The Battle For Your Self *[Foundations For Faith: Genesis 1-11]*

Genesis 4:1-26 (preached on June 7, 2009)

Note to Discussion Leaders: *Please remember to start by reading the Bible passage as a group. While this is a "sermon discussion" guide, it's vital that our reflections and applications are grounded in scripture. In a similar vein, do your best to help group members to link their discussion points to the scripture text. Don't skip over all the questions that invite the group to observe and interpret specific verses in the passage.*

READ Genesis 4:1-26 (NT reading: 1 John 3:11-18)

REFLECT

1. Why was Cain's offering rejected by God (vv. 2-5; compare Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12)? What are some ways that you're prone to pretending in your faith, work, or relationships?

2. In fighting against pretending, why is it critical to open up to someone from the *outside* (v. 7)? (*Consider this statement: The best friend of addiction is secrecy and self-sufficiency.*) Why is it so important to hear a word of truth from God in his Word and in community (vv. 6-7, 9, 26)?

3. In what ways do we see Cain deflecting – i.e., seeing the problem as being "out there" (or "them") rather than "in here"? What are ways you also tend to deflect? Consider the various techniques of using cool logic, self pity, a sense of humor, throwing a fit, etc.

4. Do you detect the following "deflecting" mindsets in you? (1) "I can't prosper if someone else is prospering." (2) "I just need to rid myself of this problem; then I won't look so bad." (3) "Am I my brother's keeper?" (v. 9)

5. *Let's discuss this idea of being our "brother's keeper" further*. Considering the Bible's sustained call to care for our neighbor (Deut. 15.8-10; Lev. 23:22; Exod. 20:10; Num. 35:9-15; Matt. 25:34-39; 1 John 3:11-18), what might be flawed about the following way of thinking, "Now that I've taken care of X, Y, and Z in my life, it's time to give back"? How does being in relationship with Jesus — our ultimate "keeper" who died in our place (Heb. 12:24) — turn our hearts towards our brothers and sisters?

6. How does the idea of being our "brother's keeper" change the way we look at people in our city ("that's *my* child, *my* grandparent, *my* sister")?

7. Where do we see evidence of Cain being <u>hardened</u> against God (vv. 5, 9, 13-14)? Do you see signs of a similar hardening of your own heart?

8. How can you *un*-harden yourself? Read Psalm 73. In what ways is the psalmist's sketch a description of the heart of Cain (vv. 1-15)? What was the key to his change of heart (v. 17)?