



# HOME GROUPS

find yours at [www.commonslife.com](http://www.commonslife.com)

**Series:** Origins - Week 3 - June 19, 2022

**Scripture:** Genesis 4 NIV11

*Community is shaped by the conversations we share. These questions are just one tool you might use to help host meaningful engagement with the themes emerging from this week's teaching.*

Make sure to check the "Journal and Talk" section at the end. You may find that it is the only thing you'll do with your group today.

**Message Summary:** Scott examines the story of Cain and Abel, exploring how the ancient Hebrews imagined the human condition to be one of freedom, not sin, and that God is merciful and walks with us in our wanderings.

**Connect:** What is your favourite thing about having a sibling? What is difficult about having a sibling? If you don't have a sibling, what do you think was good about not having one? Did you ever wish you did have one?

## Common Experience

As we work through the myths at the beginning of Genesis, it is important to remember that we are reading ancient attempts to answer the question of *why* things are the way they are, not *how* they got to be the way they are. These myths are for a world full of chaos and violence, and they address who God is in the midst of that chaos. This is at the heart of what makes these texts trustworthy; they reflect on our lives, our stories, and invite us to consider a kind of common experience. The power of the text is not its capacity to explain all our biggest questions, but its ability to convince us that we aren't alone in having questions.

- What questions are you bringing to this text today?

## Curse of Comparison

Today's story opens with Cain and Abel bringing offerings before God. God deems Abel's sacrifice acceptable, while Cain's is not. However, there is nothing in the story that distinguishes what was acceptable about Abel's offering from Cain's, why God favours one over the other. But the point of this story isn't that God prefers Abel,

it's that Cain *thinks* God does. This reveals the curse of comparisons we all fall into; the deeply human desire to have what another has. We can't live a wholehearted life free from the taskmasters of productivity and performance until we stop comparing ourselves to others. The pathway to our most creative and flourishing selves is not likely to be found in working longer hours or in more exacting efficiency, but in letting go of the scores we keep and the measurements we take that leave us feeling that we aren't worthy.

- Where do you fall into the curse of comparisons? What are the areas of life that trip you up the most when you begin comparing yourself to others?
- How might you let go of those comparisons to allow greater creativity and flourishing in your life?

### **Freedom as Foundation**

The first reference to the actual word “sin” appears in Genesis 4. In this story, the ancient poets paint a picture of sin as an external force, a roving predator, or, as scholar Celia Sinclair puts it, “a force [that] takes on a life of its own.” In verse 7, God warns Cain to be careful. This anger and disappointment he feels, this perception that he is less than his brother, is a dangerous force.

But God tells Cain his own will is also a force that can contend with sin, telling Cain he must master this force of sin that seeks to have him. God comes to Cain and paints a picture of an open and free future with real possibilities in it. Here we catch a glimpse of a Hebrew imagination that didn't see sin as our most foundational state, but freedom to choose the right.

- How does the idea that our foundational state is one of freedom, as opposed to one of sinfulness, change your perspective on how we approach and fight against sin?

### **God of Wandering**

Cain gives in to the force of sin and murders his brother, and there are real consequences for this act. Cain is banished, causing Cain to cry out to God, saying his punishment is too much to bear. Cain's passionate plea, and God's movement toward it is the very heart of this passage. God promises Cain protection as he heads into Nod, the land of wandering. And Cain's story goes on; he has children, builds a city, and has a whole line of descendants.

This is also a story for our world, a place so full of confusion, difficulty and anxiety. This primal myth centers on the discovery that God, the benevolent force of all good, the force behind all that grows and shines and moves, goes with Cain into all his wandering. And this God is also with us in ours. Even in the smallest ways, like Cain's, your darkness and weakness and mistakes are not the origin of who you are. That is never meant to be the end of your story.

- How does this message from Scott change your perspective on the story of Cain and Abel?
- Can you think of an instance where you experienced God going with you into a season of uncertainty or wandering?

## **BENEDICTION:**

*God of all our wandering,  
We're grateful for how these ancient words bring comfort,  
Reminding us we don't struggle alone with our questions.  
You are faithfully present, and you teach us to live from the  
deeper truths you know so well.  
In your image we are meant to be free.  
Go with us and give us courage to trust,  
In the name of Christ,  
Amen.*

---

## **Journal and Talk**

A new section this year that works well if you meet online.  
Maybe this will be the only exercise you do with your group.  
Keep your meeting time to an hour to avoid Zoom fatigue.  
Do a quick check-in/connect - 2 min per person.  
Invite your group to journal for 10-15 minutes in response to the prompts. Use the rest of your time listening to and interacting with each other's responses, as much as people are comfortable sharing.  
Encourage your group to see this time as a way to tell and invite others into each other's stories. Protect this time from becoming a "let's fix you" space; it's all about active and gentle listening.

*Journalling prompts:*

- Where do you fall into the curse of comparisons? What are the areas of life that trip you up the most when you begin comparing yourself to others?
- How might you let go of those comparisons to allow greater creativity and flourishing in your life?