

Sibling Rivalry – Cain and Abel

***First Slide

Our society is fascinated with sibling rivalry. I've noticed, particularly in sporting events that when brothers or sisters are playing against one another, there is a particular intensity to the coverage of that sporting event, almost as if the announcers and the audience are reliving a rivalry with their brother or sister.

***Serena and Venus Williams are perhaps one of the most famous sister rivalries in tennis history. Their rivalry early on in their careers was a constant source of news for sports writers, but the sisters found that joining together was much more lucrative than playing against each other and have since formed one of the most winning doubles teams in the history of tennis, going on to eventually win Olympic gold medals.

***Whenever the Indianapolis colts and the new York giants play each other, the story is not just a football game, but it is about the rivalry between the brothers peyton and eli manning. What is it that fascinates us about the rivalries between siblings? Why do we soooo enjoy watching brothers and sisters slug it out in sport and in life?

***What's funny tho is that Parents often times are unaware that they themselves are the ones promoting the very rivalry they are trying to avoid. I found an article titled "10 ways to promote sibling rivalry" and in it there is a listing of ways for parents to cause it in their households.

Among the 10 ways are:

1. Compare your children to one another and let them know you are doing it. Say things like, "Your brother never acts that way," and "If your sister can do it, why can't you?" Holding one child up as the model and using that model to encourage better behavior on the part of the sibling is a sure way to create resentment and divisiveness among your children.

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4. Always give the younger child hand-me-downs. This ritual, if done often, can create a feeling of being a second-hand person or less-than the other child who gets the new things. When this occurs the younger one often strives to be first or get more attention. Yes, the economics in some families make hand-me-downs a necessity. In these cases make sure the younger gets something new occasionally and the older one gets some passed on clothing as well.

5. Reward tattling. When children tattle, follow up by punishing those that were tattled on. This is a sure way to promote sibling rivalry. Refuse to listen to both sides of the story to further increase sibling rivalry. Create an atmosphere where the first person to get his story out is in the “right”. If you want sibling rivalry growing in your home, do not invest time teaching your children when it is important to tell (health and safety issues) and when and how they can handle the situation on their own.

6. Ask your kids to spy. Tell your son, “I want to know if your sister uses the phone while I am gone.” Inform your younger one, “If he splashes you again let me know.” Tell one child, “The computer is off limits while I am gone. Your sister is going to be watching you to see if you follow the rules.”

7. Buy and play many competitive games where there is one winner and many losers. Focus strongly on the importance of winning and downplay the process of playing, learning, and having fun. This way your children who have lost can fight back in other ways when they are the only ones who know a new game is being played. The new game is called getting even.

9. Attempt to be fair. Make sure everyone has the same amount of orange drink in their cup or the same number of French fries on their plate. Did you cut equal amounts of cake? Even when you do children don't always see it that way. An effort to be consistently fair will create an atmosphere where the children are constantly checking to make sure they have the same or slightly more than the other child.

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10. Run your house like a democracy. Put every decision to a vote. If two of the three kids always like to eat out at a pizza place and the third one likes Mexican food, the one who likes Mexican food will get out voted every time. Refuse to protect interests of a minority voting family member by voting to resolve disputes at all times.

The concept of sibling rivalry is as old as the fall of man. It's been around since the first brothers were born to Adam and Eve after they were booted from the Garden of Eden.

Over the next couple of weeks we are going to look into some of the Biblical accounts about the rivalries between brothers and sisters. As we go through this we will see how God uses the dynamic of family squabbles to teach us about ourselves and about our life with Him.

***Genesis 4:1-15

1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD."

2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.

4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

***5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

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***9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.

11 "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

12 "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

***13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!

14 "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

15 So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

***There are 2 main questions that I want to answer out of this passage today.

***1. Why did God only have regard on Abel's offering and not Cain's?

Some say it's because Able brought a blood sacrifice.

But I have discovered that it was a heart issue that God was addressing with Cain

3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. (first recorded offering to God, but probably not the first offering from man. an offering, purposeless, random choosing from the produce).

4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

Jude v11 says "they have gone the way of Cair" or manner or action. Cain had a way about him that God was addressing.

Proverbs teaches that as a man thinks so is he.

God was judging his heart, not his actions. This is so important for us to understand. This is why formulaic Christianity doesn't work. If I DO the right things then I'm right with God. The ONLY thing that makes you right

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with God is His grace. Cleaning yourself up to get to God does away with his Grace. However, Grace that doesn't affect your actions and the way you live your life is not true grace, either!

I remember when I used to lead worship for our former church before Real World. When we first started, we'd meet early in the morning and pray. And God met with us and blessed our efforts and the worship was sweet! But occasionally I would arrive late and we'd have to throw some songs together quickly and God, in His grace, would anoint it. I begin to think about that.

***2. What does God expect of us when we find ourselves in Cain's shoes?

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

That sin is an anger that will burn so strong and a resentment that will consume you and cause you to kill the very brother you love.

What does God expect of us? We are to master the very sin crouching at our door.

Well Jim you don't understand the hold that this has on me. The get help! Well If God loved me he'd take it away.

Cain was upset at God, but God showed him his heart. If Cain had listened to God and repented, his offering would have been accepted.

But instead he harbored that bitterness that turned to hatred.

Jesus said in Matthew that he who hates his brother is guilty of murder.

Psalms 51:16, 17 says this:

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.