

ALTARS

Title: **ALTAR OF CAIN & ABEL**

Date: February 4, 2024

Leader's Notes:

1. Start and end the life group on time.
2. Facilitate discussions with your group and **give all attendees opportunities to share their thoughts**. Encourage participation.

Life Group Discussion Proper

WORSHIP: (15 mins)

Option 1: In person - Home gatherings

Suggestions: Assign someone to lead worship or play two praise & worship songs from You Tube.

Option 2: In person gatherings at a public place (park, school, café) or Online home gathering (via Zoom).

Suggestions: Ask people to share testimonies of answered prayers or ask the question: Ask the group, "What are you thankful to God about this past week?"

Main Text: Genesis 4:1-11 NIV

Ice-breaker Questions:

Q: How many of us growing up remember the sacrifices our parents made for us (*providing our needs, sending us to school, etc.*)?

Q: How many of us appreciate the freedom we have in Canada all because of the sacrifices of those who fought in previous wars?

Intro: During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus communicated a very important guideline regarding what to do before offering a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem, which in principle is still relevant to our present-day worship of God.

WELCOME:(15 mins): I.W.C. - Introduce yourself. Welcome guests/first-time visitors. Cheerfully call someone to do the same.

Ice-breaker: Ask the group, what is your definition of "Sacrifice?" Ask for participation.

Sacrifice - means the surrendering of a possession as an offering to the Lord. It means giving something up something that we value.

- Sacrifice often involve surrendering or relinquishing something cherished, whether it be possessions, time, effort, comfort, or personal desires, in order to achieve a desired outcome, fulfill a duty, or honor a commitment.

WORD (30–45 mins)

1. ABEL DEALT WITH HIS SIN ACCORDING TO GOD'S PRESCRIPTION, BUT CAIN DID NOT – One of the fundamental reasons for offering a sacrifice to God on an altar was for the sake of atoning for the sins committed by the worshipper.

Q: What is your understanding of the word "atonement?"

Ans. Atonement is the process of causing sin to be forgiven or pardoned. In the O.T., an animal sacrifice is required by God for atonement to be possible. *"The Hebrew word "kaphar" in the O.T. is translated as "atonement" and it means "to cover." Atonement involved the sacrifice of an innocent animal, and by the shed blood of that animal, God would see the sins of the person(s) who offered the sacrifice, covered."* Dennis Jacob, Pastor

Q: How do you feel that something has to die or be sacrificed in order to be forgiven?

Atonement in the N.T. - It is the doctrine concerning the reconciliation of God and humankind, accomplished through the life, suffering, and death of Christ. (Read John 1:29, John 14:6, Romans 3:22-25)

In offering an animal sacrifice, the worshipper is willing to confront their sins in repentance because they value their relationship with God and desire nothing to stand between them and God. God prescribed that for forgiveness to be earned and His favor to be enjoyed, an innocent animal must be sacrificed. Abel offered what we believe to be instituted later in the Law of Moses, specifying the type of animal and the specific parts to be sacrificed. **(Read Genesis 4:4)** Abel was obedient to the dot. He truly valued God and his relationship with Him. The firstborn represents the best of the flock, and the fat portions symbolize the finest part of the sheep.

Continuation:

Read Hebrews 11: 4, *“By faith Abel offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”*

God accepted Able’s offering but rejected Cain’s because he was not willing to address his sins, so he offered something that was not required by the LORD in order to receive forgiveness.

Q: Have you ever felt rejected before? How did you cope with the rejection?

Read: Hebrews 11:4 NLT

Abel’s offering was based on what he heard from his parents that was the prescribed way to deal with his sins and worship God. His obedience still had impact even in his death, “he still speaks to us by his example of faith.”

Lesson Application:

Abel offered his sacrifice following God’s way for dealing with sin. We come to God in faith through the completed work of Christ—the sacrifice of His life on the cross—for the forgiveness of our sins. Through repentance and surrendering our lives to Christ, we become acceptable and pleasing in God’s sight. This is the only way approved by God; any other path will be rejected.

2. THE OFFERINGS OF ABEL AND CAIN LED TO COMPLETELY OPPOSITE OUTCOMES

In God’s sight, Abel found favor, whereas Cain faced rejection. Both offered their offerings, anticipating a favorable response from God, but only Abel’s was accepted because he approached it with faith in God and His ways. Abel was not affected by anger and sin, in contrast to Cain, who was consumed by the very sin he should have addressed according to God’s prescription. He became angry and depressed.

- Sin made Cain hate and murder his brother instead of being a brother’s keeper. Read: Genesis 4:6-9

v.8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?””

Q: How do you feel about sibling rivalry? Have you experience this growing up?

Cain went astray because he failed to worship in the correct manner. He was overwhelmed by sin which impacted his decisions, causing him misery, and leading to murder his own brother. His unacceptable way of worshipping God led to one wrong decision after another like a chain reaction!

- Abel received God’s blessing, while Cain incurred a curse. Despite Cain’s act of murdering Abel, God continues to hold Abel in high esteem.

Read Genesis 4:10-11, Hebrews 11:4a

“The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.” “Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith...”

Q: As Abel being dead and yet still has impact to this very day, what do you think can be your own legacy of faith?

Q: In what way or ways can you consider yourself an Abel or Cain worshipper?

Q: Are there times we worship according to God’s way and at times according to your own way?

Conclusion:

If we choose to be an Abel-type worshipper, expect the eternal favor of God. If you choose to be a Cain-type worshipper, expect to be rejected by God, suffer in life and even in eternity. God’s way, through His Son Jesus Christ, **is the only way to be forgiven of all our sins and be restored to a right relationship with Him.** That is how we enjoy a lifetime of God’s favor and an eternity with Him awaiting us.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST TAKE-AWAY FROM THE LESSON?

Tell your group to partner with someone and ask this question to their partner.

Q: What impacted you the most from this lesson?

WORK: The Challenge & Closing prayer (15 mins.)

1. Memorize a verse from your devotions this week and be prepared to share it on our next gathering.

2. Please take time in your smaller groups to pray for one another. If there are specific needs, take time to lift them up to God in prayer as well. Ask each other, **“what can I pray for you?”**

Leader’s Notes:

1. Please remind your group of your next gathering and ask them to invite a friend.

2. Please encourage the group to remember to pray for one another during the week.