

## **My Brother's Keeper (East of Eden Series – Part III)**

2/15/2009

1. Read Gen. 4:1-16. What is the significance of the first offspring killing his younger brother just three chapters into the Bible?

Clearly underscores the power of sin in the world East of Eden. God created man in His own image, but man chose to listen to Satan. As long as man continues to live under his own power, he will be open to the temptations that Satan will place in front of us. This early murder was just a graphic example of that. Pride and jealousy are strong emotions.

2. In Genesis 4:9, God probes Cain as to Abel's whereabouts to see if he would tell the truth. What does Cain's reply tell you about his state of mind?

Cain obviously wasn't thinking too clearly if he thought he could lie to God, or even hide the truth by not answering His question. Cain is so self-absorbed that his only thought is to try to protect himself by covering up his actions.

3. Read Mark 3:31-35. Here Jesus broadens the definition of brothers and sisters beyond blood relatives. How does that connect to Gen. 4:9?

In this scene Jesus makes it clear that all of those who belong to the family of God are just as important to Him (just as much a relative) as those who are blood relatives to Him. Thus, if Cain should have been concerned about Abel's welfare, we should be concerned about the welfare of all fellow Christians.

4. So does that mean we are only responsible for those who believe as we believe, or does God hold us to an even higher standard?

When Jesus sent His disciples out, He sent them into all the world (see Matt. 28:18-20), which meant they were responsible for witnessing to everyone, most of whom would not be Christians when they first met and befriended them.

5. In what way does Romans 5:6-11 model this relationship with nonbelievers?

Jesus died for us before we were part of the family of God. He gave His life for us, and then steps back and lets us decide whether we will accept the gift of forgiveness. Similarly, we should reach out to nonChristians because they need to see Jesus through us.

6. The passage in 1John 3:11-14,16-18 specifically talks about the connection between the story of Cain and Abel and its application to those who would follow Christ. Is it the same message?

Pretty much the same, but it provides specific instructions that we should share our material possessions with those in need; otherwise our words are empty. People know we are Christians by our actions much more than by our words.

7. Some Christians believe that these instructions apply only to fellow Christians (our brothers in Christ). Others take the much broader interpretation that everyone is my brother or sister, and I should feel some responsibility for everyone. What makes more sense to you after looking at the life of Jesus?

Jesus reached out to everyone. In fact, He was less focused on the religious of the day than on those who needed (and were open to) God the most. These people tended to be tax collectors, prostitutes, women, lepers, thieves, and all those considered “unclean” or unworthy by the religious leaders. We might interact differently with a Christian brother we know and trust (we might give him money) than with a nonChristians we don’t know as well (we might buy him lunch if he is hungry instead of just giving him money to prevent his buying booze or drugs instead), but we still need to be loving.

8. When interacting with “others” who are not like us, we too often make some fundamental mistakes. How did Pastor Steve describe them?

We categorize, label, a stereotype them to distinguish us from them. We think in a condescending manner and focus more on their need than on them as a brother or sister. We forget that we all serve the same God and are all sinners saved by grace. We need to make sure they sense the message that “You are just as important as every other person in the world”.

9. Our goal is to get back to Eden. Read 2Corinthians 5:1-9 and consider your role in life as you move forward from this place.

In our journey through this land East of Eden on our way to Eden (the new heaven and new earth described in Revelation) we are expected to strive to please God in everything we do and say. We would prefer to be in Eden, but we aren’t right now, so we are admonished by God to watch after our fellow travelers along the road – our brothers and sisters. Being involved in reaching out to others in love transforms us from “selfish” to “giving” and allows us the incredible privilege of being the feet, the hands, and the mouth of God to our brothers and sisters around the world.