

SIN SPREADS

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

After the first transgression, sin and its consequences spread rapidly throughout all people.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Genesis 4–5

+ **SETTING:**

Sin began its tragic, virulent spread the moment Adam and Eve took and ate. In consequence for their transgression, God condemned our first parents to exile and death, among other curses related to the Fall. Still, God graciously gave new life through children. Adam and Eve's family made a life east of Eden, multiplying in number but sadly also in transgression. The curse of sin and death impacts every generation, but the promise of an offspring to crush the serpent's head and bring salvation still remains.

DAY 1

READ:

Genesis 4

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 4:1-2

NOTES

Some of the best Internet videos are those of gender reveals gone wrong. Those poor parents just wanting to reveal the gender of their baby become viral sensations as the over-the-top production slides off the rails. It's hard to fault them, really. Becoming a parent is a joyous occasion, and who doesn't need more reasons to celebrate in life?

Eve certainly found reason to celebrate upon the birth of her son, a joyful occasion she recognized had occurred with the Lord's gracious help (Gen. 4:1). In a fallen world, away from the presence of God, banished from the garden, perhaps Eve thought this day would never come. Maybe she imagined a lonely existence. Adam remained by her side, but even that relationship paled in comparison to what they once were together. Sin separated them from God but also from one another. Once naked and unashamed, now skins hid the parts of them they didn't want each other to see.

But out of the sorrows of death came new life in Cain. Just as God had commanded, they were being fruitful and multiplying. Things were different, yes, but God was bringing fresh life into the world.

Of course, Cain wasn't as "good" as his parents were originally. He was born in sin and born under sin. His life eventually proved it. But before there was the first physical death, there was the first physical birth. Eve was doing one of the things God made her to do. She was the mother of all the living.

God's grace is evident in such things. Our sin separates us from Him, but that doesn't mean He's removed entirely. God still cares. He created His people for a purpose, and He will see to it that it is accomplished. Eve had a baby with the Lord's help, fulfilling her mission to fill the earth.

God was gracious to her, and He'll be gracious to you too. When He is, it's a reason to celebrate.

How are you experiencing God's grace over you today?

DAY 2

READ:

Genesis 4:1-5; Hebrews 11

FOCAL PASSAGES:

Genesis 4:3-5;
Hebrews 11:4

NOTES

Hebrews 11 is a very special chapter of the Bible, known by many as the “Hall of Faith.” Included in its 40 verses are numerous Old Testament examples of people who lived by faith, trusting God would bring a Savior as He had promised time and time again. All the people you would expect are there: Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and so on. There are so many examples that the author of Hebrews doesn’t have the time to address all of them, so he resorts to quick, one-phrase summaries of unnamed “heroes” to include as many as he can (Heb. 11:32-38).

The very first inductee into this Hall of Faith, however, is Abel, one we likely would not expect (Heb. 11:4). The second-born of his father, Adam, Abel is a man whom we know best as the brother murdered by Cain—the first human death in the Bible, the first human casualty of sin. His brief life was marked by two things: he tended flocks in the field and he offered a sacrifice that pleased the Lord.

Just as in Genesis 4, Hebrews doesn’t say anything more than Abel’s offering was better than Cain’s. No reason is given. There is no mention of the livestock to indicate that perhaps God appreciated a blood sacrifice more than grain, nor any mention of Cain’s or Abel’s works to put the men in the position of earning their way into God’s favor. The only distinction mentioned is Abel’s faith—not something he did but his belief in the One to whom he offered his sacrifice.

Abel was a righteous man who offered a better sacrifice not because he had no sin but because he trusted God. His life was cut short before he was full of days. But he still speaks through his faith. In the final analysis, faith is all that matters. Not faith in ourselves, of course, but faith in the One whose blood speaks a better word (Heb. 12:24).

What does it look like to live by faith, and how does Abel’s example show us the way?

DAY 3

READ:

Genesis 4:6-16

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 4:6-7

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #44: TEMPTATION AND SIN

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet, He never sinned but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).

One of the remarkable things these early chapters of Genesis show is the interaction between God and human beings. After Adam sinned, God came with questions (3:9,11). And when Cain was tempted to sin, God again came with questions.

Does God still ask questions today? He may not speak in the same way as He did in this instance, but does He still communicate with us? Does He still come after we've sinned or in the moment of our temptation with questions to clarify our motives and lead us to repentance and faith?

The only right answer to this question is yes. No, God doesn't come walking in the evening with a question on His lips, but He does abide with us by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). The Spirit reminds us of God's Word (John 14:26). He convicts us of sin (John 16:8). He guides us to the truth (John 16:13). He helps us in our weakness (Rom. 8:26-27).

Through the Holy Spirit, God's presence is still with us. When we open our Bibles, the Spirit helps us understand. He asks questions of our hearts. He convicts us when we need it. He does for us today what God did for Adam and Cain so long ago, now primarily through His inspired Word.

The only real question remaining is a simple but profound one: Are we listening? Is God's voice the one we listen to? Are we responding, or are we like Cain, who made no response to God's warning and ignored His wisdom and counsel altogether?

How might your life be different today if you opened the Bible and listened to God's Word?

DAY 4

READ:

Genesis 4:17-26

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 4:19-24

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Lamech is a type of the world, by which Moses wishes to show what sort of a heart, will, and wisdom the world has. It is as if he were saying: 'This is the way the seed of the serpent conducts itself. This is the way the children of this world conduct themselves. They amass riches; they pursue pleasures; they strive after power, and by their tyranny they misuse it against the true church, which they pursue and kill. But while they commit such great sins, they have no feeling of alarm; but they are proud and smug.'"¹

-Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Lamech is a particularly awful character in the early pages of the Bible. He appears in Genesis 4:19-24 as a polygamous murderer. What is his purpose? Why did God see to it that he wasn't overlooked in the biblical narrative?

Lamech is a lesson.

Lamech's sins were heinous. He not only killed but boasted about killing. He not only married multiple women but related to both as a brute, sharing his ugly deeds with them through his sickening song, making them share in his misdeeds. No one could stand in his way. If Cain was to be avenged seven times, then Lamech would be seventy-seven times (Gen. 4:24)!

If Cain didn't get the job done, then Lamech is the sign to the careful Bible reader that sin has done a thorough job of spreading from generation to generation. Lamech was merciless. He was the kind of man we would not want to work with, live near, or befriend. Yet the lesson isn't only not to associate with such people but also not to become one!

Jesus shows us a better way. One wonders if Jesus had in mind Lamech's boast as He taught His disciples years later. Peter asked Jesus how often he must forgive a brother who sins against him. Peter, in an attempt to sound gracious, offered seven as a reasonable number. Jesus said not even close. Instead of seven times, he should forgive seventy-seven times (Matt. 18:21-22).

In God's economy, it is not the vengeance we take upon others but the forgiveness we grant that leaves a legacy. A quiet life of forgiveness never makes the news. It never reaches the top of the dogpile. It probably won't win an award or make a big splash. But it is of heaven. It is the kind of life Jesus calls us to and one that will never leave a bitter taste in our mouths.

Whom do you need to forgive today that you have so far only harbored ill will toward?

DAY 5

READ:

Genesis 5

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Genesis 5:1-5

NOTES

Andrew Peterson has a song based on Matthew's genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17) on his Christmas album, *Behold the Lamb of God*. Most people don't take the time to even read the genealogies. Peterson sings them!

The album is an overview of the Christmas story. Beginning with the exodus story, the listener goes all the way to the birth of Christ. You can't get there without the historical record of the Old Testament, including all the names.

Genealogies are a big part of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. We can't read too far into Genesis before finding the first one. Adam and Eve have sons, and those sons have sons, and so forth.

What can we make of a list of names? At first glance, maybe not much. Most of the stories behind the names are lost to history. All we know about them is said in who they were fathered by and whom they fathered. But without them, we lose the line of people that takes us to Jesus.

When Seth was born in Genesis 5:3, it was the beginning of the line that eventually takes us to Christ. Without Seth, there would be no Noah. Without Seth, there would be no Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Boaz or David or Solomon or Mary or the Christ child in a manger two thousand years ago. Jesus came into the world through a lineage of people—sinful, every one of them, which is why He came (Matt. 1:21).

The next time you come upon a genealogy in the Bible, don't overlook it to get to the next story. It is a story—part of the family story of the Savior and His people.

Think a moment about the long line from Seth to Jesus. How does this increase your gratitude for God's plan of redemption?

GROUP

NOTES

POINT 1: Transgression spread throughout the generations (Gen. 4:1-8).



What do you see in these verses that shows the effects of sin in the world?

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #44: TEMPTATION AND SIN

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet, He never sinned but faithfully _____ temptation and followed the _____ of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on _____ against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we _____ for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).



How can we rule over sin?

POINT 2: Wickedness spread throughout the generations (Gen. 4:17-24).

Cain's line of descendants grew, fulfilling God's _____ mandate (Gen. 1:28), even after their forefather's heinous _____ of his brother. This is an example of God's _____.



What are some ways we have experienced God's grace through people fulfilling God's cultural mandate?

Though God's grace was active, wickedness continued to spread deep in the hearts of sinners. Lamech, as an example, followed the path of his forefather, Cain, and _____ murdered a man in _____.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Whoever hates is a murderer. You may not have prepared any poison or committed a crime. You have only hated, and in doing so, you have killed yourself first of all."²

-Augustine (354-430)

POINT 3: Death spread throughout the generations (Gen. 5:3-5).

The genealogy of Genesis 5 reveals God's _____ to His word. First, though righteous Abel was murdered by wicked Cain, God provided another son, Seth, through whom would come the promised "_____."

 **Why might death cause us to question the faithfulness of God?**

Second, God was faithful to His word that Adam's sin would end in _____, and we all suffer under the consequence of our forefather's choice. But God's faithfulness in this punishment _____ we can trust Him for our salvation in Jesus.

 **How have you seen God prove Himself faithful even through seemingly impossible circumstances?**

MY RESPONSE

Because sin is an affront to God and brings great harm to us and others, we are to fight against sin in our lives and stand against sin in our culture, all while declaring and resting in the forgiveness found in Christ Jesus.

- **HEAD:** How does a proper understanding of sin prepare us for a proper understanding of the gospel?
- **HEART:** What does the gospel say to us when we feel the weight of our sins upon us?
- **HANDS:** What sins do you need to confess and repent of today?

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Love is the great divide between the children of God and the children of the devil. Those who have love are children of God, and those who do not are children of the devil. Have anything else you like, but if you lack this one thing, then all the rest is of no use to you whatsoever. On the other hand, you may lack almost anything else, but if you have this one thing, you have fulfilled the law."³

-Bede (c. 673-735)