

September 6 – Work With Me on This!

Explore the mystery of Cain and Abel and a question the Genesis story never directly answers: Why was Abel's offering pleasing to God while Cain's was not? We will look beyond the differences in the offerings and consider a deeper possibility, that God designed us to be co-creative companions. We were made to work WITH God rather than FOR God. We will explore how communion with God transforms our work from an attempt to earn His favor into a fruitful expression of joyful companionship.

Scripture:

Genesis 4:1-16 NLT

Now Adam[j] had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the Lord's help, I have produced[b] a man!" 2 Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.
When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. 3 When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. 4 Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, 5 but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. 6 "Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? 7 You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." 8 One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him. 9 Afterward the Lord asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?" 10 But the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! 11 Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. 12 No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth." 13 Cain replied to the Lord, "My punishment is too great for me to bear! 14 You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!" 15 The Lord replied, "No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the Lord put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. 16 So Cain left the Lord's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

John 15:1-17 NLT

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. 9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

Questions:

- Where in your life are you working FOR God when God may be inviting you to work WITH him?
- What does the fruit of your work reveal about its source?
- What would it look like this week to abide rather than strive?

Reading for the Week:

Monday: 1 Corinthians 3:7-9
Tuesday: Philippians 2:12-13
Wednesday: Matthew 11:28-30
Thursday: Colossians 3:23-24
Friday: Hebrews 2:9-11