

First, God. God is the subject of life. God is foundational for living. If we don't have a sense of the primacy of God, we will never get it right, get life right, get our lives right. Not God at the margins; not God as an option; not God on the weekends. God at the center and circumference; God first and last; God, God, God.

Genesis gets us off on the right foot. Genesis pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled. It gives us a vocabulary for speaking accurately and comprehensively about our lives, where we come from and where we are going, what we think and what we do, the we live with and how to get along with them, the troubles we find ourselves in and the blessings that keep arriving.

Genesis used words to make a foundation that is solid and true. Everything we think and do and feel is material in a building operation in which we are engaged all our life long. There is immense significance in everything we do. Our speech and our actions and our prayers are all, every detail of them, involved in the vast building operation comprehensively known as the Kingdom of God. But we don't build the foundation. the Foundation is given. The foundation is firmly in place.

Jesus concluded his most famous teaching by telling us that there are two ways to go about our lives- we can build on sand or we can build on rock. No matter how wonderfully we build, if we build on sand it will all fall to pieces like a house of cards. We build on what is already there, on the rock. Genesis is a verbal witness to that rock: God's creative acts, God's intervening and gracious judgments, God's call to a life of faith, God's making covenant with us.

But Genesis presents none of this to us as an abstract, bloodless "truth" or "principle." We are given a succession of stories with named people, people who loved and quarreled, believed and doubted, had children and married, experienced sin and grace. If we pay attention, we find that we ourselves are living variations on these very stories: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and his brothers. The stories show clearly that we are never outsiders or spectators to anything in "heaven and earth." God doesn't work impersonally from space; he works with us where we are, as he finds us. No matter what we do, whether good or bad, we continue to be part of everything that God is doing. Nobody can drop out-there's no place to drop out to. So we may as well get started and take our place in the story- at the beginning.

For more information on Genesis visit:

<https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-genesis/>

READ Genesis 4

Opening

- Whom did you envy as a child? Why this person?
- As a child, what homemade birthday presents do you recall giving your folks?
- As a parent, which homemade presents have delighted you?
- Did you ever suspect your parents of having “favorites” among your siblings? What was the basis for your suspicion?

Digging in — Discovering the Word

- God accepts both animal and grain sacrifices (see Lev 6:14-30) and there is no indication as to why God accepts Abel’s sacrifice and rejects Cain’s sacrifice. Why do you think God rejects Cain’s sacrifice: A) only a blood sacrifice, in place of a human death, could cover sin and guilt B) Cain had a bad attitude or lack of faith? C) Cain’s offering didn’t mean anything to him? D) Cain’s offering did not embody social righteousness?
- Read again God’s instructions to Cain in v7. What does this tell you about the nature of anger and sin, righteousness and acceptance? How might you re-word this sentence if you were speaking to a child?
- After the murder of Abel, why do you think God approaches Cain as He does? Why not directly accuse Cain? Why delay punishment?
- Why was Cain punished as he was: A) wrong sacrifice B) hateful attitude C) murderous act D) failure to master sin? E) Attempt to cover up sin?
- Would honesty with God have reduced his punishment? Why or why not?
- Did Cain repent of his sin? How does his confession and the Lord’s reply shed light on this?
- Why did God protect Cain? In this story of man in exile, where is the cycle of sin, judgment and mercy repeated from chapter 3?

Connecting the Dots — Applying the Word

- The first family in the Bible is beyond dysfunctional. Put yourself in Adam and Eve’s shoes...what would life be like for them after this horrifying turn of events? How would you bring this before God in light of everything that happened in ch. 3-4?
- How would you assess the way you handle anger? What might you call yourself: Vern Volcano? Susy Supression? Tina Tightlip? Dennis Denial? Or what? What would you like to do differently with your anger?
- Where might God be looking on your life with favor? With disfavor?
- Cain is promised frustration at work and restlessness in life (vv.11-12). How are you experiencing either of these? Lamech remembers God’s promise to his forefather, Cain (vv.23-24). What promises or blessings had God give your ancestors which serve as a comfort to you?
- Are you your “brother’s keeper”? How so? What kind of “keeping” do you do: Nagging? Parenting? Covenanting? Praying? What brothers and sisters do you keep?

(adapted from IVP Press Daily Bible Study, The Serendipity Bible, and The Invitation by Eugene Peterson)