

CAIN AND ABEL

CONCEPT

God accepts us because of Jesus' work on the cross.

GOAL

Christian students will learn that what matters is our heart attitude and throughout our life God will teach us to depend on Him.

Non-Christian students will learn that what is pleasing to God is when we have faith in Him.

PASSAGE: GENESIS 4:2B-5

Key Verse: "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

PLANNING AHEAD*

Lesson Supplies

Lesson:

- 2 bed sheets
- 2 signs: "Man's Way," "God's Way"
- Basket of plastic fruits
- Stuffed lamb

Learning Activity #1:

- 2 blindfolds

Craft Supplies

Activity Stations:

- Printed cardstock maze, 1/student
- ½" ceramic disc magnet, 1/student
- Adhesive backed strip magnet, ½"/student
- Stickers, 1/student
- 10 rulers
- 10 pencils

* **Teachers please note:** For clarity, the shaded areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag. **Items followed by an asterisk* are to be supplied by the teaching team.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/TEACHER HELPS

"The story of man continues, revealing the significant differences in his religious approach to God. These differences are illustrated in the two sacrifices offered by Adam's sons, Cain and Abel. The two sons were outside of God's Kingdom, the Garden of Eden, and living in the world system run by Satan. This was a result of man's rebellion and we shall now see how sin progresses and bears fruit. Adam's original sin was against God but we shall see that Cain sinned not only against God but also against his brother, illustrating the natural progression of sin.

"Cain's Religion and Abel's Relationship. The two brothers, Cain and Abel, each offered sacrifices to God. Cain brought the "fruit of the ground" (Genesis 4:3) as his offering and God did not accept it. Abel, on the other hand, brought by faith the sacrifice of an unblemished animal which God accepted (see Hebrews 11:4). Why was one rejected and the other accepted?

"God was not playing favorites with Cain and Abel. Both were Adam's sons and were as fallen and alienated from God as was Adam. Both brothers were equally religious in the sense that they each brought offerings to God. The difference, however, was in their heart attitudes."¹

"The author's purpose seems to be to use the narrative of Cain and Abel to teach a lesson on the kind of worship that is pleasing to God. Worship that pleases God springs from a pure heart. How does the narrative teach a lesson about a pure heart? It does so by allowing the reader to see, behind the scenes, the response of Cain to God's rejection. In his response we see the heart that lay behind the unaccepted offering.

"5-7 Rather than attempting to discover what was wrong with Cain's offering, we would be better advised simply to take notice that the author has omitted any explanation. He was apparently less concerned about Cain's offering than he was Cain's response to the Lord's rejection of his offering. Whatever the cause of God's rejection of Cain's offering, the narrative itself focuses our attention to Cain's response. It is there that the narrative seeks to make its point. Cain's response was twofold: (1) anger against God (v. 4b) and (2) anger against his brother (v. 8). By stating the problem in this way, the author surrounds his lesson on "pleasing offerings" with a subtle narrative warning: "by their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt 7:20). In his understanding of the importance of a pure heart in worship, the author is very close in his ideas to those expressed by Jeremiah against the false and hypocritical worshipers in his day. Just as Jeremiah pleaded with his people "to do well [im-heteb tetibu NIV, "if you really change"] ... and do not shed innocent blood," lest they be exiled from their land (Jer 7:5-7), so God pleaded with Cain to "do what is right" (im-tetib) or face the consequences of shedding innocent blood and exile from the land (v. 7; cf. v. 12)."¹

While preparing this lesson, consider your role as a teacher. Are you offering yourself by faith to God to be used by Him as Abel did? Or are you depending on your own abilities to please God, as Cain did?

¹ Martha McCallum, Jane Hamblin, *God's Incredible Plan*, Media Concepts, Xenos Christian Fellowship, pp. 29, 31.

¹ Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit addition) Version 2.6, © 1989-1998, The Zondervan Corporation, Genesis 4:3-4, 5-7.

LESSON PLAN

SET UP	Instructions: Set up 2 tents in the room side by side for the LESSON. Drape sheets using chairs and tables as a frame. Separate the tents by a Velcro line on the floor. One tent should be labeled "Man's Way" and the other tent "God's Way." The picture of Cain and Abel, bowl of fruit and stuffed lamb should be stored inside the "Man's Way" tent.
INCORPORATION 15-20 MIN	Activity Stations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Craft – One Way to God Mazes Instructions: Give each student a cardstock maze, one ½" magnet, one adhesive-backed magnetic strip, and a sticker. Have the students cut the dotted lines on the maze. With a ruler and pencil, score the outside solid lines then fold toward the maze. Stick a sticker on the adhesive side of the other magnet. To use the maze, put the sticker magnet at the starting point of the maze. Hold the ½" magnet under the maze and try to guide the sticker magnet through it. While students are working discuss the concept that there is only one way to God just as there is only one way from the start to the finish of the maze. We can try going other ways, but will always end up at a dead end. ● Missions Prayer Instructions: Talk about and pray for Oasis Giving campaign and adopted missionary child.
LESSON -- LG GROUP 10 MIN	<p>Today we're going to read about the first two brothers who looked pretty much the same on the outside but were very different on the inside. Everyone grab a Bible and sit in front of the tents.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Two Camps (Teacher, begin by sitting in the "Man's Way" camp.)</i></p> <p>Open your Bibles to Genesis 4. This is the story of the first 2 sons of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve had been sent out of Eden. They then had two sons, Cain and Abel. These two sons were very different. As these boys grew up, I'm sure their parents told them about God and His love.</p> <p>Follow along as I read Genesis 4:2-4a.</p> <p>(Pull key verse out of tent.) Our key verse says, "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). This verse tells us that our faith is what pleases God. What is faith? What does it mean if I say I have faith that this chair will hold me up when I sit down? It means that I believe this chair will hold me up when I put my weight on it. My belief or faith is in the chair, not in myself. (Pull out picture of Cain and Abel.) Although Cain and Abel were doing the same thing—each bringing a gift to God—God knew each of their hearts. Abel had faith in God and Cain had faith in himself. It was because of Abel's faith in God that He was pleased with Abel's gift. So, the key verse means that if I don't put my faith in God, I can't please Him. Some people, like Cain, think they please God because of what they do. But God sees our hearts and knows if our faith is in Him or in ourselves. God is pleased when we believe in Him and have faith in what He has done for us. Who can tell me what He has done for us? (Jesus died for us to pay for our sins.)</p> <p>Read Genesis 4:4b-6 with me. How did God receive the gifts that were offered? (He accepted Abel and his gift, but did not accept Cain and his gift.) Why do you think God accepted Abel's gift and not Cain's? (Take the bowl of fruit and vegetables out of the tent.) Look at the fruit and vegetables like the ones Cain gave God. Is there anything wrong with them? (No.) Abel gave his best lamb. (Take lamb out of tent.) Cain and Abel both gave God good gifts. So does God like lamb better than fruit and vegetables? God knew the hearts of these two men. Listen as I read Hebrews 11:4. "It was by faith that Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. God said he was pleased with the gifts Abel offered and called Abel a good man because of his faith." Cain and Abel were both born separated from God in "Man's Way" camp. But God gave</p>

	<p>them both the choice to do things God's way or man's way. Even though Cain's heart was unwilling to trust God, God loved him and offered him forgiveness. All Cain had to do was to admit that he was angry and jealous, thank God that He wanted to accept Him and ask God to forgive Him. But instead, Cain's anger got worse, he decided not to receive God's forgiveness and he killed Abel. Even after that, God gave him a chance again to say he was sorry, but Cain wouldn't. So God had to send him away to wander far from his family for the rest of his life.</p> <p>Just like Cain and Abel, all of us start out in this camp—Man's Way. We have faith when we believe we are acceptable to God because of what He has done. Our faith shows when we follow His way. (Get up and walk across the line to God's camp.) Those who choose to go to God knowing He will accept them because Jesus died for their sins are in the "God's Way" camp. They know they can't be good enough to be friends with God. They have faith in God. They believe that they can only be friends with God because Jesus died on the cross for them. For the rest of our lives our faith in God's forgiveness must increase as we become more and more aware of our sinfulness.</p> <p>Even though Cain and Abel were doing the same thing—each bringing a gift to God, God knew what was inside each of their hearts. God knew that Abel had faith in God's love and acceptance. Abel knew that he was a sinner and needed forgiveness. <u>In faith, Abel gave the gift of his best lamb out of gratitude for God's acceptance.</u> Cain took his offering to God <u>trusting in his own goodness and expecting God to accept him because of the offering.</u> The difference was in their heart attitudes toward God. Cain and Abel looked the same on the outside, but inside, their hearts toward God were very different.</p>
TRANSITION – 2 MIN	We're going to play a game.
LEARNING ACTIVITY #1 – LG GROUP 10 MIN	GAME -- AIRPORT² Goal: To illustrate the importance of dependence on the one who "sees" where we are going rather on ourselves. Instructions: Divide the class into pairs. One person becomes the "pilot" while the other partner is the "air traffic controller." One pair runs the course. The rest of the players become the runway by forming two lines about eight feet apart with the lines facing each other. Obstacles, such as chairs, books, boxes, shoes and so on, are placed on the runway. Be careful not to use objects that will be harmful if stepped on or bumped into. The air traffic controller stands at one end of the runway. The pilot is blindfolded and stands at the opposite end. The controller verbally guides the pilot down the runway so that the pilot avoids obstacles and the people on either side. Try the same game but have two pilots, two controllers and two runways working simultaneously. Debrief - This game was a picture of what it is like to depend on God rather than ourselves. God wants to guide us like the controller wanted to guide the pilot. When we choose to depend on Him rather than our own good works, we see the need to depend more on Him and we get to know Him better.
TRANSITION – 2 MIN	Let's get into small groups to talk about the difference between responding to God by faith and by doing things on our own.
LEARNING ACTIVITY #3 – SM GROUPS 10 MIN Rationale: to apply scripture to real life.	Even after we have changed camps by believing in Christ by faith, we have the same choice to make every day for the rest of our lives. Do we want to follow God by trusting in Him or by trusting ourselves? Repeat the key verse. "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to you to have faith? What does it look like to have faith in God? What

² Bob Gregson, *The Incredible Indoor Games Book*, © 1982 by Fearon Teacher Aids, p. 85.

does it look like when you trust in yourself? (The idea is to have the students verbalize what faith in God vs. faith in self looks like in their lives, e.g., when I'm afraid I tell God and ask Him to help me/run & hide; when I get impatient with my little brother, I apologize/yell at him, etc.)

- Is there something that you know would be good for you to do, but you just can't do it? Do you know a Bible passage that might be helpful? (You're looking here for kids to talk about how God might be calling on them to depend on Him rather than on themselves.)
- Who has an example of a time you did what God said and depended on Him to give you the ability or courage to do it? (Teachers, you may need to get the students going with your own age-appropriate example.)
- Do you think you will ever get to the place where you will always trust God and never trust yourself? (It's important for the students to know that they have a sin nature that will fight to have control of their decisions until they die. They should never be surprised that they sin, but ready to admit their sin and thank Jesus that His death paid for that, too.)

Let's **pray** that we will remember that God accepts us because of what Jesus did on the cross. If you have never admitted to God that you know you need His forgiveness, you can make that choice at any time. Let's thank the Holy Spirit that He lives in God's children and will give us everything we need to fight temptation and to take those steps of faith to move out to do what He tells us.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Play with mazes and discuss the two ways to God. Only one way is successful.

Maze Solution: Created with Discover Channel School's PuzzleMaker.

