*By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. (Hebrews 11.4)*

lifegroup

resource guide

for the week of 4 November

Baseball fans must travel to Cooperstown, New York to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame. Enthusiasts of Rock music make their way to Cleveland in order to tour the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. However, you will not have to travel to Israel to visit the Bible’s Old Testament Hall of Fame. You will find it located in Hebrews 11. There you will revisit the exploits of: Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, and Abel.

At first sight, Abel is a curious choice for entry into this hall of fame. He is mentioned in only three Old Testament verses and he is the victim of the first murder recorded in Scripture. His name means “vanity” or “mere breath.” He led no armies, wrote no books, left no wisdom, and had no disciples. He is a “nobody” when compared to the giants of Scripture—but then God delights to make nobodies into “somebodies” in His sight where there is even a kernel of authentic faith.

There are three important things to notice about Abel. First by faith he worshiped: he “offered God... a sacrifice.” Worship is more important than work, ministry, family, or our witness for Christ. Workers can devote themselves to their labor for numerous reasons— money, success, power, prestige, influence, love, or pleasing others— yet rarely is worship at the top of their motivational list. A worshiper works to exalt God— his labors are a response to God’s call. People sometimes say, “I went to such and such a church but I didn’t get anything out of it.” The question is, “What did you put into it?” First, we worship, then we receive; that’s the proper order of things in the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, by faith Abel was accepted by God: “God spoke well of his offerings.” The story of Cain and Abel’s sacrifices (Genesis 4.3-5) seems unfair at first sight. Yet if we study this passage in its context we soon realize that God had previously shown Cain and Abel what offerings would be acceptable to Him. Faith’s “hall of fame” in Hebrews 11, is comprised of men and women who, by faith, obeyed God’s word to them. So it must have been that Abel, by faith, obeyed while Cain gave the sacrifice he deemed adequate and good enough.

Some men struggle in their walk with God because they don’t feel accepted by him. But perhaps it is because what we offer Him through our worship is unacceptable... God will forgive sin and God will save sinners. God will not accept pretense, rationalized sin, and half-hearted devotion even when it is offered, like Cain, as an act of worship. Can God really accept 2% when he has called us to worship with 10%? Can he accept compromise when he has called us to integrity? Will God accept our double-minded lust when he has called us to single-minded purity? This is not an issue of grace by faith alone, it is an issue of carelessness and thoughtlessness masquerading as worship. Worship is not a “bone” we throw to satisfy God. King David understood it well when he exclaimed, “I will not offer up to my God sacrifices that cost me nothing.” (2 Samuel 24.24)

Thirdly, by faith Abel still speaks. Whatever is done by faith, in obedience to God’s word, has the stamp of eternity on it. TV shows, books, articles, etc. deluge us with talk of retirement and estate planning. Our ultimate goal in life is to leave a legacy of faith that will speak to the generations that follow us. They may not remember our name, as we do Abel’s, but God promises that our faithfulness will preach to the generations to come. Our race will not be in vain.

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

Who was your first “crush”? How old were you? How did this make you feel?

Getting to know one another…

Getting to know one another…

Reading Scripture together…

Exodus 20.14; Matthew 5.27-30… Because lust is just the beginning

Exodus 20.13: *You shall not murder.*

Matthew 5.27-30: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. “If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.*

What? (does the Bible say?)

**NOTE:** In the 1994 book, *Sex in America,* the authors reported that twenty percent of all women and as many as thirty-five percent of all men have been unfaithful in marriage. Christianity Today surveyed its readers and discovered that twenty-three percent of their subscribers admitted to having had affairs. Leadership Journal found that ten percent of the pastors and church leaders they surveyed had committed adultery. Can something so common be so wrong? The seventh commandment says yes, it can.

Now what? (how will I think?)

Reread Exodus 20.1-17. Why do you think the commandment prohibiting adultery occurs here?

What does adultery have in common with previous commandments?

What, according to Jesus, is the full meaning of the seventh commandment: "Do not commit adultery" (Matthew 5:27-28)?

How does adultery start? (5:28)

How has Jesus challenged a superficial view of righteousness?

Now what? (how will I think?)

When does looking at someone become inappropriate?

Why are our moral choices important?

So what? (what difference does it make?)

In what specific areas do you feel the need for a deeper righteousness?

What “temptation traps” in your life need to be neutralized to avoid the destructive spiral of sin? What changes do you need to make in your reading or viewing habits to avoid temptations to lust?

Ask God to help you rid your life of anything that consistently tempts you to sin. Pray that you will be able to obey Him your attitudes and your actions.

What three steps can you take this week to protect your marriage and/or encourage the marriages around you against affairs?

Praying for my group…

My prayer needs (write down in advance)