

Adam, Eve & Cain

David W. Nance, D.Min.

Class is on Bible characters. And what I'd like to do is to start in the book of Genesis. When I think of Bible study of characters, there are several ways to approach it. One is just a factual thing. You know, here's so and so, and here's what he did, and then move on. Here's so-and-so, and here's what he did. And those are very necessary.

You know, we teach our kids these things in Bible classes. When I was a student at the School of Preaching, they assumed that we didn't know very much about the Bible when we started. And, at least I didn't. And so you know, it was very good to be very factual, you know, just right down to the text. What I want to do is do it a little bit differently. I'm going to assume that you have some familiarity with these characters.

The first character I want to deal with is, I don't know if you call them one or two: Adam and Eve. And here's one of the things that I want to do. I want to make these people real, because they were real. It helps us to understand what was going on in their mind to the degree we can. It helps us to understand their situation to the degree we can. They were real people living in real places. And that means that I can learn how to live my real life in my real place.

Alright, let's take a look at Genesis 3. And, if someone will read verses 1 through 5, please. What I want you to notice here is what Satan does to Eve. Satan does something that I'm sure you've noticed in yourself, and you're sure you've noticed it in your kids. Have you ever been to some big amusement park, say Disneyland or Disney World? And you see a kid who should be in hog heaven. But he's standing there because his ice cream cone dripped all over his hand and now it fell off onto the concrete. What is this kid doing? Yeah, crying and bawling and the whole world is a disaster and so on. He's concentrating on the one thing that was not the way he wanted it.

And that's exactly what Satan does, you know. Eve is running around to do everything, have everything, be everything. And so, joy and happiness, of course. And what does he do? He focuses her mind on the one thing that just isn't quite like she probably would like it to be. And then he does something else. He does call God a liar. Okay. But, notice how he calls Him a liar. Verse five, "God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God." Now the knowing good and evil is interesting, but it's the "be like God."

What he does is he immediately calls into question God's loyalty to her. Now, if you believe that someone is not loyal to you, what happens to your loyalty to them? Immediately, your loyalty, at least, faces a challenge. And that's exactly what goes on here. He is questioning God's love for Eve. And Eve begins to question it, too.

Look at verse six. "So when the woman saw the tree was good for food, was pleasant to the eyes, a tree desirable to make one wise? Well, she took it, and she ate it." But then what's the very next thing she did? She went and found Adam and gave it to him also.

Now, we don't know why he did it. I suspect, you know, Timothy says that the man being in the transgression was knowledgeable. He knew what he was doing. I suspect he had a war of loyalty within himself. He had a loyalty to God, and he had a loyalty to his wife. That's what I think may be going on here. But the biggest thing I want us to realize is that the basis of this first sin, even when there was no

temptation, in any way by anybody other than just some words, the core of the temptation is, is God loyal to me? If God is not, then I have to be loyal to myself. Virtually every sin is rooted in this.

And you think about what John said. John said, "We love Him, because He first loved us." Think about what John also said, John 3:16. Can anybody quote John 3:16? Notice: "God so loved the world that He gave..." You see. What is He trying to do? He's trying to reestablish what was undermined right here. And of course, then, you know, we all are familiar with the way it goes after that. Call it blame shifting, right?

What I want you to notice is what God does. Of course, is, you know, they're naked, and they sewed the fig leaves and so on. Look down at verse eight, "They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Now, let me ask you: did God have to ask that question? No. What you're going to notice in in their dealings, with, his dealings with Adam and Eve, is something you're also going to notice in his dealings with Cain in the next chapter. He's going to ask a lot of questions. Now, why would God do that?

There is no better way than asking questions to direct someone's thinking. Even if they don't answer, it almost automatically forces their thinking, at least for a small length of time in the channel that you want them to go. I've heard it said, and I really think it's true: When you and I are reflecting on our Christianity and on our faith. When we're looking at what the Bible has to say, the quality of our devotion, the quality of our Bible study depends on the quality of the questions we ask ourselves.

You ever noticed that sometimes people don't want to talk about a certain subject? Well, if they don't want to talk about it, what's the chance that they learn anything about it? if they don't allow themselves to think about it? But how do you make yourself think about something? You ask yourself a question. That's exactly what God is doing. And so right here in Genesis chapter three, you see the first sin and you see God, immediately starting the process of getting them to think about the things they really don't want to think about.

So you see, being a Christian is based on the good news. But it's good news, because there's bad news. Isn't that true? The bad news is our sin, our guilt. And the good news begins with us being real. You hear people say sometimes, "Oh, get real, be real, or man, it's real." You know? Well, that's, you know, that's a nice little, you know, slang talk. But this is the real, real deal.

Well see, now my take on that is a little different. I think He really was talking about physical death. I think they knew what physical death was. Otherwise, the threat would be meaningless. And I think ,basically, what he said was "you shall die." That's a real threat, a physical threat here and now. And then in the end, what He does is He institute's animal sacrifices. Do you notice what he clothes them with? He clothed them with animal skins? Well, I don't believe God whipped up the animal skin, just you know, which of course He could do. But I think He sacrificed; taught Adam to sacrifice. But again now, that's speculation. You know? I really don't know.

Question asked: "How long were they in the Garden?"

I get the impression they could have been there a very long time. I don't know how long at all. I don't think it was a day or two. One of the things I notice is that Adam was, I mean, he was told to give names to all the animals and the creatures. Well, you know, by my reckoning, there haven't been any new creatures made since then. I don't believe there's been any new creatures evolved since then. And so I believe there were probably more critters around then than there are now. And so, I don't think he did that in an afternoon. That's just one, one take on it.

Question asked: "He said now that her pain in childbirth was going to be increased. Did they already have children?"

You know, I don't think they did. Well, the word "increase," I think, is a misnomer. It's like that word "replenish," in Genesis 2, where you know, the text, ah, Genesis 1, where God says, "Be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth." The idea of your pain will increase. There is some softness in the translation of those terms. "Replenished" doesn't, it doesn't necessarily mean that it was already populated and now it's going to be repopulated. And so I'm thinking the increase in the pain is not really so much other than, "You're going to have some pain."

This text here says, this is New King James, "To the woman he said, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception.'" Well, I don't believe she actually had sorrow before this. Except she may be sorrowful now. You know, this was the Garden of Eden and, "your conception in pain, you shall bring forth children, your desire to the husband." And the pain I'm thinking, is not so much physical pain, but bringing children into a terrible world now, a world full of sin, a world full of pain and suffering. I believe that she would have had pain in childbirth, even in the Garden of Eden, if you just think about the physicality of it.

All right, well, let's move on a little bit here to the next chapter, chapter four. And let's talk about whom I take to be the first people here. You know, Adam and Eve conceive and said, "We've got a son named Abel." And then he got he's, what is he? What's his job? What's his work? He's keeper of the sheep, okay; a herder, right? And then Cain, of course: What does Cain become? A farmer.

Now immediately, what this tells me is that there's been some more time go by. Because these kids are grown up. I'm thinking at least 20 years or so. And they become good at what they do, when you start seeing specialization, where someone is, you know, taking care of one aspect of the work, someone's taking care of another aspect of the work. In other words, life is starting to get more normal, like we know it, you know. Not everybody is a mechanic, not everybody is a farmer, not everybody is a whatever. And that's what you start seeing: specialization here. So I think there's some good length of time here, although not a great length of time, and I don't know how to categorize that.

Comment made: "God never said if they had daughters in between."

See, I think there were other kids. The reason I think that, first: what was their command? Multiply. Go. These were the healthiest people who'd ever lived on the planet. I suspect that having kids was just bang, bang, bang, for them. And it was the command. They were told to do that. And I get the impression that they were not rebellious in this matter. Plus Cain, a little later on, is going to worry about what other people think. Isn't he? And he's going to marry somebody. So, I think there's a pretty good number of people around. And this is maybe, we call it the first sin of, in the new world. It's the first recorded sin. I can hardly believe that nobody committed a sin, at least a thought, over all those years, if not action.

Let's go on down here and take a look. If someone will read verses 4 down through 7.

Isn't that a kind of a beautiful description: "his face fell"? I mean, that's just like, you can just see it. And because, you know, we see it in our lives, I just think it's a beautiful description.

But, notice what happens here. Cain is angry, because his offering was not accepted. I don't know why his offering was not accepted. There's a lot of speculation as to why and that's all it is: speculation. And any guess may be as good as any other guess. The other side of that, is that right here, you and I begin to see the principle, that God is not going to accept our worship to Him just any old which way we happen to want to deliver it. Have you ever noticed that? Right here in the beginning? And there's a

reason I think for that, because worship is to be the exact opposite of what the partaking of the fruit was, in the previous chapter. The partaking of the fruit was a focus on me, me, me. And worship is supposed to be a focus on not me, not me, not me. So Cain learns that lesson and he isn't very happy with it.

Notice, when verse six, the Lord asks a question, doesn't He? "Why are you angry? Why has your face fallen?" Now, have you ever noticed somebody who gets angry, and then if you ask them why are they angry, they get angrier? Because they, because somehow they realize that sometimes there's a little fault in themselves. Isn't that true? Sure. I think this is just so real. Because these people are real people living in real situations. I can see myself in a lot of this.

Now, God then asks him a question in verse 7, another question, a third one. "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" Well, you know the proper answer? Duh, of course? God is about redemption. That's the whole reason Adam and Eve weren't killed. God is about redemption. That's the whole point of the sacrifice, the whole point of the offering. So God is not cutting Cain off at the knees.

Comment made: "There's an implication here that he knew to do well, otherwise he wouldn't be addressing it if he didn't know the difference."

I think that's really true. There is an implication that he knew to do well.

Comment made: "I don't think this is the first time."

You know, I think you're right, because one of the things I think of is murder is usually not first on the list of people's sins. It usually takes a heart that's getting harder and harder and harder, or more and more and more desperate, before that's reached.

God asks him a series of questions. But asking ourselves questions only gets us so far. Because, you know, I'm answering myself. At some point, I have to start getting more information. And I have to be willing to listen to the more information. And that's exactly what God does here.

Now He tells him, "So sin is laying at the door, and you are the one who has to deal with it." And so he's laying the responsibility for future redemption square on Cain's response here.

You know, you think about his response. And so here's where I'm kind of assuming you all are familiar with the story. And you are. He says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Who in the world would respond to God in a snide remark like that? And, you know, I can remember if I replied to a question like that from my dad, I, there would have been a sting on the side of my cheek. Because you know, that, to me is a pretty harsh response to God, face to face, or at least voice to voice. However, the communication took place.

They call it the patriarchal age where God spoke to the fathers. But this is even before that, and it almost looks like every individual had some kind of an interaction. But again, that's just a little speculation on my part. Now one of the things we got to be careful, when we do these kinds of character studies like this, we got to be willing to admit when we're speculating. We got to be willing to admit when, you know, I can't just nail it down. Otherwise, we can lead ourselves into some mistakes.

He goes over and kills Abel. Why would he do that? Abel had done nothing to him, at least nothing we know of. Abel is righteous. Abel is good. Hebrews 11 testifies to that fact. I think what it is, is that when you and I become conscious of doing something wrong, we don't want any reminders of it in our face.

Think about how it is, when you're a kid, what is one of the worst things other kids are going to call you? A tattler, a goody two shoes, or some other kind of a name like that. And they're going to push you away if you don't cooperate, at least, you know, let it slide, whatever little sinful thing, or evil game the other kids are playing. Have you ever noticed that?

I can remember a terrible time in my life. I was in high school, and we used to drink like fish. And I had one guy out of the four of us, who finally decided he was going to quit drinking. He, you know, he just felt like he needed to do that. Well, we four were close buddies. We three, put a lot of pressure on this fourth one, to join us back in our drinking, because it just wasn't the same. You know, we knew it in your hearts, you know, you're not supposed to be doing this. I regret that to this day. That man became an alcoholic. And I had a hand in it.

But it goes back to, I think the same kind of thing you're talking about here. Their relationship may not have been really good for a long time, precisely because Abel was what he was supposed to be. And Cain was slowly, or maybe not so slowly, becoming what he shouldn't and didn't like it.

Let's go on down here now to Cain in verse 13. You know, he's told in verse 12, he said that, you know, "You're a farmer, and your farming isn't going to work well for you anymore. Now, you're going to have to be a wanderer." You think about what a farmer is? Well, whatever a farmer is, the opposite of it is a wanderer. A farmer is tied right there. So all of these relationships and everything. So his sin has had a high cost.

The second thing you'll notice, then, "Surely you've driven me out," verse 14, "from the face of the ground. I shall be hidden from your face." Well, so you see, it's kind of interesting. Why is Cain concerned about that? I think it's this: no matter how sinful people are, there is in the back of their heart and their mind, a desire for a relationship with God. They may not even have an understanding of what God is, or who God is. But, God gives us a life that is more significant than just trudging around until we can't trudge around anymore.

Cain, as much as he wants to rebel and do his own thing, he still wants that relationship with God. And why is that important? Because you and I are trying to reach people who have no relationship with God. We've got to have a real strong understanding that they do want to have a relationship with God, if circumstances or whatever, we'll bring it out. One of the mistakes I think we make as people who teach other people is that we hear someone say, "No, I don't want to come to church. I don't want to have a Bible study with you. Don't talk to me about Jesus. Don't," you know, whatever put off we hear when we start bringing up these kinds of things and start trying to share the good news.

One of the reactions we have is: "Well, okay, that's it. Poof, I'll not bring it up ever again." I'm not saying bring it up the next day, or the next week, or even the next year, but, depending on the relationship, it is a tremendous mistake for us to not bring it up again. I trained as an insurance agent back in the days of yore. And one of the things that they taught us, they said. You know, you may not remember, but some of you probably do, you'd sit down at the dinner table, and sure enough, an insurance agent will call you up and want to offer you life insurance. And the insurance industry taught us, said, "Listen, if you are not talking to people about insurance when they don't want to buy it, when they do want to buy it, you will not be the one they talk to." Now, if you and I are not talking to people about Jesus, then when something happens in their life and they actually have a sliver of an opening of interest, you and I are not going to be the ones that they ask a question of.

Cain indicates here, that for all his sinfulness, he still had that, I'd say, deep desires which he was pushing away, pushing away, pushing away, pushing away. But, he could not make it disappear.

And, then the last thing I want you to notice, he says, "I shall be," in verse 14, "a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." "The Lord says, 'therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven fold.' And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him."

Let me suggest to you that here is what else God is doing: God is establishing the limits of vengeance. “‘Vengeance is mine,’ saith the Lord. Not yours.” And He’s establishing that right here, and right now. Because if God did not establish that, then the world would descend into a chaos of feuds. This is the beginning of what you and I might call, “The rule of law.”