



FOUNDATIONS • COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY • GENESIS 4

Two Ways to Live

A guided conversation from the October 4, 2026 sermon by Kent Keller

SUMMARY

Week four of Foundations is the first family in the Bible, and it ends in a field with one brother dead and the other a wanderer. Kent Keller walked us through Genesis 4 — Cain and Abel — and called it two ways to live: the way of works and the way of grace. Both brothers brought God an offering. Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and its fat portions — his best, his first. Cain just 'brought an offering of the fruit of the ground.' God had regard for Abel's gift and not for Cain's, and Hebrews tells us why: 'by faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice.' It was never about what was on the altar. It was about the heart of the one bringing it.

From that first lesson Kent drew the first warning: don't bring God your leftovers. God is not impressed by lip service, by going through the motions, by the 'CEOs' who show up twice a year and drop a twenty in the plate. He doesn't need our money; he wants our whole person — heart, mind, soul — worship in spirit and in truth. And when we give him our best, imperfect but honest, something happens that happened to Eric Liddell in Chariots of Fire: 'When I run, I feel his pleasure.' God lifts our face. The second warning came out of Cain's white-hot anger: don't blame others for your sins. Cain was furious at a brother who had done nothing to him except succeed where Cain had not. The person we most need to confront is the one in the mirror. And the sin that trips up a Bible-believing church is rarely the loud one — it's the quieter self-righteousness, the judgmentalism, the spiritual pride. As John Flavel said, it is easier to cry out against a thousand sins of others than to kill one of your own.

Then the story turns brutal — fratricide — and Kent would not let us file it away as something primitive people did. Human nature has not changed; we are just as fallen and just as much in need of grace. But here is the third and final word, the one that makes this a story of grace and not only judgment: don't ever think you are beyond the reach of God. Cain killed his brother, and God — who would have been just to end him on the spot — put a mark on him to protect him instead. 'There is more mercy in Christ than there is sin in us.' The story that began in a garden ends in a city, pointing all the way forward to the city of God where everything is made right. Abel's blood cried out from the ground; the blood of Jesus speaks a better word, and it is still calling fallen people of every kind to the table. That is why we took communion together — a table of grace, from a God of grace, for people in need of grace.

PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

Father, we come as the kind of people this story is about — quick to bring you our leftovers, quick to blame someone else, slow to believe your grace reaches as far as it does. As we open Genesis 4, show us which way we are living. Search the heart behind what we bring you, and meet us at the table of grace where the blood of Jesus still speaks a better word. We are listening. Amen.

START ICE BREAKER

Think of a time someone succeeded at something you had worked hard for and missed. Be honest — what was the first thing that rose up in you?

SCRIPTURE KEY SCRIPTURES

GENESIS 4:4-5 (ESV)

Genesis 4:4-5 (ESV) *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, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.*

GENESIS 4:6-7 (ESV)

Genesis 4:6-7 (ESV) *The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 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, and you must rule over it."*

HEBREWS 11:4 (ESV)

Hebrews 11:4 (ESV) *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.*

HEBREWS 12:24 (ESV)

Hebrews 12:24 (ESV) *and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

ROMANS 8:1 (ESV)

Romans 8:1 (ESV) *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

DISCUSS DISCUSSION

01 HIS BEST, OR AN OFFERING

Read Genesis 4:4–5. Abel brought the firstborn and the fat portions; Cain simply 'brought an offering.' Kent said God was not impressed, because it is never about what's on the altar but the heart behind it. Where in your life are you bringing God something real but not your best — not your first, not your heart?

02 DON'T BRING GOD YOUR LEFTOVERS

Kent described the 'CEO' — Christmas and Easter Only — and the temptation we all feel toward going-through-the-motions worship. What does bringing God your leftovers look like in your actual week, and what would it take to bring him your whole person instead of the crumbs?

03 WHEN YOU FEEL HIS PLEASURE

Kent quoted Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire*: 'When I run, I feel his pleasure.' When we do what God made us to do, we sense his pleasure and he lifts our face. When was the last time you felt God's pleasure doing something he made you for — and when did you last feel your face fall like Cain's?

04 THE PERSON IN THE MIRROR

Read Genesis 4:5–6. Cain burned with anger at a brother who had done nothing to him except succeed where he had failed. Kent said the person we really need to confront is the one in the mirror. Whose success stirs resentment in you — and what is that resentment actually pointing to in your own heart?

05 SIN IS CROUCHING AT THE DOOR

Read Genesis 4:7. God warns Cain that sin is crouching, desiring him, and that he must rule over it — Kent called sin an opportunistic infection that never sleeps and knows your weak spot. What sin is crouching at your door right now, and where is it looking for its opening in you?

06 THE SINS WE EXCUSE

Kent named the quieter sins a Bible-believing church is most tempted to tolerate — self-righteousness, judgmentalism, spiritual pride — and quoted John Flavel: 'It is easier to cry out against a thousand sins of others than to kill one of your own.' Which 'respectable' sin do you excuse in yourself while condemning the louder ones in others?

07 DON'T WALLOW — THAT'S WHAT THE CROSS IS FOR

Kent spoke to the person who keeps falling back into the same sin and wants to just lie down and wallow in the guilt. He said: don't — that is exactly what the cross is for. Where are you tempted to give up and conclude you'll never get free, and what would it look like to confess it instead of wallowing in it?

08 MORE MERCY THAN SIN

Read Genesis 4:15 and Romans 8:1. Justice would have been to end Cain on the spot; instead God marked him to protect him. Kent quoted Richard Sibbes: 'There is more mercy in Christ than there is sin in us.' Is there a sin you secretly believe has put you beyond the reach of God's grace? What does it do to that belief to see God protect even Cain?

APPLY THIS WEEK

Pick one. Do it before you meet again.

- 1 Bring your first, not your leftovers** Name one area — your time, your money, your attention, your Sunday — where God has been getting your leftovers. This week, give him the first and the best of it on purpose, and notice what changes in your heart, not just your schedule.
- 2 Face the mirror** Where you feel resentment at someone's success, stop and ask what it is exposing in you. Instead of blaming, confess the real thing — to God, and if you can, to one person in this group — and ask him to rule the sin that is crouching there.
- 3 Come to the table of grace** If you have been believing a sin has put you beyond God's reach, bring it into the light this week. Read Romans 8:1 out loud over yourself every day: there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The blood of Jesus speaks a better word than your worst day.

Come back next week ready to say what happened, not what you intended.

REMEMBER REMEMBER

- ▶ There are two ways to live: the way of works and the way of grace. Abel's offering was accepted 'by faith' — it was never about what was on the altar, but the heart of the one who brought it.

- ▶ Don't bring God your leftovers. He doesn't need your money; he wants your whole person — worship in spirit and in truth. When we give him our best, he lifts our face.
- ▶ Don't blame others for your sins. Cain's anger belonged in the mirror. Sin is crouching at the door — and the sins we excuse are often the quiet ones: pride, judgment, self-righteousness.
- ▶ Don't ever think you're beyond the reach of grace. God protected even Cain. There is more mercy in Christ than there is sin in us, and his blood speaks a better word than Abel's.

Genesis 4 begins in anger and ends in wandering — but it points to a table of grace, from a God of grace, for people in need of grace. The blood of Jesus still speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

God of grace, thank you that you did not spare your own Son but gave him for us, so that people like Cain — and like us — would not get the justice we earned but the mercy we never could. Free us from leftover worship, from blaming everyone but ourselves, and from the lie that we have wandered too far. Call us back to the table every time. The blood of Jesus speaks a better word, and we are listening. Amen.



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