**Old School – Week 1 (Cain and Abel)**

**June 8-9, 2019**

How many of you have ever heard a phrase like, “We’re going old school” or “I like things that are old school.” I’m sure some of you have. Well, when I think of things that are OLD SCHOOL, I picture some things from my childhood. Here are some pictures from my childhood that some of you may recognize and some of you may not!

**(Leaders Note: Show images of movies, TV shows, cartoons, electronic devices, clothes/shoes, etc…anything that could be considered “retro” or “old school” in some way! Feel free to adapt the message slides so you can include your photos.)**

Well, you’re in luck because we are going OLD SCHOOL with this next series because we are going to be focusing on the OLDEST parts of the Bible: the Old Testament.

We are going to spend the next several weeks looking at people, families, stories, and places from the Old Testament. My hope is that these stories will come to life because one of the difficulties of the Bible is that it can sometimes feel like a “make-believe” story. It’s hard to imagine a time/place very different than ours.

If we’re going to start a series on the Old Testament, we should probably start at the very beginning, right? Adam and Eve…the Garden of Eden…God created this beautiful garden for them to live…one rule…don’t eat the fruit on this tree…ate the fruit…DUH DUH DUH!! Everyone caught up? Today, we’re talking about their family: specifically their two sons, Cain and Abel. Their story can be found in Genesis 4 so let’s jump right in and read about them! We’re going to start at Genesis 4:2 **(Leaders Note: I would suggest starting in the 2nd half of Verse 2. Verse 1 starts with the phrase “Adam and Eve made love” ☺)**

Genesis 4:2-16 – *“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper? ”The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.” Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” But the LORD said to him, “Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”*

I think we can focus on one key part of this story…**God was merciful to Cain**.

Jealousy and envy totally ruled Cain’s life. He was jealous and even ENVIOUS that Abel received God’s favor when he brought his offerings. God did not appreciate Cain’s offerings because he didn’t give God his best. Here is a good definition of the words “jealousy” and “envy”

-Jealousy: “I want what you have.”

-Envy: “I want what you have and I wish you didn’t have it.”

The jealousy and envy that Cain felt led him to kill his own brother. He was so angry that God was pleased with Abel and not him; he thought the only response was to get rid of Abel. However, look at God’s response to Cain…

**He does punish him, but he spares his life and will keep anyone from killing him.**

Here’s what I think this story can teach us: God’s mercy is such an incredible thing to experience when we feel like we’ve blown it. Maybe we’ve said something to someone that was mean or hurtful…or we were dishonest with our parents…or we’ve even been jealous/envious of someone else just like Cain. No matter what it is, **God’s mercy can overcome anything and help us experience His love.**

**I have two questions for you to think about: Are you giving God your best?** Cain was not giving God his best offering. He was keeping it for himself. Are you doing that with anything in your life?

**Is there jealousy or envy in your life? If so, what/who are you jealous of?** Maybe you are jealous that your brother or sister seem to get what they want or receive most of the attention from your parents. You just wish someone would do that for you. Maybe you’re jealous of a friend or something they have. Jealousy can make us really angry with him/her.

**Here’s why those questions are important: God’s mercy can overcome any struggle that we have. When we experience that type of love and forgiveness, we should start to extend that to others. That’s how God wants us to live!**

Ephesians 2:4-5: *“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”*

As we continue through this Old School series, I think God is going to teach us a lot through these Old Testament stories about His love, mercy, and His second chances. Let’s pray.

**(Leaders Note: After prayer, finish the next part of the script.)**

You may have noticed that we forgot something in this message. Anyone want to take a guess? That’s right…we didn’t have a THP! Here’s why: I want you to come up with one during your table discussion. Based on the story of Cain and Abel and the message around it, work with your group to come up with a good THP for this message. Ready, set, go!