

## Introduction

This is a picture of a tract with my testimony. I gave thousands of these out when I played professional golf. I would like to read the first paragraph or two.

*“I spent the majority of my younger years living in Iran while my father worked for an oil company. As a family, we attended church services. For me, it was a bad experience. All I seemed to see was dryness and hypocrisy, which turned me off. Even though I went through confirmation and was an "official" church member, I didn't really believe it. I considered myself an atheist. During my freshman year at Texas Christian University, a student shared with me the truth of who Jesus Christ is. He was persistent, checking on me periodically and letting me know that he was praying for me. I was cold as ice, but the love and genuineness that I saw in this man slowly melted my cold heart. Before my sophomore year, I realized how wrong I had been as a child. I believed the truth found in the Bible and welcomed Jesus into my life.”*

I share this story because there is a marked difference between people of the world and people of faith. I saw false religion as a young boy, and had no regard for it. I saw genuine faith and Christianity as a college student, and I had regard for it. It was attractive. There was an obvious difference. Church, there is a discernable difference between false religion and true religion. Listen to what John says in 1 John 3.

(1 John 3:7-15) “Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; {8} the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. {9} No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. {10} By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. {11} For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; {12} not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. {13} Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. {14} We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. {15} Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

John said by this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. John uses the example of Cain and Abel. We are studying the book of Genesis right now and we are in chapter four. Adam and Eve gave birth to two sons. They understood that children were gifts from God. It starts out well. Both Cain and Abel were gifts from God. But as the story goes along, we see two different paths. Abel was righteous and Cain was evil. Cain was jealous of his brother and hated him, and then he murdered his brother. John wrote that that everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.

This morning we are going to cover the first eight verses of Genesis 4. We will see that a genuine faith believes that everything that we have comes from God. Second, we will see that genuine faith loves and honors God. Third, we will see that a genuine faith loves his brother. Let's read the first eight verses of Genesis 4.

(Gen 4:1-8) “Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD." {2} Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. {3} So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. {4} Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; {5} but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. {6} Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? {7} If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." {8} Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”

### **A Regard For Genuine Faith**

1. Genuine Faith Believes All Things Come From God
2. Genuine Faith Loves God
3. Genuine Faith Loves His Brother

#### **1. Genuine Faith Believes All Things Come From God**

We sang a worship song this morning out of Acts 17:28. It says that “in Him we live and move and have our being.” Last week we sang a song out of Romans 11 that said, “who has first given to Him that it should be paid back to Him again. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.” We have been acknowledging that all things come from God. Our passage today starts with this acknowledgement.

##### **a. Our children come from God**

We see in verse 1 that Eve recognized that children were a gift from God. After she had Cain, she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord.” Last week we saw that God knew each of us before He formed us in our mother’s womb. We saw that He knew the days ordained for each of us. He knew the gifts and calling on each of our lives. God has a plan and purpose for each one of us. Abel was a keeper of livestock and Cain was a tiller of the ground. They had different bents, desires, abilities, and callings. Our lives come from God. Adam and Eve were quick to recognize this.

(Gen 4:1-2) “Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD. {2} Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.”

##### **b. Our provision comes from God**

Next, we see that both Abel and Cain brought offerings to God. Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and the fat portions. We do not know if God had given commands or instructions to them about giving or not. All we know is that both Cain and Abel brought offerings. I believe that offerings are an acknowledgement of where our provision comes from.

(Gen 4:3-5) “So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. {4} Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; {5} but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard....”

I get paid twice a month. I received a paycheck on Wednesday this week. The first thing that I did was to thank God for His provision for my family. I do not take His provision for us lightly. I am sincerely grateful for His faithful provision for me. Last week I gave you some stories about our large family. One of the things people asked was, “How can you afford all these children?” That is a legitimate question. I frequently hear people tell me that they can’t afford children. I tell people that I can’t afford them either. But, the Scriptures teach me that God is the source of my provision. He is Jehovah Jireh, and my God shall supply all of my needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Karen and I have trusted God for His provision in our lives. He can afford our large family.

Karen and I used to put our children to bed, and then go for walks. In one chapter of our life, God was teaching us to trust Him to provide. It seems that I have more than one chapter in my life that I learn or relearn this lesson. In this particular chapter, we found money every night. I would see a coin across the street. I would find coins in the Saint Augustine grass along the sidewalk or street. We did not miss finding money every single night. God was telling us that He would provide what we needed on a daily basis. It was like the children of Israel collecting manna every day. It was not a lot, but it was what they needed that day.

On one of those walks the Lord spoke to Karen. She had been asking God about the funds required to go back onto the PGA Tour. The Lord spoke to her and said, “If I can provide for the nation of Israel, I can provide for your family of nine.” We ended up having ten of our own children, but at that time we only had seven. Karen and I recognized that our children were from the Lord and our provision was from the Lord.

Notice what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 7:13. “He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock...” Cain and Abel recognized that their provision, whether crops or herds, came from the Lord. When people recognize that God is their provider, giving back a portion to the Lord is easier.

(Deut 7:13) “He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you.”

## **2. Genuine Faith Loves God**

### **a. We love God by honoring Him with our first fruits.**

Both Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. Cain was a tiller of the ground and offered the Lord from the fruit of the ground. Abel was a keeper of livestock, and he returned the firstlings of his flocks. I believe that we should honor God with what we have. Cain brought an offering, but Abel honored God with an offering because he loved God.

Last year I had a discussion with a man about the difference between love and honor. I told him that you could honor someone without loving him. People may stand up for a king or president and may or may not love him. But, if you love someone, you will honor them. Honor is a part of love. In James, we see that if we show partiality to a rich man over a poor man, we have dishonored the poor man and violated the royal law, which is to love.

I believe there were some very key differences in the offerings of Abel and the offerings of Cain. One of those differences is that Abel gave the firstlings. God wants the first fruits that we have and Abel gave of his firstlings. Notice in Proverbs 3:9 that God tells us to honor Him with our wealth and from the first of all our produce. Our passage today is a contrast between an offering that God had regard for and one that He did not regard. I believe that we can infer that Cain brought an offering, but it was not his first fruits. Abel gave his firstlings and God had regard for that. A sincere faith puts God first and gives God the first of their income.

(Pr 3:9) “Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce;”

#### **b. We honor God by giving the fat portion**

We see that Able not only brought the firstlings, but he also gave the fat portions. The fat portions represent the very best that we have. I have always disliked church garage sales. There is nothing wrong with them. They help raise funds for needed projects or causes. My issue with them is just the fat portion. I don't think we give God our leftovers and our junk. I believe we give God our first and our finest. At church garage sales, we usually get rid of our old, junky stuff. I would rather someone buy something new and give that to the church to sell. That is what Abel did; he gave his very best.

In the book of Malachi, God speaks about giving the very best. The people of Israel were bringing their lame and sick from the herd, not the very best. God was being dishonored by what they were bringing, so He addresses that through the His spokesman, the prophet Malachi.

(Mal 1:6-9) “‘A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?’ says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, ‘How have we despised Your name?’ {7} “You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’ In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is to be despised.’ {8} “But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?” says the LORD of hosts. {9} “But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?” says the LORD of hosts.”

(Gen 4:3-5) “So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. {4} Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; {5} but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard....”

There is no mention of the quantity of either offering. God wants our first, and He wants our best. In Luke 21, Jesus addresses the quantity. They watched the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and they also watched a poor widow put in two small copper coins. Jesus said, “this

poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.” It was not the quantity that Jesus regarded. The rich put in more than the widow. But, the widow’s portion was far more generous, and God had regard for her offering.

(Luke 21:1-4) “And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. {2} And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. {3} And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; {4} for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”

### c. **We honor God With Our Heart Attitude**

Abel brought his firstlings and his fat portion because he loved God. Abel did not give so that he could get something. He understood that everything he had belonged to God and came from God. On the other hand, Cain brought an offering to God and expected to gain God’s favor. He thought that since he was doing God a favor and giving Him something, that God owed him something. Notice the response that Cain had when his offering was not regarded by God. He became very angry. Cain was angry on two counts. He was angry with God for not regarding his offering, and he was angry and jealous of Abel because his offering had been accepted.

(Gen 4:5-8) “but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. {6} Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? {7} “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” {8} Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”

Unfortunately, there is a lot of teaching today about giving so that we can receive. Karen and I went to an African service one time where the pastor said that if you don’t come up front and give an offering you will not receive God’s blessing. I don’t give so that I can receive God’s blessing. God’s love is unconditional; we cannot earn it or buy it. That was Cain’s attitude. He thought that if he gave, he would receive favor and recognition from God.

What makes this difficult is that God does bless when we give. In Malachi 3, God promises to rebuke the devourer and to pour out a blessing on us until it overflows. He promises that when we honor Him, He will fill our barns with plenty and our vats will overflow with new wine.” These are genuine promises of God, but these cannot be the motivations of our heart. We should give to God because we want to honor Him. Our offerings will reflect our love.

(Pr 3:9-10) “Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; {10} So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine.”

(Mal 3:10-11) “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. {11} Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts.”

Jesus demonstrated His love by going to the cross for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8); He gave everything. There is no greater love than to lay your life down for your friends (John 15:13). For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). God's love was reflected by His offering to us. Abel's offering reflected his love for God.

### **3. A Genuine Faith Loves His Brother**

In 1 John 4:7-8, we are told to love one another, for love is from God. John tells us that "everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." A person with genuine faith knows God and has love. He has love for God and he has love for one another. John also tells us in 1 John 4:20 that we cannot say that we love God and hate our brother. If we say that, we are a liar, "for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

Cain did not have a genuine faith because he was angry at his brother and slew him. In verse eight we see that when they went out into the field, Cain rose up against Abel and killed him. Let's go back to 1 John 3 and get God's insights on why Cain killed Abel. It starts by saying the message from the beginning is that we should love one another. Then, it says, not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. Cain did not love his brother. God gives some reasons why. Abel was righteous and his deeds were righteous. The world hates righteousness. God tells us not to be surprised if the world hates us because we are righteous. God also tells us that if we hate our brother, we are murderers.

(Gen 4:8) "Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him."

(1 John 3:11-15) "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; {12} not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. {13} Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. {14} We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. {15} Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

### **Conclusion**

As we come to a close this morning, I want to finish with Genesis 4:6-7. God speaks to Cain and asks, "why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." The KJV says, "if thou doest well, shall thou not be accepted?" What God was telling Cain was that His grace was available for him also. If Cain would repent and come before God with the proper offering, then God would have regard for him also. God's grace was available for everyone. When Jesus died on the cross, He died for the sins of the world. His grace is available to everyone who calls upon Him.

Turn to Isaiah 66:1-2. God tells us "heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house that you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being." A genuine faith recognizes that all things come from God. Our children, our provision, and everything comes from God.

God then says, but to this one I will look, to Him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at My word.” God will have regard on a man who has three characteristics. He will have regard for a man who is humble, who is contrite of spirit, and who trembles at His word.

(Is 66:1-2) “Thus says the LORD, ‘Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? {2} “For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,’ declares the LORD. ‘But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”

Cain’s offerings were his offerings. He did not see them as coming from God. Cain was a self-made man. Even his name means something made. He was doing God a favor with his offering. He thought he could earn God’s regard. There was no humility there, just pride.

Jesus said that if we are not converted and become like children, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven. “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” God has regard for the humble. For God to regard Cain, he needed to humble himself as a child and be converted.

(Matt 18:3-4) “and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. {4} Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Second, God has regard for a man with a contrite spirit. Contrite means to be remorse and sorry for what we have done. It means to be repentant for what we have done. Let’s take a look at the offerings in Genesis 3 and 4. In Genesis 3, God provided an offering for Adam and Eve. It was an offering of an animal, and he clothed them with garments of skin. Adam and Eve received the covering and payment for their sins by putting on the clothes that God provided. The blood sacrifice was a picture of the Lamb of God who would come later and take away the sins of the world. (John 1:29)

Abel’s offering was an animal sacrifice. It was an offering of blood for his sins. It showed a repentant and contrite heart for his sins. It was not just a firstling or the fat portion; it was a blood sacrifice for his sins. The humble and contrite heart that Abel had was something that God had regard for. Cain’s sacrifice was just a token offering to give God something, which God did not need anyway. There was no sacrifice or repentance for his sinful condition. Adam and Eve’s garments of skin from the sacrifice did not cover Cain or Abel. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Each one of us must have our sins covered. Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away that sin. We must accept His offering for us, and be clothed in His righteousness. God told Cain that sin was crouching at the door and he must master it. The only way to master sin is with the blood of the Lamb. If Cain would have come with a humble and contrite heart, God would have accepted him and his offering.

The third thing that God has regard for is one who trembles at His word. Notice that God spoke to Cain and told him what he needed to do to be accepted. Cain had no regard for what God spoke to him. He ignored it and then slew his brother.

This morning, has God been speaking His word to you? Have you been clothed in Christ? Have you accepted His payment for your sins? Have you humbled yourself as a child and been

converted? Is it obvious to those around you that you are a Christian and have a sincere faith? Have you confessed with your mouth that He is Lord. Have you acknowledged that everything we have is from God. It is in Him that we live and move and have our being. God will have regard for those with a genuine faith. If you have never received Christ and would like to receive Him this morning, we would welcome the opportunity to pray with you. If you have come here this morning and felt like you have found a new home, and would like to become part of the Connection Church this morning, we would love to welcome you into our family. Let's pray.