

CAIN - "Self Pity: Doorway To Self-Destruction"



1. **(Q1)** Feeling sorry for myself is the inevitable fruit of comparison. It is reasonable (though definitely not certain) that Cain's rejection by Yahweh was the final straw for him. The phrases that are used to describe Adam's life after the Fall are all austere and harsh (Gen 3:17-19). *This*, as a "tiller of the soil," was the life of Cain as well, as the firstborn son. In fact, God's eventual judgment on Cain was simply a further extension of Adam's judgment for it involved Cain's relationship to the soil. In Cain's case, the harshness of labor would produce *no yield*, rather than merely more work.
2. **(Q3)** The Hebrew word for "crouching" might more clearly be translated. "parked" for our era. It has the notion of "lying down" (Ps 23:2), or "resting by sitting" (Ezek 34:15). It *does* refer to lions/lionesses in the Bible, but even then it is often a reference to simply "staying put" (Ezek 19:2). The idea of being attacked is really not in this verse. However, the notion of sin being "parked" right outside his door is very present.

The word translated "desire" only appears 3x in our Old Testament. Once in this story, once in reference to Eve's tendency with Adam after the Fall (Gen 3:16), and once in reference to Solomon's feelings for his "beloved" (Song 7:10). The obvious connection is sin's "longing" to "rule over" Cain (and me). The phrasing in *both* the passage about Eve and Cain is *identical*. This at least creates the possibility that Eve's "desire" for Adam was going to be for *control*, rather than affection.

3. **(Q6)** A little later in this passage, Paul furthers this idea when he specifically addresses the issue of comparison with others. Even though Paul is speaking to the Corinthian believers about the "cult of celebrity" and its subsequent pride, how he *concludes* the section has special application for the subject of self-pity. Paul says that those who compare themselves to others and "measure" their life by others are "without understanding." The Greek here is *very* insightful. It has the force of being without the ability to "set things together" or "to set things in the same place." This is a word that has to do with be able to reason in a straight line, or more simply, to think clearly. This admonition implies that comparison to others (the root of self-pity) skews our thinking and renders us unable to reason properly.
4. **(Q11)** Isaiah 58:10-11 is an excellent promise about involvement in others' needs as an antidote to discouragement.



1. **(Q1)** We need to remind ourselves that although Satan's not mentioned in the narrative of chapter 4, he's still present on earth. We are lulled into thinking that he has such a victory in Genesis 3, that he decided to take a "break" until Job 1! Certainly the Enemy of God, who was so at work *in* the Garden, is certainly (perhaps doubly) at work *outside* it.
2. **(Q1)** Be careful here *not* to assume or teach that Cain's offering was inferior because it wasn't an animal sacrifice. There's *nothing* in this story to suggest that (even though it "preaches" really well!). The plain reading indicates that Cain had not "done well" in his offering (Gen 4:6). It is more likely, looking

what follows the rejection of his offering, that he came before God with either serious issues with Him, or perhaps his family.

3. **(Q4)** Don't assume that Cain's blame is directed towards *Abel* (though it *might* be). He addresses Yahweh in 4:9 with an attitude of contempt. Cain *may* have been blaming Yahweh for more than a "problem" with the offering. Resentment, at the end of the day, is always directed towards God.
4. **(Q6)** We must be careful here *not* to presume that Paul is talking about a battle *over* ideas. Paul's warfare language here reveals a battle *between* ideas/thoughts. Until we recognize that certain ideas/thoughts/though patterns as "enemies," we are missing the significance of Paul's teaching. Ideas "taken captive" are enemies that have been identified, isolated, and captured by a clear understanding of the Truth. Bottom line: some of *our own thoughts* are our enemies. We should treat them the same way we would a terrorist. Rather than massage and entertain them, we should seek to conquer them.



“Going Deeper”

1. **(Q4)** Do you think when we conclude that something that has happened to us is “unfair,” that it makes it easier to pursue a path that's wrong?
2. **(Q4)** Can you trace the 3 steps listed in this question in a situation from your own life?
3. **(Q5)** Have group members share their responses to this question.
4. **(Q7)** When you compare/contrast yourself to others on the idea of “fairness,” do you compare yourself with those whose life is easier or harder? What does this tell you about your idea of “fairness”?
5. **(Q7)** What would it mean to confuse justice with “fairness”? (NOTE: justice means people get what they deserve; fairness means all people always get the same.) Do you think we really want either, for ourselves?
6. **(Q10)** Have group members share their responses to this question.