

INTRO

- Growing up, were you ever caught doing something wrong? How did you respond? What did you learn from the experience?

God's story continues to spiral downward showing the ripple effect of man's rebellion towards God and fracturing of human relationship at every level.

READ

Gen 4:1-16

REFLECT

The story of Cain & Abel is immensely insightful in showing us the **essence of FAITH, the power of SIN, and the depth of God's GRACE** in a world beyond Eden.

1. ESSENCE OF FAITH

On the surface, Cain & Abel are really similar. They both believe in God, are attempting to do the right thing and bring offerings.

Read Heb 11:4. — *What is the difference between Abel & Cain's offering?*

The offering isn't the focus; rather the *offerer*. Abel had a different posture of his heart in bringing his offering. For God, **the essence of faith is the fundamental trust of our heart**, not religious tokenism (symbolic effort).

How does Cain respond to God's rejection of his efforts? What does this reveal about Cain's true heart toward Abel and God?

It is likely that Cain discovered his offering was rejected in favour of Abel's as he began to see God's blessing and prosperity on Abel's life, and its absence in his.

How might God use another's success, or disappointments in your life, as a way to refine your heart?

2. POWER OF SIN

In today's culture, we cringe at the word *sin*. Yet it is a dominant theme throughout God's story and we need to recover its vocabulary if we are going to properly explain what's wrong with the world. **Read Gen 4:7 again.** — *What do we learn about sin from this metaphor?*

- **Sin HIDES in our life:** it crouches at the door. *Why is it easier to see the sin in others than in ourselves? What thoughts, attitudes or actions in your life are easy for you to justify, downplay or excuse? Would God call them sinful?*
- **Sin DEVOURS.** Like a predator, *its desire is to have you*. Consider this: Eve had to be talked *into* sin by Satan. Cain has to be talked *out of* sin by God. — *What does that show you about sin's nature?*
- **Sin GROWS in power** when left unchecked in our lives. Yet, we see a counter-balance: God encourages Cain to face his sin (*you must rule over it*). We don't underestimate sin's power but we are not to neglect our responsibility to courageously face it.

3. DEPTH OF GRACE

Even beyond Eden, we see God come after fallen humanity.

Why does God ask questions? What do we learn about God asking questions? Where does God's grace first meet Cain: before he's committed murder or after? What does this tell us about God's grace in our lives to fight sin?

Lastly, Heb 12:24 tells us that Jesus' blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood cried out for justice and judgement. Jesus' blood cries out for our forgiveness and atonement as he's dealt with sin's penalty and power. Trust in that. Today. Everyday.

RESPOND & PRAY

- In what way/s does this part of God's Story encourage & challenge you? Pray accordingly.