

June 29-July 3, 2020 Edition

The "Big Story" Of The Bible

Finding Jesus In The Old Testament

Cain & Abel- The Nature Of Sin

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday Reflection: This week we are going to be looking at the nature of “sin”. That word doesn’t really get used much nowadays, does it? In fact the whole concept of sin has fallen from favor (which is kind of funny when you think about it since that’s what sin did to us- caused us to fall from favor) and most modern people don’t want to talk about sin.

In fact I read in an article a while back that the whole idea of sin was antiquated and it was time to let go of those theological words that were at the heart of most of the world’s ills and instead start using more modern and more accurate language from psychology, sociology, and the legal fields. But none of the words or concepts from any of those disciplines come close to explaining what is going on in the world today.

The phrase “bad habit” isn’t up to explaining why people are the way we are. The idea of breaking-the-rules likewise can’t explain the depravity of the human condition. Why? Because neither bad habits nor broken rules get to the heart of the matter. And what is the heart of the matter, you ask? I’m so glad you did. The heart of the matter as it turns out is the human heart:

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong. James 4:1-3 (NLT)

As it turns out the problem with sin isn’t something that’s “out there”- it’s something inside every one of us. Paul talks about it a lot- he calls it the sinful nature. It’s the part of us that thinks we know better than God how to live our lives. It’s the toddler within us that will throw a tantrum if it doesn’t get what it wants. When writing to the church at Corinth Paul had this to say about that sinful nature:

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NLT)

The sinful nature puts you at war with others and even with yourself if you ever try to discipline yourself and tell yourself no when something or someone isn’t good for you. When I was a younger man I never told myself no. I basically did whatever sounded good. Because of that I never had a problem with my sinful nature. But as soon as I decided I was going to change my life by disciplining what I did and didn’t do my sinful nature threw a tantrum. It caused a war within me that I had to work really hard to win. But the sinful nature doesn’t just cause internal wars- it more often causes wars and battles with others. Often even those we love.

The story of Cain & Abel gives us a unique insight into how the sinful nature works on us and what can happen if we’re not careful to manage it rather than letting it manage us. This week we’ll talk about the nature of sin but for today maybe spend some time thinking about the whole concept of sin and the sinful nature that the Bible says we all have and ask yourself if you’re managing your sinful nature or if it’s managing you?

Tuesday Reflection: As we begin looking at the story of Cain & Abel let's start off by reading the whole account and then talking about what we can learn from this story:

Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the Lord's help, I have produced a man!" Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift-the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. "Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him. Afterward the Lord asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?" But the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth." Cain replied to the Lord, "My punishment is too great for me to bear! You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!" The Lord replied, "No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the Lord put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. So Cain left the Lord's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Genesis 4:1-15 (NLT)

So what did you learn from reading this ancient story about the nature of sin and its consequences? The first thing I want to notice in this story is the puissance of sin.

That's right. Puissance. What? You don't know what puissance means? Neither did I. The only reason you're reading about it right now is because I didn't like the original word I came up with to describe this particular insight from the story. The original word I thought of was "potency". But it wasn't exactly right. I mean, sin is potent- especially if we let it manage us. But it's not exactly right. So what does "puissance" mean, you ask? Dictionary.com defines puissance as: great power, influence, or prowess.

And that's exactly what this story is trying to convey to us in regards to the nature of sin- it has ginormous puissance. Look at what God says to Cain after Cain's offering is not accepted with the same favor as Abel's was:

"Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." Genesis 4:6-7 (NLT)

When talking about sin God uses the imagery of a predator laying in wait to pounce when its prey least suspects it. That's why the language of any other discipline isn't enough to convey the nature and understanding of what is going on in the world today- bad habits and rule breaking just won't cut it. Sin is so much more than those two concepts even if it does contain those

concepts. When we reduce sin to a single event we lose sight of what's truly going on. Sin is something that begins within our hearts and over time when allowed to make itself at home in our lives will eventually be birthed into bad habits that over time will bring forth death:

Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.
James 1:14-15 (NLT)

What is James getting at? That sin is progressive in nature. It may start with a bad habit and breaking a rule but isn't content to stop there. It does its best to make us think the initial infractions aren't that big of a deal and they may not be but they aren't the end game of sin. God wants to make sure Cain (and we) don't miss that. Jealousy might not seem like such a big deal but if we allow it fester it will give birth to other much more sinister and toxic things in our lives and the lives of those we love. Sin is a predator and it wants us to misjudge it. Don't fall for that.

Wednesday Reflection: Yesterday we were talking about the fact that the nature of sin is puissant (great power, influence, or prowess). God's words about sin bring to mind images of a predator:

You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." Genesis 4:6-7 (NLT)

Sin, if allowed to fester in our hearts will have a progressive and abiding influence that grows more and more powerful the longer we let it make itself at home. When we commit a "sin" it's not really a singular event- it's more like a seed that gets planted that if we're not careful will become a presence in our lives and eventually take over if we're not careful. It may start with a bad habit but it will go far beyond that when left to run wild. That's when psychologists start talking in terms of "addiction" and at that point they're getting warmer. Addicts understand the predatory nature of sin. They understand that one sinful action so often leads to many more unrelated sinful actions that over time will destroy lives and relationships.

So what hope is there? How does one do battle with something as destructive and sneaky as sin? Well, that's the good news. Because God doesn't just warn Cain to avoid evil- he urges Cain to pursue the good. Why? Because that's the only true antidote to sin (whether we're talking about small individual first steps with sin or full blown "death" which occurs when sin is allowed to run wild in our lives and hearts). Ask any recovering addict how they are keeping their addiction at bay and none of them will tell you they are recovering simply by cutting out the bad stuff. It's important to cut out the bad stuff but if that's all you do eventually you'll find yourself back exactly where you began- or worse. I wonder if that's what Jesus was getting when He said this:

"When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, searching for rest. But when it finds none, it says, 'I will return to the person I came from.' So it returns and finds that its former home is all swept and in order. Then the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before." LUKE 11:24-26 (NLT)

That story used to confuse me. Not so much anymore. I mean, I still don't get some of it but what I think is going on is the place the demon left hasn't filled itself up with something new. It's just been swept clean and put in order. That's exactly what happened to me countless times as a teenager when trying to leave behind the drug abusing life I had somehow allowed myself to fall into. I was NEVER successful until by accident I stumbled on the secret- I had to fill my life up with good stuff if I was going to keep the bad stuff away. And so I filled my life with Jesus and while it wasn't easy I was finally able to leave that old life behind. Why did that work when nothing else had? Because just like sin is a seed and will grow over time to overwhelm a life- so is good.

The ways of right-living people glow with light; the longer they live, the brighter they shine. But the road of wrongdoing gets darker and darker- travelers can't see a thing; they fall flat on their faces. Proverbs 4:18-19 (MSG)

I love that idea- the longer they live, the brighter they shine. I think we all know people who as they age their lives become brighter and brighter. Why? What makes them shine? A series of decisions that over time bring more light into the world (and their own lives too) rather than more darkness. Does it mean they're perfect? No. But it does mean they are aiming for bringing more beauty and light into this world with their thoughts and actions than darkness. And that changes things. It's not immediate but over time a life lived in this way stands out and starts to change the world. And all of it begins with a change of trajectory. Will I choose to be tempted into sin (the crouching predator waiting to pounce) or will I "master" that sin- not by the strength of my own will but by actively pursuing the good that God designed me to pursue. One way of living will cause untold pain and misery in my own life and the lives of the people I love. The other way of living will unleash light and beauty. And over the course of a lifetime the results are amazing. But CS Lewis reminds us we are eternal beings created to last forever. Take a life that makes small decisions every day that either bring more light or more darkness into being and extrapolate the effects over millions of years and the results would be staggering. In his book *Mere Christianity* Lewis writes this:

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."

So choose wisely the thoughts and actions that you allow to guide your life because they will determine who you are becoming for better or for worse.

Thursday Reflection: OK- so we know that one thing this story teaches us is that sin (and favor) are puissant (don't know that word? Go read Tuesday's reflection). Today we look at the interior nature of both sin and favor. What do I mean by the "interior nature" of sin and

favor? Just that. That they are both things that begin inside of our hearts. We saw this on Tuesday with sin:

Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.
James 1:14-15 (NLT)

The problems with the world aren't "out there". They're "in here". They are ultimately a matter of the heart. Take a look at the beginning of the story of Cain and Abel again and see if you can tell why God favored Abel but not Cain:

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift-the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. Genesis 4:2-5 (NLT)

Can you see anything in that story that identifies why Cain's offering was not looked upon with favor but Abel's was? They both brought offerings. They both were going-to-church if you want to look at it that way. They're both seeking God's favor. But only one of them receives it. Why?

It's subtle but the writer gives us a couple of clues- let's us see it's a matter of the heart. An interior job. There are not descriptives about Cain's offering but there are about Abel's. Abel brings "the best portions of his first born lambs from the flock." What does that mean? Every shepherd would understand. The mark of wealth for a shepherd is how much his herd is growing every year. There's not telling for sure how many lambs are going to survive each year so the prudent thing to do would be to wait until all the lambs have been born and then decide how much to give back to God.

But Abel doesn't do that. What does that mean? It means that Abel trusted God with all of his heart. The only reason we know Cain didn't is because God did not "accept" Cain's offering. I always wondered what it meant that God didn't accept Cain's offering. Why not? What did that look like? We don't know but we know that the way Cain reacts to God's warnings shows us Cain didn't trust God. Cain believed that embracing his jealousy was the way to go. But it all began from within. We get a bit of insight into what was going on in the book of Hebrews:

It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith. Hebrews 11:4 (NLT)

Abel still speaks to us by his example of faith. I really like that. His life didn't last very long but it had tremendous impact on the rest of history. But notice what that passage says about Abel- it was "by faith" that Abel brought a more acceptable offering. What does that mean? Here we see yet again how complex that word that is translated here in English as "faith" really is. Growing up I thought faith was about what you thought. Belief and faith were things you considered to be true. Faith in God meant I believed that He existed. And that's part of it but it's not all of it. It can't be. I mean, do you think Cain's lack of faith meant he didn't believe God existed? No chance. And yet he didn't have the faith that Abel had.

What does that mean? There's another word that can be used to translate that Bible word that so often is translated as faith or belief. Trust. Also commitment. Faith/belief/trust/commitment. All these concepts are wrapped up in the Bible word for faith or belief. Abel trusted God. The only conclusion in Genesis 4 that I can see is that Cain did not. That must be the reason Cain's offering was not accepted. So then why was Cain even bothering to give an offering? Only one reason I can think of.

To manipulate God. To earn God's favor. And before you start thinking too poorly of Cain (for this part of his issues- not for the murder part which I think go ahead and think poorly of him for that ;o) we do this too. It still exists in our world. Even in the church. It's called works based salvation. It's the belief that I can earn God's favor and my redemption. It's the belief that if I give God enough of my money it will come back as more money than I originally gave to Him. One could call it a heavenly pyramid scheme. We don't usually think of it in such a graphic way but that's exactly what many Christians do. I'll work for God so I'll get what I want from Him. Rather than saying, "I'll work for God because of how grateful I am for what He's given me."

It's a fine line but it's an important one when it comes to finding favor from God. And it's the only way to develop the heart of Jesus in my life. And as that heart grows within us we start to become more gracious to those around us. Or if that heart doesn't grow within us we will become bitter when things don't go the way we think they should and we'll blame everyone else for our issues- even God Himself. There are still Cain's everywhere in this world all around us. Blaming everyone else for the things that are going wrong in their own lives and in this world. I see Cain's on both sides of every argument on Facebook. Cain's hate other Cain's. They also hate Abel's. But Abel's don't hate Cain's. Do you see the one unifying theme that identifies Cain's? Hate. And blame. Don't be a Cain. Be an Abel. It starts in your heart.

Friday Reflection: So if you've been reading this week's reflections you may be asking if there's any hope at all? Yes! There is! Choosing God's way. It was what Abel did and that brought about the favor of God in his life. It's what Cain rejected and that's what caused all his problems. It's interesting that Cain so closely resembles the older brother in the story of the Prodigal Sons (yes sonS. It's not a misprint. They were both prodigal in the end and even the Father was prodigal which is a story for another time). This is a synopsis of the story Jesus told:

A man had two sons and the younger one couldn't wait for his father to die before he got his inheritance so he asked his dad to give him his share now so he can go live his life the way he wanted to. And dad does as his son asks (hence the "prodigal" nature of the dad since the word prodigal simply means wasteful with a valuable commodity- the dad "wasted" his money on the no good son is how the people listening to Jesus would see it). The son goes off and spends it all and when it's gone and all his friends are gone and he's at his absolute lowest he remembers that the servants at his dad's house have it better than he does. He decides he will go back and beg to be taken back as a servant since he's no longer worthy to be a son. When the dad sees his son coming from far away he runs to him and doesn't even let the boy get his whole speech out. He welcomes the younger son back as a full member of the family. But when the older son comes home to the celebration he sulks:

"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you

told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf! Luke 15:28-30 (NLT)

If you know anything about middle eastern culture then you know the older brother just did something every bit as offensive as the younger brother did. He disrespected his dad on several levels that would have gotten him kicked out of any typical first century family. He too was "prodigal" since he wasted the valuable resource of family. The dad replies to his son that they had to celebrate because the younger son (who was lost and yet now is found, dead and yet now alive) had returned. And that's where the story ends. Why? Couldn't Jesus think up a good ending for the story? Yes. He could. Jesus knows exactly how He'd like the story to end. The problem is, it's not up to Jesus. It's up to each one of us listening to the story. Will we be like the older brother who is really when you think about it a lot like Cain. How so?

Cain wanted to earn God's favor. When it didn't go the way he thought he blamed Abel (his younger brother) and he blamed God. Rather than asking himself what he might be able to do differently to find favor in the eyes of God he decided to rebel. The older brother in the story of the Prodigal Sons THOUGHT he was earning the favor of the father. He always did the right thing. He never (outwardly) rebelled. But then his dad turns his favor on the younger brother and he just can't stand it. It HAS to be somebody's fault because it can't be his. So he blames dad AND brother.

So does Cain. And if we're not careful we'll become more like Cain than Abel as we go through life IF we think we can earn the favor of God. But you can't. And neither can I. None of us can. So what hope is there? This story of Cain and Abel seems so bleak. It doesn't seem have a happy ending at all:

One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him. Afterward the Lord asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?" But the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!" Genesis 4:8-10 (NLT)

What does God say? "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!" A similar statement is made several times in the Old Testament. It is a tragic story AND YET because the Holy Spirit- who inspired Moses to write this story- is such a brilliant story teller we've got foreshadowing here. A sneak preview. And hope. Right here we find the basic furniture (I heard someone use that phrase this week and I can't get it out of my mind ;o) of the victory of grace over sin- the Grace of God and the Justice of God. When Cain starts going down the wrong path God doesn't show up and say, "HOW DARE YOU!!!! DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!?!?" What does God do? He asks questions. "Why are you angry? Why do you look so dejected?" He tries to bring Cain along. To help Cain.

He did the same with Adam & Eve when they ate the fruit. He came to the garden and started asking them questions. Where are you? What have you done? Why? Well it's not because He didn't know. There's not a lot I can say for a certainty but I can say this with full confidence- when God asks us a question He's not looking for information. He's not trying to gauge the condition of our hearts. He knows the answers to His questions and He already knows the

conditions of our hearts. So why does He ask questions? To get us to gauge the condition of our hearts. Because we so rarely do. I wonder what question God is asking me today. I wonder what question He might be asking you today?

Friday Reflection: Even after Cain has murdered his brother God asks questions of Cain rather than attacking him. Where is your brother? What have you done? Why? Because God is rooting even for Cain. Yes there are consequences that go along with what Cain did but you also see the Grace of God at work here so early on in the story of the Bible. It's hard for us because we love the idea of grace for the things we've done but are often bothered when it's also offered to someone we deem unworthy. It's hard for all of us with some kinds of people and for certain kinds of "sins". We demand justice for everyone else and that leads us to the second part of the furniture of God's victory over sin- God's justice.

When the innocent are harmed it REALLY bothers God. When the powerful oppress the weak it REALLY bothers God. God tells Cain that Abel's blood "cries out" to Him from the ground. When injustice occurs there HAS to be a price that is paid. It's part of the fabric of reality. It's probably part of Who God Is- part of His Nature. Justice says that when an injustice has been done somebody has to pay for it. Abel's blood was spilled and it cried out for justice. And every time you or I have done something wrong (and it doesn't have to be as bad as murder either) justice cries out to be paid. So who's going to pay for my wrongs? Who's going to take care of my tab that I can't afford to pay? There's only two who can- the one who committed the injustice and God Himself. We learn in the book of Hebrews that Jesus blood cries out sort of like (but not exactly like) Abel's:

You have come to God, the Judge of all... to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:23-24 (NLT)

This fascinates me. God is "Judge of all". That worried me at first. Why? Because I've done a lot (and continue to do a lot) of stuff that deserves judgment. So how is this verse in Hebrews supposed to be comforting? Because of the blood of Jesus. Blood that cries out like Abel's blood did but with a "better word". What's that better word? Grace. Mercy. Forgiveness. Abel's blood cried out for justice. Justice must be served because God is just as much the God of Justice as He is the God of Grace and Mercy. So what did He do to make sure that both justice and grace could be served? He came Himself and paid my bail. And yours too. And the other people in your home, your neighborhood, your community, city, state, nation, world.

He also paid Cain's debt. And now because Jesus paid our debts we don't have to be afraid to approach God when we've messed up. Sheepish, sure. But Jesus paid our debt and that means we won't be charged for the transgressions we've made, are making, will make. Sure there are still consequences associated with our sin but the legal bill that kept us separated from God has been taken care of. I remember when I was a young man and I'd screw up royally I'd go to God and ask for grace and mercy and forgiveness. But after a while when I kept coming back to Him for the same things over and over and over and over and over (ok you get the idea) again I started to wonder when God would get tired of me coming back for the same thing over and over and over and over again. I was afraid the day would come when He'd say, "I'm sick and tired of doling out grace and mercy and forgiveness over and over again so that's it! You're through!"

Turns out that will never happen. Why? Because of the justice of God. Huh? The justice of God? That's right. But doesn't justice demand a price be paid? Sure. Then why would you think the justice of God is what will keep Him from ever deciding you've gone too far and can't be forgiven again. Just this:

If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 1 John 1:9 (NLT)

Do you see how it doesn't say "he is faithful and merciful to forgive us..."? Instead it says, "he is faithful and JUST to forgive us..." What does that mean? That the debt for all past sins, current sins and future sins were paid for at the cross. Justice demands a price be paid but justice also ensures the same crime isn't paid for twice. Sort of like double jeopardy but not really. God forgives not ONLY because He's merciful but also because He's just. Forgiveness for me now is justice because of what Jesus did on the cross. I know it's mind boggling but it's the most comforting thing you'll ever hear when you apply it to yourself. It can be extremely challenging when you apply it to someone else. Someone who you wish didn't get forgiveness from God.

Problem is that makes us more like the older brother and Cain than making us more like Jesus. I'm not claiming this is easy stuff to deal with but it's absolutely essential to you and me developing the heart of Jesus rather than the heart of Cain. Remember how this whole story started out- with God waning Cain:

"Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." Genesis 4:6-7 (NLT)

Sin is also crouching at our door. Eager to control us. But we must subdue it and be its master. How? Not by our own power but by developing the heart of Jesus. By flooding our lives and the world with so much light that there is no room for the darkness that accusations and jealousy and bitterness bring. Remember- your choices are like seeds and what you nurture will grow. Nurture the light.