



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 2 Cain and Abel

Summary of Today's Story

After Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, Eve bears two sons: Cain and Abel. Both make a sacrifice to God upon the altar. God accepts Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's. Angered, Cain kills Abel and then must account to God. God sends Cain away, but puts a mark upon his forehead to protect him from harm by others.

Where You'll Find Today's Story

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

Genesis 4:1-16

In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

In Our Sunday Lectionary

This story is not told in church on any Sunday.



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

The sin of Adam and Eve was not a fluke, not a one-time occurrence. We think of this story of Cain and Abel as “the first murder,” but it is really a continuation of the story of Adam and Eve: sin and its consequence. For Adam and Eve, the sin is against God, a breaking of the commandment “to love the Lord your God.” For Cain, the sin is against another—his brother—breaking the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

We do not know why God rejects Cain’s sacrifice (there have been many guesses, but there is a literary gap here). In fact, it may not have been Cain’s *offering* that was necessarily displeasing to God. Look at God’s advice to Cain: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

The sin has not yet been committed. But the warning seems to be not about the quality of Cain’s sacrifice, but about his attitude—and likely his attitude toward and relationship with God.

Perhaps if Cain had merely given another offering, in humility, or had spoken with God, or given an offering of thanksgiving to God, the outcome might have been different. In Cain’s reaction to God’s non-acceptance of the sacrifice, we see a refusal to accept God, a refusal to accept his dependence on God and a need to control the terms of the sacrifice.

Angry, Cain murders Abel and God condemns Cain. His punishment is to wander the earth. Again, as in the story of Adam and Eve, the consequence of sin is exile from God, not death. The penalty for humankind’s rebellion against God is separation both from God and—as in this story—from other people. Thus, the theme of alienation continues to unfold.

Remember, though, that in the end, God protects Cain’s life, despite his grave sin. *God stays with us, no matter what.*



The Episcopal Thread

This story is not found in any of our Sunday readings, and its lesson is difficult for us.

A look at our confessions found in our *Prayer Book* will help us see the sin of Cain. In the confession for Morning and Evening Prayer Rite I on pages 41 and 62, we say:

...we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws...

Our tendency to do what we ought not to do and to leave undone what we ought to have done is so universal that we confess that failure in our General Confession each week. But as Episcopalians we are careful when we look at the story of Cain and Abel. As Urban T. Holmes III, one of our foremost theologians, says, Episcopalians reject a dichotomy of good and evil, for “we must risk evil if [we are] to know the meaning of the good” (*Spirituality of Ministry*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Press 1982, p. 127).

For us, the way to wholeness always lies through evil, that is, by way of the cross. In other words, we acknowledge the evil that is in each of us; we do not deny it. We also acknowledge the good. And we take faith and find hope in knowing that, in our fragile selves that contain both evil and good, God is with us.

At our worship services, we, like Cain and Abel, offer up a sacrifice to God when we offer the gifts of our life and labor to the Lord in our offertory. We are reminded, however, that these gifts are only tokens of what belongs to God. In truth, we are giving back to God a little of all that God has given us. And we are also reminded that our true offering is the offering of our selves, our obedience and love, our commitment to God and our praise and thanksgiving.

As the celebrant invites us to make our offering, they or she often says a passage from scripture found on pages 376-377 of the *Prayer Book*. As we place our money in the offering plate, these passages tell us what our true offering is:

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High (Psalm 50:14).

... present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1).

Through Christ let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise... (Hebrews 13:15).

This is the kind of offering that pleases God—an offering of ourselves to God out of love and thankfulness for God's great mercy and love for us.



Weaving God's Beloved Community

Cain committed a great crime. And yet God let him live, sent him to a safe place to live in peace, and protected him from others who might want to harm him.

In our society, how do we treat the sinful—those who have been and are incarcerated for their crimes? How do we treat them both in prison and upon their release? How does our justice compare with God's justice? Are our criminal justice policies fair,

or vengeful? Where does redemption belong? God protected Cain's life. Would we?

Topics that can be discussed with children:

How do we treat someone when he or she has done wrong, either in their home life or at school?

Do you think there is such a thing as an unfair punishment?



Gathering

As the children enter the classroom, get them started on a simple activity that relates to the

lesson. Today children could make get-well cards for the homebound in your congregation. Suggest that each child draw a picture and get it signed by everyone, including the teachers.

As an option for the older children, you might offer a brief fellowship time, giving the children an opportunity to catch up with each other on the past week's happenings and establish friendships. This social time is important for building community in the church school class and we encourage you to offer a few minutes for fellowship before the class begins on a regular basis.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer, for example:

- Thank you, God, for bringing us in safety to this new day. Please stay with us as we hear your story and learn about your love and how we can love you. We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*



Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or tell the story in your own words, or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-10. To bring the story to life, try one of these suggestions:

- When telling the story, use voice inflections and hand movements.
- Teach the children to respond with hand movements as they hear the story, for example, *praying hands* as Abel offers his sacrifice.
- Use a flannel board to act out the story.

You'll find more ways to bring the story to life on pages 2-3 in the Appendix, also found on the website.

The story of Cain and Abel is an important part of this year's story—the story of our salvation—but you do not need to explain or analyze it, nor do you need to ask the children to explore its meaning at this time. For now, we just want the children to absorb the story in their heads and hearts and to remember its power. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

Materials

small table with a cloth to cover it
 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
 matches
 Bible
 cross
optional: flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during the Gathering. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses, though we recommend keeping the reading short.

Suggestions for the reading:

For younger children: Genesis 4:8-9

For older children: Genesis 4:8-10

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of Genesis:
(Read the selected passage.)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Ask for prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week.
- Welcome intercessory prayers, asking for God's help or presence for people.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as one of

these adapted from prayers found on page 835 of the *Book of Common Prayer*:

- Give us grateful hearts, O Lord, for all your gifts, and make us mindful of the needs of others, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

or

- Bless, O Lord, this food to our use and us to your loving service, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Or share a favorite grace that you or one of the children say at home.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story of Cain and Abel that the children just heard and to draw out their reactions to it. You might wonder about:

- Cain's reaction to God's displeasure (what could he have done differently?)
- God's response to Cain when Cain asks "Am I my brother's keeper?"
- God's punishment of Cain, which was not capital punishment but exile.

The children may have their own thoughts on this powerful and sad story. Let them talk freely about it. Here are some themes you might pick up on:

- sibling rivalry (*Be careful with this one!*)
- the impossibility of pretending before God
- caring for each other ("I am my brother's keeper.")
- God's protecting of Cain's life
- war and peace

Remind the children that for his wrongdoing, Cain was *not* punished by God with death; God's justice is not like that. God gave Cain *life*, and the "mark of Cain" will *protect* Cain from the vengeance of humanity.



Memorization

Continue encouraging the intermediate children to memorize the books of the Bible. You'll find suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization on page 15 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.



Weaving Our Faith

As the class draws to a close, help the children weave today's lesson together with their life experiences and their own thoughts and ideas by asking the following questions. Such questions help the children assimilate the story and also provide them with a simple synopsis of what they have learned today.

Ask:

- Who did we talk about today?
- What was this story about?
- What did we learn from this lesson?
- What did we learn about God's love?

To help the children remember today's story, remind them of these key words:

- *sin*
- *protect*
- *sacrifice*



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing.

The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- Thank you, Lord, for being with us today. Send us now in peace back to our homes, our families, and our friends, and may we spread your love to all whom we meet this week. We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord."

The children respond:

- Thanks be to God!



Weaving God's Promises

GENESIS 4:1-16

This is God's story about us. God's story in the Bible tells us how we mess up, and how God loves us anyway, no matter what.

Adam and Eve have two sons. The oldest one is Cain. When he is old enough to work, he takes care of the land and grows the food. The second son is Abel. He is younger than Cain, and he takes care of the sheep.

Adam and Eve teach their sons to give thanks to God by offering to God some of the work that they have done. We do this now, when we give money to God in the church as part of our offering of our life and our work. In those days, they didn't give money. They gave whatever they had.

Cain takes care of the land, so he would give some of the food that he has grown, and put it on a pile of stones, and burn it. The smoke from the offering would rise up to the sky along with the prayers that Cain would pray. Like us, he might pray to God, thanking God for everything God has done for him. Or he might ask God for good weather so his crops can grow. Or he might pray for his mother who is sick today.

Abel takes care of the sheep, so he would take one of his best little lambs and give it to God. He would put the lamb on a pile of stones and burn it. The smoke from the offering would rise up to the sky along with Abel's prayers. Maybe Abel gives thanks to God for his sheep, and his family, and his brother. Maybe Abel asks God to take care of his sheep so they don't get sick. And he too would pray for his mother who is sick today.

For some reason—and we don't know why—one day God likes Abel's offering, but God does not like Cain's. We can guess why God took Abel's sheep but turned away from Cain's food. But we don't know.

Cain is very angry. His face grows dark. His eyebrows furrow over his eyes and his mouth tightens into a slit. God sees Cain and says, “Why are you so angry? If you do well, your work will be good. If you do not do well, watch out that you do not do evil.”

But Cain is still angry, and maybe he blames Abel. Maybe he thinks that if he is the only son, God will love him more. Or maybe he thinks that God likes Abel better than God likes Cain. We do not know why Cain does what he does, just like we don’t know sometimes why people do what they do.

Cain finds Abel and says, “Let’s go out to the field.” The two brothers walk to the open field. There, Cain kills Abel and leaves him lying on the ground, bleeding. Cain walks away.

God sees Cain all by himself. He says to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

Cain says, “How should I know? Am I my brother’s babysitter?”

But God is not fooled. God says to Cain, “What have you done? Listen! Listen to your brother’s blood, crying out from the ground!”

Cain hides his face as he listens to God. He cannot hide from God. He cannot shut his ears from what God is saying to him. God says, “It was your hand that killed your brother, and his blood is soaking into the ground. Now that ground is cursed against you. When you try to work the soil to make food, the ground will not grow for you. The earth is against you, because you made the earth take your brother’s blood.”

Then God says, “Because you cannot grow food anymore like a farmer, you will have to wander all over the earth and gather whatever food you can find.”

Cain cries and his heart breaks. He says, “Your punishment is more than I can take! I will be wandering the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me!”

But God is a loving God. Even though Cain killed Abel, God will not kill Cain. God says to Cain, “It is not true that you will be killed. I will put a mark on your forehead, and that mark is a sign to anyone that I protect you. No one who meets you will kill you.”

So Cain goes away to the land of Nod. And there God protects him and stays with him and keeps him safe. For even though we mess up, God stays with us, no matter what.



Weaving God's Promises

WE ARE OUR BROTHERS' KEEPERS for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

God protected Cain even after he did wrong. Likewise, God expected Cain to protect and care for his brother Abel. God also wants us to watch out and care for each other.

Below are a few outreach projects. These are only a few ideas. Look for others on pages 9-11 in the Appendix.

Get Well Cards for the Homebound

Invite the children to fold plain paper in half and make get-well cards for the sick or the homebound in your church to show that we care for them. If they want, the children can attach a small piece of wrapped candy to each card.

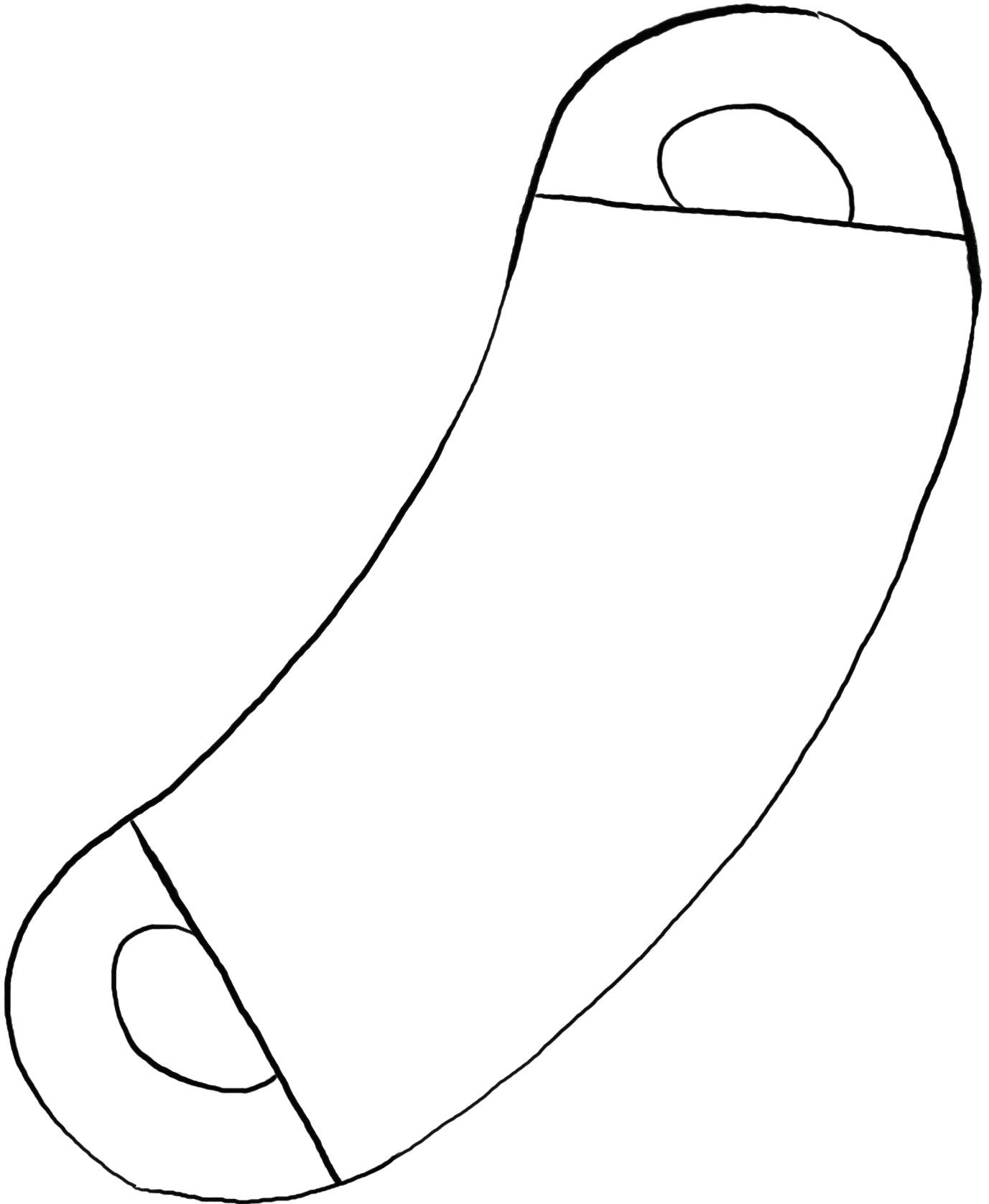
We Care Kits

Invite the children to make small care packages to give to those in your congregation who may be ill. In these packages, include small items such as travel tissues, cough drops, a short scripture reading and perhaps a treat such as a piece of candy or a tissue paper flower made by the children. Encourage the children to use their imagination and own sense of thoughtfulness to tell them what might go into these gifts.

Gift Mugs

Make copies of the *Cup Wrapper Pattern* on page 12. Invite each child to decorate a pattern, cut it out and carefully glue it onto a styrofoam cup. In each cup, place a package of hot chocolate or tea and have the children give their cups as gifts to those who might need cheer.

CUP WRAPPER PATTERN





Weaving God's Promises

AN OFFERING TO GOD for Primary, Elementary

This activity will need to be done in two parts. You can begin it this week, but will need to finish it next week (unless you pick one of the other options).

Children offer a part of themselves—pictures that symbolize who they are—to God.

Materials:

foam sheets, felt or construction paper of various colors
markers
scissors
glue
paper strips
air-drying clay
optional: paints and paintbrushes

Directions:

Invite the children to make their offerings and work together to sculpt an offering plate. Give the children these directions:

1. On felt, foam or paper, draw pictures—about 3" in size—of things that represent who you are or what is important to you. For example, you might draw a heart, flowers, a pet, Bible, cross, a hobby, even a skateboard! Use different colors to make the items—for example, a red and yellow flower—and glue them together.
2. Cut out the pictures and use markers and other materials to embellish them. You may also write your name on the pictures.
3. Work together to mold an offering plate out of the clay. Set it aside to dry (which will take 24 hours).

Next week, when the clay is thoroughly dry, invite the children to finish the offering plate, following these directions:

4. Decorate the plate with paints or markers.

5. Write the words *We offer ourselves to God* or *We give ourselves to God* on the plate, then add your names.
6. Glue or place the pictures and items that you made on the plate as an offering.

Option 1: Have the children make individual offering plates, which they can take home to finish. Encourage them to add more offerings to the plate—notes or pictures of things they are thankful for—whenever they are thankful to God.

Option 2: For a powerful action that involves the entire church, ask that these symbolic offerings be presented to God at the offertory on a Sunday. Talk with your priest or presider and tell her or him what you are doing and what it means. (For this option, the children will not need to make an offering plate.)



Weaving God's Promises

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER QUILT for Preschool, Primary, Elementary

Children make special quilts, which will help remind them each night that they truly are their brother's keeper and that everyone is their brother.

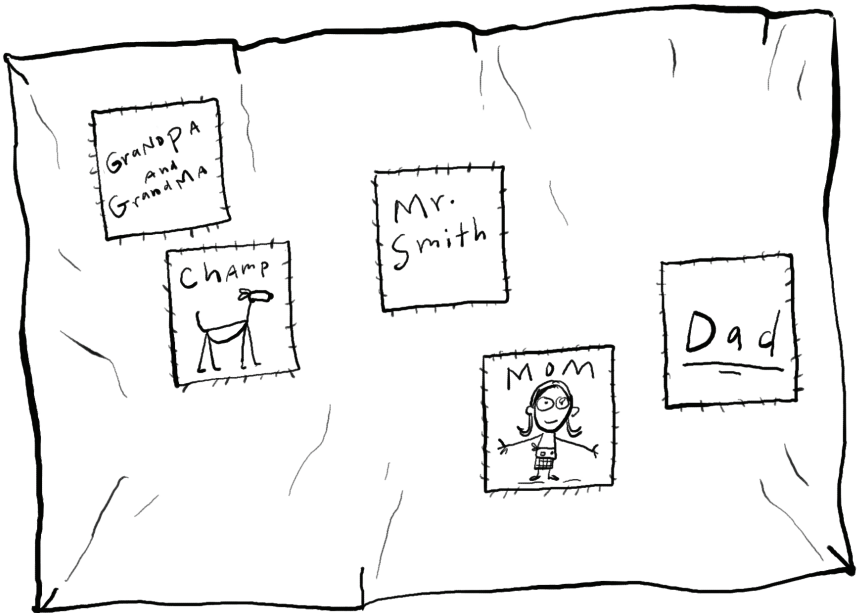
Materials:

- large sheet of fabric for each child
- squares of white fabric (tight weave), several for each child
- permanent markers or fabric paint
- pencils
- fabric glue

Directions:

Give each of the children several squares of white fabric and invite them to make their own special quilt. Help the younger children as needed. Give the children these directions:

1. On each square, write the name or draw a picture of somebody you care about. It may be a parent or parents, siblings, grandparents, other family members, friends, neighbors or even pets. Color it in with markers or fabric paint.
2. Lay out the squares where you want them to be on a large piece of fabric.
3. Using fabric glue, glue the squares to the piece of fabric.





Weaving God's Promises

INCENSE OFFERING TO GOD for Intermediate

In the church, the smoke of incense sends our prayers up to heaven. Children make incense holders for offering up their prayers to God.

Materials:

- stick incense
- empty can, label removed (A tuna fish or pet food can will work.)
- acrylic paints and paintbrushes or 3-D markers
- other decorative materials, if desired
- heat-proof surface

Directions:

Invite the children to make individual incense holders. Give the children these directions:

1. Decorate the outside of a can, using paint, markers and other decorations.
2. Put the incense inside your incense holder.
3. Place the holder on a heat-proof surface and light.

Caution the children: *When burning the incense, be careful—the can will get hot!*





Weaving God's Promises

PRAYER OFFERING for Intermediate

Children write prayers and light them on fire, sending them up in smoke to heaven in this liturgical activity.

This activity should be done in a worshipful setting, with a worshipful attitude. For safety reasons, it probably should also be done outside.

Materials:

- paper, white or various colors
- scissors
- pens or pencils
- cast iron pot or other container that can safely contain the fire
- match or fire starter

Directions:

Invite each child to write a prayer on a piece of paper. Suggest:

- You might write a prayer of thanksgiving, petition, praise and adoration, supplication (asking) or confession.
- You might write a prayer for yourself, for others or for the world.
- You might write more than one prayer.

Ask the children to drop their pieces of paper into the pot. With the children following in a procession, carry the pot to a place where it's safe to have a fire. Light the papers with a match and let the prayers rise up in smoke to heaven.



Weaving God's Promises

CONVERSATION JUMP-START: YOU MAKE ME SO MAD! for Intermediate

Children take a look at their own anger and share some of their thoughts with the class.

Materials:

You Make Me So Mad handout (p. 20)
pen or pencils

Preparations:

Make copies of the handout, 1 per child.

Directions:

Distribute the handout and invite each child to spend a few minutes thinking about and answering the questions. Then jump-start a conversation with these questions:

- Is it wrong to get angry?
- What do you get mad about?
- What do you do about it?
- What does the Bible say about anger?

YOU MAKE ME SO MAD!

- What really makes you mad? List at least two things:

- When I get mad, I _____
_____.

- What do you think? Mark Y for yes, N for no.

_____ Everybody gets mad.

_____ It's not getting mad, but how you express your anger that's right or wrong.

_____ Anger is a sin.

_____ If I am angry, I shouldn't act on it.

_____ There are good and bad ways to be angry.

- What would you do if...

Somebody pours soda pop into your backpack full of books.

You get grounded for something you didn't do.

Someone at school starts to tease you.

- Look up Ephesians 4:26-5:2. What does the author say about how to be when others make you upset?



Weaving God's Promises

“WHERE’S YOUR BROTHER?” for Elementary, Intermediate

Children perform a freeze-frame “musical” about Cain and Abel.

Materials:

Script for “Where’s Your Brother” (pp. 22-23)

Songs for “Where’s Your Brother” (p. 24)

props and costumes, including the offerings of Cain and Abel

optional: video camcorder

Preparation:

Make copies of the *Script for “Where’s Your Brother”* and *Songs for “Where’s Your Brother.”*

Directions:

Invite the children to take part in this musical production.

1. Pick children to play *God, Cain* and *Abel*. Then pick children to be in the Greek Chorus. Hand out copies of the script and songs.
2. Teach the Greek Chorus the songs. (The children may hold the songs printout in their hands while performing so they only need to learn how the words and the tune fit together.)
3. Meanwhile, *God, Cain* and *Abel* review the script and prepare costumes and props. (The costumes can be contemporary.)
4. When ready, read the script while *Cain, Abel* and *God* act out the parts.
5. When it is time for the *Greek Chorus* to sing—as indicated in the script—the actors freeze.

Invite the children to perform this “musical” for another church school class or videotape it for posterity.

SCRIPT FOR “WHERE’S YOUR BROTHER?”

This is the story of the two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and what happened to them.

Now Adam, the first man, lived with his wife Eve, the first woman. She conceived and bore a son Cain. *Cain, take a bow.* She was thrilled, and proclaimed, “I have borne a son with God’s help!”

Next, she had Abel, Cain’s brother. *Abel, take a bow.*

(Chorus sings “God’s Love Song I.”)

Now Abel grew up to be a keeper of sheep—a shepherd, that is. Here he is, taking care of his sheep.

(Chorus sings “Abel’s Song”)

Cain grew up to be a tiller of the ground—a farmer. His job was to grow the fruits and vegetables for his family to eat. Here he is, working hard to hoe the ground and pick the food.

(Chorus sings “Cain’s Song.”)

One day, it was time for the brothers to give God an offering—a gift of their heart and their life and work. So Cain brought some fruits and veggies and kind of tossed them on the altar. Abel brought the biggest, fattest, healthiest little lambs that he could find.

Now God really liked Abel’s offering. He praised Abel and patted him on the back and smiled a great smile for him. But for some reason, God did not like Cain’s offering. God held up his nose and turned away from it.

So Cain was very upset, and then he became very angry. He stomped around the field and then sat and moped.

(Chorus sings “Why Does God Love You More.”)

God saw Cain and said to him, “Why are you so mad? Why do you look so down in the dumps? If you do

well, it will be accepted. But if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door waiting for you, so watch out.” Now Cain did not have a clue what God meant, but he knew that something bad was brewing inside him because he could feel his angry feelings start to explode.

So Cain went to his brother Abel. Abel waved to Cain and said, “Hey, Cain! What’s happening?” Cain shrugged his shoulders and said, “Nothing much. Let’s go out to the field.” So they walked together to the field. Abel was kind of skipping, happy to be with his sheep and with God and with his dear brother Cain. But Cain was stomping and kicking the pebbles on the ground. When they got to the big open space, Cain went and killed Abel with whatever weapon he happened to have.

(Chorus sings “What Did I Do.”)

Then God came. He said to Cain, “Hey, Cain, where is your brother Abel?”

Cain said, “How should I know? Am I my brother’s babysitter?”

But God was not fooled. God said to Cain, “What have you done? Listen! Listen carefully!” Cain covered his ears with his hands and closed his eyes. But God said, “Your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!”

(Chorus sings “Where’s Your Brother.”)

God continued, “And now you are cursed from the ground. The ground has just opened up to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. Look at it! Look! Now, when you till the ground, it will no longer be your friend. You will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

Cain began to cry. He said to God, “My punishment is more than I can stand! Today you have driven me away from the soil. I will be hidden from your face and I will be a runaway and a fugitive and a wanderer without a home. And on top of all that, anyone who meets me will want to kill me!”

But God said, “That’s not true! I will be with you always, and I will always protect you! Whoever kills you will be punished. I will put a mark on you so that everybody knows who you are and everybody knows not to kill you because I will protect you.”

So God put a mark on Cain so that no one who saw him would kill him. Then Cain walked away from God and went to live in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

(Chorus sings “God’s Love Song II.”)

SONGS FOR “WHERE’S YOUR BROTHER?”

God’s Love Song I

(sung to the tune of “Silent Night”)

Cain’s a farmer, growing his wheat.
Abel a shepherd, tends his sheep.
Born from Adam and Eve in love,
Taught to worship their God above.
Peace and joy to you brothers.
Peace and joy to you.

Abel’s Song

(sung to the tune of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home”)

I love my sheep and my sheep love me, hurrah,
hurrah.
I love my God, and God loves me, hurrah, hurrah.
I love my God and I love my sheep,
My life I’ll give for these loves to keep,
And we all will live in peace (in peace, in peace.)

Cain’s Song

(sung to the tune of “O When the Saints Come Marching In”)

O when the crops are gathered in,
O when the crops are gathered in,
I just want to sit and enjoy them,
When the crops are gathered in.
O when the corn is getting ripe,
O when the corn is getting ripe,
I just hate to go out and pick them,
When the corn is getting ripe.
O when the ____ are getting ripe (*tomatoes, avocados, carrots, etc.*),
O when the ____ are getting ripe,
I just hate to go out and pick them,
When the ____ are getting ripe.

Why Does God Love You More?

(sung to the tune of “Jingle Bells” refrain)

Why does God love you more,
Love you more than me?
Why did God praise you so
And scolded only me-ee?
Why does God love you more,
Love you more than me?
Why did God praise you so
And scolded only me?

What Did I Do

(sung to the tune of “Ring Around the Rosy”)

Note: Divide the Chorus into Abel’s voice and Cain’s voice.

Abel: What did I do to deserve this?
Cain: What have I done to my brother?
Abel: I’m dying!
Cain: I’m scared!
All: We all fall down!

Where’s Your Brother

(sung to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?”)

Where’s your brother, where’s your brother?
Abel’s dead, Abel’s dead!
Listen to him calling, listen to him crying,
From the ground, from the ground.

God’s Love Song II

(sung to the tune of “Silent Night”)

Cain, my dear child, do not hide.
I will always be at your side.
Though you sinned, I love you still.
Let your God protect you well.
Come and walk with me always.
Come and walk with me.



Weaving God's Promises

GETTING ALONG WITH SIBLINGS for Primary, Elementary

Children play this game that shows how we really are our brother's keeper and that our brother is everyone else.

Materials:

- 2' scarf, ribbon or velcro
- bag containing a few crackers (1 bag per pair of children)
- scissors

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Getting Along with Siblings game. *Directions:*

1. Divide the class into pairs. Ask one child in each pair to use the tie to join his or her right wrist with the other child's left wrist.
2. Give each pair a bag. Ask them to do simple tasks such as moving furniture or books, drawing a picture on paper, putting away pencils. Also ask them to take the crackers out of the bag and feed each other.
3. After a few minutes, gather the children together in a circle and discuss what it was like to be tied to each other. Then say:
— With God as our Father/Mother, we all are tied to each other, we just can't see the ties. We are all each other's brothers and sisters. And God asks us to take care of our brothers and sisters. How can we do that better?



Weaving God's Promises

BAD ROCKS for Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Our wrongdoings are like rocks. They weigh us down. In this exercise, children learn the weight of their sins and how to let go of them.

Materials:

smooth rocks
black markers
backpack
Book of Common Prayer

Preparation:

Make a copy for each child of the Confession of Sin found in *The Book of Common Prayer* on pages 359-360. (You can skip the instructions on page 359.)

Directions:

Invite the children to gather in a circle and join in this devotional activity:

1. Ask each child to take at least one rock and write on it a word or two that describes something that he or she has experienced as sin. It might be something that they have done or some wrong that has been done to them. Explain that sufferings caused by others, like sins, are weights—that's why we want to get rid of both.
2. Have the children put their rocks in a backpack and pass it around the circle. Discuss how heavy it is.
3. Pass out copies of the Confession of Sin and ask the children to read it, together or individually, line by line.
4. After all the children have had time to read the Confession, ask:
 - How does confessing our sins—unlike Cain who tried to deny them—lighten our load?
 - How does the absolution lighten our load?
 - What sins that we wrote on the rocks are included in which lines of the Confession?
5. If you have a cross in your room, invite the children to place their rocks at the foot of the cross, offering their sins up to God.



Weaving God's Promises

RUBBER BAND FEELINGS

for Preschool, Primary

Cain got very angry and didn't know how to handle his anger. Kids might think from this story that it's not okay to get angry. Use this game to teach the children that their feelings are okay—it's what they do with their anger that might not be okay.

Children use rubber bands to make their faces look happy, mad and sad and then talk about these feelings.

Materials:

large, loose rubber bands

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Rubber Band Feelings game.

1. Gather everybody in a circle so they can see each other.
2. Give each child several rubber bands. Ask them to try to create different faces by stretching the rubber bands around their heads and faces. Have them make a happy face, a sad face, a proud face and finally a mad face. Applaud their work.
3. Ask: What makes you happy, or sad or mad? Then say:
 - There's nothing wrong with feeling sad or happy or mad. God created your feelings. But when you're mad, there are good ways and not-so-good ways to act. Cain acted in a bad way. What are good ways that Cain could have acted?



Weaving God's Promises

THE TRIAL OF CAIN for Intermediate

Cain is accused of killing his brother, but he pleads innocent because he has what he thinks is a good excuse: "I'm not my brother's babysitter!" Is this a good defense? Children act out this courtroom trial to find out what the issues are.

Directions:

Invite the children to participate in this drama:

1. Divide the class into two groups: the defense and the prosecution. God is the judge who pronounces sentence. If you wish, assign one child to play *Cain*.
2. Give the groups 10-15 minutes to decide how to present their case to the judge. Ask one group to think of reasons why Cain's excuse was right (defense) and one group to decide why Cain's excuse was wrong (prosecution).
3. Have the two sides present their arguments, then discuss the issues as a class. Note that God's punishment for murder was not capital punishment (death) but rather exile.

LESSON 2: CAIN AND ABEL



We Believe . . .

At our worship services, we, like Cain and Abel, offer up a sacrifice to God when we offer the gifts of our life and labor to the Lord in our offertory. We are reminded, however, that we are giving back to God but a little of all that God has given us. And we are also reminded that our true offering is the offering of our selves, our obedience and love, our commitment to God and our praise and thanksgiving:

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High (Psalm 50:14).

Present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1).

This is the kind of offering that pleases God—an offering of ourselves to God out of love and thankfulness for God's great mercy and love for us.



Today's Story:



Genesis 4:1-16

We do not know why God rejects Cain's offering. In fact, it may not have been Cain's *offering* that was necessarily displeasing to God. Look at God's advice to Cain: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

The sin has not yet been committed. But the warning seems to be not about the quality of Cain's sacrifice, but about his *attitude*—and likely his attitude toward and relationship with God.

Perhaps if Cain had merely given another offering, in humility, or had spoken with God, or given an offering of thanksgiving to God, the outcome might have been different. In Cain's reaction to God's non-acceptance of the sacrifice, we see a refusal to accept his dependence on God and a need to control the terms of the sacrifice.

Angry, Cain murders Abel and God condemns Cain. His punishment is to wander the earth. Again, as in the story of Adam and Eve, the consequence of sin is exile from God, not death. The penalty for humankind's rebellion against God is separation both from God and—as in this story—from other people. Thus, the theme of alienation continues to unfold.



Words of Faith

Sin—that which leads us away from God

Protect—to keep from harm; to shelter

Sacrifice—what we give up for God or others

Even when we sin, God continues to love and protect us



Sharing

Read the story of Cain and Abel from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible.

There may be many questions about what Cain did and about God's response to his wrongdoing, for example:

- Why didn't God accept Cain's sacrifice?
- What motivated Cain to kill his brother?
- Why wasn't Cain punished more than he was? Why did God just let him go?
- Does this story tell anything about my siblings?

Reinforce the idea that God continued to love Cain and protect him, just as God stayed with Cain's parents, Adam and Eve, after they sinned. We are in relationship to a God whose love for us is not dependent on our behavior.



Weaving God's Promises

This Week at Home



- **Roleplay ways to make peace between siblings or between friends.** Think up scenarios (*Joe gossips about Julio and Julio confronts him; Jenna borrows and ruins a sweater belonging to her sister Maya and it turns into an all-out brawl*), then take roles and play out different ways these disagreements could end. What words/ behaviors help settle an argument? What words/behaviors escalate an argument?
- **Talk about times when we get angry.** Help family members know that anger is a real and natural human emotion, and that the important thing is to deal with your anger in good ways, not unkind ways. Brainstorm a list of healthy, loving ways to deal with anger.
- **Imagine you could have talked to Cain and Abel** before their relationship ended in disaster. What would you have said to Cain? to Abel? Do you ever have opportunities to intervene when family members or friends are fighting or arguing? What do you do? What do you say?
- **Think of a word you can say that will calm you down when you get mad.** Maybe it's "Fiddlesticks!" which would probably make you laugh and take the edge off your anger. More seriously, "Help me here, God" might settle an impulse to lash out. Even if your anger is just, this is a way to help you deal with your feelings in a healthy way. One of the best ways to manage your anger is to mentally "step back" and take the role of the observer. If you switch into observer-mode, you will be able to make choices from a calmer, more rational place.
- **Is there anyone with whom you feel angry right now?** What could you do to help you deal with your anger? to restore the relationship? If you can, share your angry feelings with someone you trust. Perhaps you need to calmly share your angry feelings with the one whom you believe has hurt you. Be ready to listen as well as talk, because there may be things you don't yet know or understand about the situation. Never forget: *God loves you just as much when you are angry.*



Household Prayer

God, even though we love each other in our family, we don't always get along. Forgive us when we forget to treat each other kindly, and help us to love each other as you love us. *Amen.*

