

June 1, 2025

Gift-Giving That Matters or Cain and Abel Offer Sacrifices

Genesis 4:1-16

Unifying Principle (Focus of Lesson)

Giving gifts to show appreciation and honor is a common practice. How do we expect our gifts to be received? From their very livelihood, Cain and Abel offer gifts to God, but Cain grew angry because Abel's gift was more pleasing to God.

Goals for Learners

1. To evaluate God's choice of Abel's sacrificial gift over Cain's gift.
2. To empathize with Cain's anger that his gift was rejected.
3. To design a practice of giving that deepens their connection of giving with worship.

Challenges for the Week

1. Reflect upon a time when you felt rejected by someone.
2. Read the story taking on the role of Cain as you read. Name situations in which you might feel justified in resorting to violence.
3. Do you ever feel less than other worshippers? What is that feeling based on? How are those feelings resolved?
4. What are some reasons for God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice over Cain's in light of Scripture's claim that God does not show partiality (Deuteronomy 10:17; Acts 10:34).
5. Compare the sacrifices of Cain and Abel with the widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4).
6. Read Hebrews 11:4 and try to determine what the reading adds to the story of Cain and Abel. What example does Abel give in how to make offerings to God? What negative example does Cain give?

June 8, 2025 (Pentecost)

The Rainbow Promise or Noah Builds an Altar

Genesis 8:13-22; 9:11-13

Unifying Principle (Focus of Lesson)

When people come through harrowing events, they feel grateful. How do people express these feelings? After the Great Flood, Noah built an altar on dry land and offered burnt offerings that so pleased the Lord that God promised never again to destroy the earth with a flood.

Goals for Learners

1. To take a deep dive into the broader context that called forth Noah's worship.
2. To empathize with Noah's felt need to worship.
3. To identify an aspect of Noah's worship of God and adapt it for use in their own congregation.

Challenges For The Week

1. How would you react if one day God announced the earth's destruction and was appointing you to ensure the creation lived on?
2. Is the Noah story a myth or history. Support your views. What does it matter if it's a myth or history?
3. Name flood experiences in your life, either literal floods of water, or figurative floods of emotion or a sense of being overwhelmed. What helped you tread water?
4. What is the significance of God smelling "the pleasing odor" of Noah's sacrifice (8:21)? How does the aroma of burning meat lead to God's decision?
5. God gives meaning to the rainbow as a sign to Noah. What other natural phenomena have become signs of God's faithfulness.
6. Paint a butcher paper-sized rainbow as a sign that you accept and value God's promise. Display the rainbow where the whole church can see it.

June 15, 2025

The Value of a Life or Abraham Makes an Offering

Genesis 22:1-14

Unifying Principle (Focus of the Lesson)

Obedience and trust are marks of commitment to one another. What do we offer to demonstrate ultimate allegiance and commitment? Abraham passes the test of faithfulness to God in his willingness to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, on the altar.

Goals for the Learners

1. To examine the level of trust Abraham demonstrates in obeying God's call.
2. To value God's testing and trusting in our own lives.
3. To promise obedience to God in the midst of testing.

Challenges for the Week

1. Research infant sacrifice in the ancient Near East and the OT's prohibitions of the practice.
2. Compare God's command to send away Ishmael (Genesis 21) with the command to sacrifice Isaac.
3. Review the covenant promise (Genesis 12; 15) that Abraham's family would be a blessing to the world.
4. Name your prized relationship and imagine God asking you to end it, just to see if you trust God enough. How is it possible to make sense of the severity of God's test?
5. What are some difficult issues that arise in this story in an era of increased awareness of child abuse?

June 22, 2025

Digging Your Own Well or Isaac Calls on the Name of the Lord

Genesis 26:24-33

Unifying Principle (Focus of Lesson)

As children grow to adulthood, they step into their own lives. What do we take with us from our family of origin? Isaac receives the blessing and promises that God made to his father, Abraham. In response, Isaac builds an altar and calls on the name of the Lord.

Goals for the Learners

1. To examine the importance of Isaac's godly heritage.
2. To appreciate both the privilege and responsibility of being included in the family of faith.
3. To express gratitude to God for those who have passed faith along to us.

Challenges For the Week

1. Take time to trace your family's genealogy. Are there multigenerational patterns of behavior, career paths, personality traits, body types, and so on?
2. Compare Abraham and Isaac's life experiences. Note the differences of each and list the similarities.
3. Have you received bequests from family members that required you to take responsibility for something?
4. Research the significance of wells in the ancient Near East in relation to Isaac's well in the story.
5. What is the significance of the Lord renewing the covenant promises. Research the Wesleyan Covenant prayer and write down its significance today.

June 29, 2025

Jacob Marks God's Faithfulness or Jacob Sets Up a Sacred Pillar

Genesis 28:10-22

Unifying Principle (Focus of Lesson)

Meaningful events and places can hold a lasting impression. How do we mark important events in life? Jacob marks his important encounters with altars, offerings, and signs of worship.

Goals for the Learners

1. To discern God's interaction with Jacob in the course of his life's journey.
2. To experience inexplicable joy in God's presence.
3. To celebrate our God-encounters in praise and worship.

Challenges For the Week

1. Research ritual and how it can give meaning and order to the human experience.
2. Create a monologue for Jacob and perform it. What is he thinking/feeling at that moment? Why?
3. Draw a map of Jacob's travels. Mark each place that he sets up a pillar or altar.
4. Pick the most important word, phrase, image, object, or event in today's Scripture reading and write why you chose it. How does it relate to Jacob's worship in the story?
5. Display several representations of ancient ziggurats as you review the purpose of such structures.
6. What intrigues, bothers, and confuses you about Jacob's story.