

# Raising Cain: the Beginning of Child Rebellion

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**Text:** Genesis 4:1-16

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**Series:** Genesis: The Book of Beginnings

**Text and Theme:** Please open your Bibles to Genesis 4. Genesis is the book of beginnings. We've seen the beginning of creation. The beginning of sin in the universe. We saw last week with Cain's offering, the beginning of false religion. Today we are going to see the beginning of Child Rebellion. The title of the message is "Raising Cain". When you say someone is raising Cain, that's not a good thing that they're doing. The way of Cain is accursed according to Jude. And the way he deals with life is destructive, and his life ends in destruction.

Now we see this pattern in Cain, and we see it in our own children. If we do not reach our children with Christ, they will serve themselves and their lives will end in rebellion, misery and utter selfishness. Let's read our text.

**Genesis 4:1-16**, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.'" 2 And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. 3 ¶ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 6 ¶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." 8 ¶ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. 9 ¶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." 13 ¶ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." 15 Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him."

**Introduction:** Our story begins with the birth of two brothers. Genesis 4 picks up where Genesis 3 ends. Sin had entered God's perfect world. It came in through an open window near the dark corner where God's rule and man's freedom meet. Both sides of

the equation are true. God is in control. He is sovereign, and yet He loves us enough to allow us room to make responsible choices. Our first parents chose poorly. We have all gone astray. We are all dead in Adam. Cain was dead in Adam and needed faith to made alive. Now he came to the Lord, but he came in the wrong way.

**Illustration:** Now this is not rocket science. You can sincerely go to the White House to meet the president, but if you go to anywhere else than 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, you are not where the president lives. Someone could give you the wrong address, or you could misinterpret the directions. The fact is unless you are at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, you went the wrong way!

And so we find two brothers, Cain and Abel. Cain may have been sincere—he was certainly diligent in his offering. But he came the wrong way. He did not come in faith. He came through his own efforts. Because his efforts failed, he enraged. His offering was not accepted, and so in a rage, he makes plans for an end game where he gets to control everything. And it is into this state that we are born, and all our children find themselves as well “dead in the trespasses and sins” (**Ephesians 2:1**). Our children are by nature prone to control their own lives, and it will lead to their own destruction.

What can we do about this? I don’t think Adam and Eve woke up one day and said, “You know I want our first born son to grow up and be the first murderer!” That didn’t happen. No one likes or plans for their children to rebel. And sometimes in spite of the best efforts of godly parents, children still break their children’s hearts and rebel.

**Explanation:** What is surprising is not that Adam and Eve produced a murderer. What is a shock is that Abel came to faith in the Lord. God had grace on Adam and Eve and bel and therefore, the whole human race did not become extinct. Now it is rapidly headed toward extinction. Very shortly after Adam dies, the whole earth is in rebellion, and all but Noah’s family are swimming in the waters of God’s judgment.

How can we identify and stop the rebellion that our children inherit from us? Our children are prone to sin. How can we recognize it and what do we do with it?

Let’s **recognize** this rebellion. Many parents are scratching their heads wondering why everyone is after their son or daughter. They see nothing wrong with their son or daughter. How could anyone think any thing ill of my boy or my girl. Though all of us have personal responsibility for our sins, there are many parents who could have stepped into their children’s life recognized their lostness and confronted them with the Gospel, and they did not or will not. Rebellion is life lived outside of the control of Christ. A person can be a philanthropist and be a rebel. They want to do things their way. Check out what a life outside of Christ’s control looks like in the life of Cain.

I. Rebellion is characterized by **force** (vs. 8).

Verse 8, “Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.”

Boiling with rage, Cain sought out his brother in the field. He spoke to his brother. We don't know what they talked about. Certainly it was a lure. Cain had murder in his heart. He thought of no one but himself.

A. Cain's spiritual children. We can imagine what they talked about simply by listening to Cain's spiritual heirs. Steve Chalke wrote a book endorsed by Brian McClaren that called the idea of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ "cosmic child abuse". Specifically he wrote:

"The fact is that the cross is not a form of cosmic child abuse, a vengeful father punishing his son for an offense he has not even committed."<sup>1</sup>

So if you believe that Jesus substituted for your sins and bore the wrath of God, you are offending many who believe that that is just barbaric and primal and abusive. This is how Cain's spiritual children think about Christ's substitution for us. They reject it as presented in the Scriptures.

Cain did not come to God through faith as Abel is recording as coming in Hebrews 11. The cross of Jesus Christ in the symbolic form of a sacrificial lamb was not good enough for Cain, and it is being rejected by Cain's spiritual children today.

Listen if you want to raise Cain in your home, let your child get his way. Don't hold him accountable for his sins. Don't show him that his way deserves hell. Don't give him the law to make him desperate in his sins. Don't show him the bloody cross of Christ to atone for your child's sins.

I can imagine Cain was repulsed by the blood and gore of the sacrifice. He might have wanted Abel to be more refined, more distinguished and thoughtful and reasonable.

And then filled with rage, Cain, whose religion was too refined to slay a lamb, "rose up against his brother Abel and killed him" (vs. 8).

B. Cain's fast spreading religion.

Of course Cain's religion has spread today. Before it was an hour old, Cain's religion produced the world's first martyr. Every drop of blood shed on earth ever since has spread Cain's religion.

People are addicted to their own way, and intoxicated with enough power, and not having the grace of the Lord, they are prone to destroy life if it gets in the way of their own plans.

**Application:** Does your child think he or she is the center of the universe. One of the early church fathers said that there are some children that if they had the

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Chalke. *The Lost Message of Jesus*, 182, 183.

power they would murder to get their way. They only thing that holds them back is their weakness.

**Application:** Use the Law of God to bring your children into the light of their rebellion, Present the bloody sacrifice of Christ to them every time they disobey.

II. Rebellion is characterized by **Falsehood** (vs. 9).

**Verse 9**, “Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know...”

With shameless audacity Cain lied to the face of God. Those who believe in their own way will hold on to the control of their own lives in the broad daylight of the truth.

Cain knew where his brother was. He lied. Be very careful not to allow falsehood in your home.

Now understand we all have a nature to lie. “The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked who can know it?”

**Application:** The greatest deceit perpetrated in the heart of man is that our heart tells us we will get away with sin. Our heart tells us that sin is worth rebelling against God. This is rebellion. Our heart says that sin will pay off. But the Bible says “there is a way that seems right to a man, and that end leads to death”.

III. Rebellion is characterized by a **Forsaking** of responsibility (vs. 9).

**Verse 9**, “Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; **am I my brother’s keeper?**”

You are your brother’s keeper. You have a responsibility for how your brother or sister lives. We are told to proclaim the Gospel to every creature. We need to tell our children constantly of their responsibility to God and others.

IV. Rebellion is characterized by **Futility** (vs. 10-12). Sin does not pay. It ends in death!

**Verses 10-12**, “And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

It is futile to fight with God! You cannot win! John 3:36; Romans 6:23. Sin always ends in death and misery.

V. Rebellion is characterized by **Fear** of responsibility (vs. 13-15).

Verses 13-15, "Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." 15 Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him."

There is no remorse, no repentance in Cain's religion, only looking out for what's good for him. Don't be deceived. He lived. He left behind a thriving civilization.

Cain feared that he would not be great in the earth. Cain became great. He apparently helped civilization to grow. But what did he do for God's kingdom. If you kids grow up to be successful in the business world, it's vain if they don't know Christ.

**Conclusion:** What will it profit a child if they grow up and gain the whole world and lose their own soul? Catch the rebellion of their heart with the mirror of the law and give them the Gospel!