keeper?" Genesis 4:9.

FAITH STORY:

Genesis 4:1-16

FAITH FOCUS:

Adam and Eve have their first children, two boys, Cain and Abel. Cain grows up to become a farmer, while Abel is into livestock. As an act of worship, Cain and Abel bring the fruits of their vocations as offerings to the Lord. God is pleased with Abel's offering but displeased with Cain's.

This upsets Cain, and he ends up killing his brother. When the Lord asks Cain about his brother, he retorts: "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord says, "As consequence for your sin, the land will no longer yield its fruit, (farming days are over). You will be a restless wanderer." Cain pleads for mercy, saying that the punishment is greater than he can bear. He fears being found and killed by others. The Lord responds with a promise of limited protection by placing a mark on Cain to prevent anyone from killing him. So Cain went and lived east of Eden.

SESSION GOAL:

To have students reflect on how anger disrupts and destroys relationships.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

Help students learn how to manage anger so it doesn't result in behavior that hurts their relationship with God and others.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

Copies of skit

Chalkboard or newsprint and marker

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (10 minutes)

- 1 Ask for two volunteers to play siblings that are young children sitting in a vehicle, and two volunteers to be the parents. Set up four chairs for the "vehicle" with one parent driving, one in the passenger seat, and the two kids behind them. Tell the kids that they are going to be getting along okay until one of them touches the other one, and to take it from there, with them complaining to parents, ("He touched me," "Did not," "Did so! etc) and the parents responding, etc. Let the role play continue until the parents figure out how to resolve the situation.
- 2 Ask for four more volunteers (or use the same ones). Now the siblings are teenagers. Ask them to come up with something that they argue about while driving. (Which music to listen to? Which video to watch in the van?) Have them and the parents do the role play

until someone (parents or kids) come up with a resolution.

- 3 Share a “sibling fight” story of your own and encourage students to share their own stories.

CONNECT: (5–7 minutes)

Ask: *Which siblings got into a major fight in the Bible*

Invite two students to portray Cain and Abel in the same “vehicle” you used earlier. Without looking up the story, ask them to carry out a conversation between the two brothers. What are they arguing about? (If they don’t know the story, ask other students to help out. If no one knows, have them guess what they might be talking about, but don’t fill in the details at this point.) Let students have fun with this!

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (25 minutes)

- 1 Give the skit to two students and have them act it out while sitting in the “vehicle.”
- 2 After the skit, take turns reading the story in the Bible, (Genesis 4:1-16) one verse at a time.
- 3 Ask the following “I wonder” questions and tell students to answer them with their thoughts, beginning with “Because.”

I wonder why God didn't like Cain's offering as well as Abel's.

I wonder why Cain was so angry.

I wonder why Cain took his anger out on Abel.

I wonder why Cain thought he could get away with killing Abel.

I wonder why God had mercy on Cain.

Encourage students to come up with their own “I wonder” questions.

- 4 Have students form groups of 3. Ask each group decide one way that Cain could have dealt with his anger, rather than killing his brother. When the groups are done, have them share their results with the group and make a list on the chalkboard or newsprint. Some possibilities that could be on the list include: talking to a counselor or pastor, praying/ spending time with God, talking to Abel and telling him how he felt, talking to a close friend, exercising to dispel some of the anger, watching the movie “Anger Management.” (just kidding—but put it on the list).

APPLY: (5 minutes)

Ask students to think of one person with whom they get angry. Ask the following questions, and instruct students to move to one side of the room if their answer is yes, and the other side if no.

Does your anger affect your relationship with this person?

Do you care about this person enough to want to work on what makes you angry?

Do you think one of the things on the list would help you manage this anger?

Are you willing to do one of those things to possibly help the relationship?

RESPOND: (5 minutes)

Ask students to close their eyes and imagine sitting in a vehicle with the person beside them with whom they get angry.

Say: *If you were going to take today's lesson to heart, what would you say to the person beside you? Think about that for a minute.*

Then spend some time talking to God about this situation.

Ask students to throw out one word that comes to mind as they think about their situation. Close with a prayer that incorporates the words they suggest.

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE:

Our story focuses on the first family of God's creation—a community of four people. Adam and Eve have two sons, and Eve acknowledges God as the source or giver of these gifts. Then we have a giant leap in time from the babyhood of Cain and Abel to their manhood. Apparently, they had some choice in their vocations—Cain is listed as a farmer and Abel as a rancher.

It is interesting to note that the first recorded sin after the 'fall' in the Garden of Eden has to do with worshipping God. It seems implicit in the text that Cain and Abel had some idea or previous instruction on what kind of offerings were acceptable. Cain's offering of some of his harvest displeased the Lord, whereas Abel's offering of the first lamb born to his sheep was pleasing and acceptable to the Lord.

Cain became very angry and depressed over his unsatisfactory offering, resulting in the Lord's confrontation and caution, "Deal with your anger appropriately or sin will overwhelm you, Cain." Cain was unable to contain his anger, which resulted in murder in the first family of God's creation. God once again confronts Cain by asking, "Where is your brother, Abel?"

We can see the deceptive and progressive nature of sin in Cain's response, "I don't know the whereabouts of my brother." God responds by informing Cain of the consequences of his sin, "Your farming days are over. The soil will not produce when you plant your crops. You will have a life of restless wandering." Cain is overwhelmed by his punishment and pleads for mercy, something he himself did not extend to his brother. God shows mercy in punishment by marking Cain so others would not kill him. We can only speculate how the mark alerted others to God's protection over Cain. Our lesson text closes with Cain going out from the Lord's presence and living in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER? • Cain and Abel Skit

CAIN: So, bro, what'd you give God last week?

ABEL: Man, that was hard to do, but I took my favorite lamb—you know, the pet that I raised—and gave it to God.

CAIN: Why'd you do that? You've got a gazillion sheep! Why'd you take your pet lamb?

ABEL: I guess because I feel like I owe God the best. What'd you take?

CAIN: Some of my wheat.

ABEL: Good!

CAIN: Apparently God didn't think so.

ABEL: What do you mean?

CAIN: (*getting angry*) Just that! God didn't like it!

ABEL: But why not?

CAIN: HOW SHOULD I KNOW? AM I A MIND-READER OF GOD?

ABEL: No, no, I was just wondering....

CAIN: Look, I took wheat, God didn't like it, and I don't know why! So shut up already!

ABEL: It just seems weird that God liked my lamb but not your wheat!

CAIN: YOU ARE ABOUT TO DRIVE ME CRAZY! DAD, STOP THIS CAR!

(*Cain reaches into his pocket to pull out a knife.*)

CAIN: Abel, look at those cool flowers along the road. Wanna come out and get some with me?