

# SUMMER OF SIN: WRATH

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## Genesis 4:1-16

Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have produced a man with the help of the LORD.'<sup>2</sup>Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.<sup>3</sup>In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,<sup>4</sup>and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,<sup>5</sup>but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.<sup>6</sup>The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?<sup>7</sup>If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door;

its desire is for you, but you must master it.'

<sup>8</sup>Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out to the field.' And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'<sup>10</sup>And the LORD said, 'What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!<sup>11</sup>And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

<sup>12</sup>When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.'<sup>13</sup>Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear!<sup>14</sup>Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.'<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to him, 'Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.' And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.<sup>16</sup>Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden."

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## REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. The first use of the word “sin” in scripture occurs in this passage (v.7).
  - a. What sin “lurks at the door” and eventually happens?
  - b. Why does Cain murder his brother?
3. Have you ever been so triggered that you found yourself in a rage?
  - a. What happened?
  - b. How were you able to calm down?
  - c. What have you learned about anger and how to de-escalate?

**NOTE:** Anger, like any emotion, is neither good nor bad in itself: it reveals *what we care about* and *the stories* we tell ourselves about what is going on.

**Anger usually signals that we perceive a wrong has happened**—against ourselves, our loved ones, or something we care about. It doesn’t mean we’ve perceived accurately, nor does it mean that what we value is *most important*. This is why

pausing to get curious about our anger is so important, not least to investigate if what we perceive is truly accurate. **Anger is also an approach emotion**, meaning it activates us to move toward people, situations, or goals (rather than withdraw). *What we do with anger and how we move toward others* is what matters.

4. What “wrong” does Cain’s anger signal? Is he accurate in his perception?
5. How do Cain’s later actions reveal not just anger, but *wrath*? How would you define wrath?
6. Read Mark 3:1-6. What is Jesus angry about? What does he do with his anger? How are his actions different from *wrath*?
7. What *wrongs* in the world today get you activated and angry? How can anger energize action and change?
8. What spiritual practices, emotional tools, or social skills can help keep anger from turning into wrath?

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