

Series: God & Cain #1007

Title: Genesis 4.1-16

The Introduction

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. You have selected a great day to be with us as we will begin the promised new series in the Book of Genesis chapter 4. I will say more about that in a few minutes. But, let's open with this. Do you like stories? Do you savor a well-spun tale spoken by a gifted storyteller? Do you read stories? Do you find irresistible a really good movie or book or television show that captures your imagination and carries you away from the struggles, or worries and concerns, the difficulties of real life?

Or, perhaps true stories that help you to meet the real challenges you have in your life? Has there been someone else's struggle – told by them to you – that has helped you with your own problem? Those stories are not about escaping but rather engaging and dealing with that which concerns you.

A lot of people get this from their music. Some of the world's best storytellers are musicians. Some of the world's *worst* storytellers are also musicians. Choose your music wisely!

This will not surprise you, if you've been listening for a while: I *love* a good story! That's why I enjoy reading not only as a way to learn but also as a way to relax. And I am drawn to people who have the gift and the ability to tell a story that can capture the mind and the heart. I feel that storytelling, say seated around a table or by a fire or just down in the workplace is a kind of lost art today. We've become so obsessed with our mobile phones. We tend to live isolated from others and somehow we have become disinterested in the person who begins, "Let me tell you about..." We turn away back to our little private worlds. We are ensconced in the technology. That makes me sigh.

What is your story? You might think, "Well, I do not have anything interesting to tell." Oh sure you do! I, for one, would like to hear it. People fascinate me and autobiography is very appealing. Maybe someday we can tell each other our stories? I think heaven will be filled with the narratives of what God has done in our lives. We will celebrate His goodness by telling each other what really happened to us along life's way.

Well, the Bible is full of stories. And this is especially true in the Book of Genesis. That's why a lot of Bible readers really enjoy all this Book has to offer. And the all-wise God gave us Genesis in the form of a story. And, in that way, Genesis becomes very memorable. Even people who are not Christians or Jews or who do not read or know very much of the Bible have a somewhat decent understanding of certain characters in the Genesis, say Adam and Eve and Noah and Abraham. Joseph! We can apply what the English journalist, poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling said, "If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten."

Well, Genesis is real, true history told in the form of stories, and therefore it is never forgotten.

I think another reason this first Book of the Bible is compelling is because the stories herein are, in many ways, our stories. We find ourselves in Genesis. The characters are very relatable. We relate well to them, because we are all human and there is really nothing new under the sun when it comes to how persons think and act. So when we read about the men and women that walk across the stage of this history, we can easily see how what they experienced, we also experience.

John Steinbeck, one of my favorite American writers, puts it this way, "If a story is not about the hearer he [or she] will not listen...A great lasting story is about everyone or it will not last. The strange and foreign is not interesting – only the deeply personal and familiar." How true!

The ways in which this cast of characters live their lives, how they relate to God and one another, their triumphs and tragedies, their sin, their righteousness, and what they say and do mirror what is happening in our lives all these many centuries later. These stories in Genesis *are* about the hearers. These stories are about all of us, and therefore we listen and Genesis lasts. These people in Genesis experience not what is strange and foreign to us, but what is deeply personal and familiar.

And there is *much* to choose from.

If you have been with us, or if you go back and listen to previous podcasts posted to godisministry.org (our website is godisministry.o-r-g), then you know we have already explored in detail Genesis chapters 2 and 3. But how should the remainder of Genesis be taught? One option, of course, is to continue to move chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse. However, there are fifty chapters and 1,533 verses. (That's fifty chapters [5-0] and 1,533 verses.) And we have about 12 minutes together each weekday. So, if we take this approach then we will be in Genesis a *very long time*! That's not necessarily a bad thing, but what about the other sixty-five books of the Bible? Those demand our attention as well.

Here is what I have prayerfully decided to do. I have drawn from the text three individual lives. My intention is to tell you their story, and to always be on the lookout for what we can learn about *God* in His relationship to these two men and one woman. This is going to take us a while to do, so strap yourself in. This is a marathon, not a sprint. Context is always important to us, so we look at several verses that surround the core of each individual testimony. And our first life belongs to...*Cain*. Cain. And his story is told in Genesis chapter 4.

The specific time period in his life that I want us to look at is written in Genesis 4, verses 1-16. If you have access to your Bible now, please open it to Genesis 4 and read it along with me. Otherwise, take some time later on and read this for yourself. Or, have it read to you from an audio Bible, if you prefer.

I remind you that I read from the *New American Standard Bible*, the 1995 edition. This is the NASB. Unless stated otherwise, this is always the translation from which I read. Genesis 4, verses 1-16 says,

“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.

⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ And he said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’¹⁰ [God] said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.¹¹ Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.¹² When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.’¹³ Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is too great to bear!’¹⁴ Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.’

¹⁵ So the Lord said to [Cain], ‘Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.’ And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”
That is quite a story! (Genesis 4, verses 1-16.)

In the days and weeks ahead we will become very familiar with this. I do hope you will plan to be with us each weekday on this station and/or on the God Is Podcast. And this is a *great* time to invite someone you know to tune in with you. Invite someone *today* so they can get in on the start of this new series in Genesis 4.

Later this week I want to introduce you to the characters who we have just met. There is God (always the main character), there are Adam and Eve, and then Cain and his brother Abel. And the Devil is here too, but he is lurking in the shadows.

However, before we dive into the text, the script as it were, I want to distinguish between the Bible as story and literally *all* other stories. The Bible is a Book unlike any other book. Reading the Scripture is totally different than reading Kipling or Steinbeck or, name your favorite author. What do we need to be aware of as we embark upon Cain's story? That is what we will discuss tomorrow on *God Is*.

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