

“Am I My Brother’s Keeper?” - Genesis 4:1-17 & Exodus 18:13-27

Pastor Burt Garwood – July 9, 2017

Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought the fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. (Genesis 4:3-4).

- God was pleased with Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s, and this upset Cain. READ: Genesis 4:6-7. God knew that Cain hadn’t sacrificed with the right heart, and didn’t bring the right thing to sacrifice.
- Cain gets jealous of Abel, and kills his only brother in cold blood. Cain valued his feelings above his brother’s life. Cain violently asserted himself at the expense of Abel’s life.
- When God asks Cain “Where is your brother?”, Cain says, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Almost like he doesn’t care at all that he just killed his brother.

Generations later, Moses and the people of Israel are in the desert after their escape from slavery in Egypt. They number around 1 million (Numbers 1:46). Moses would take his seat as judge at sun up and listen to the people’s disputes until sunset.

- READ: Exodus 18:17-23. The people were divided into groups, with leaders over them, who cared for them, listened to their disputes and held them accountable.
- They were taught, “Am I my brother’s keeper? Yes.”

When you step back from these two stories, it’s obvious that we should care for each other and be each other’s keeper. But when it comes to watching out for each other...our culture is sending us mixed messages.

- On the one hand, people get passionate about social justice and looking out for the needs of the marginalized. “Let’s help others make a better standard of living” they say.
- But they miss tending to the greater needs of a person’s wounded and confused soul. “Don’t mess with another person’s feelings or desires”, we are told. Let them live life however their heart leads them...and whatever lifestyle choices that entails.
- People rush to the rescue of an endangered species. But our children are being exposed to gender choices as early as kindergarten.

This new tolerance coming from secularists on the far-left is not about being your brother’s keeper. It’s about letting everyone do whatever they want and endorsing it and celebrating it.

- But our Father God disagrees with this new tolerance: “...do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13) Do you think this text doesn’t speak to our culture today?
- These secularists advocate for “tolerance”, but they themselves are intolerant of anyone or any belief system that disagrees with them. And they are trying to silence anyone that opposes them.
- Our children and youth and our young adults are listening to these pied pipers who feed them worldly poison in sweet and tempting packages. Secularists are appealing to hunger, passion and desire in the hearts of our young ones. And they are telling us to leave them alone to make their own choices.
- Whose standard are we living by? Our own desires and feelings? (Then you’re just like Cain) What our culture is telling us is now acceptable? Or God’s?

READ: 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Contrary to the intolerance of secularists, the best way to measure whether we accept all people is whether we accept people whose beliefs we oppose. What does this mean?

- Loving and agreeing are not the same thing. Sometimes the most gracious thing we can do is to oppose unbiblical ideas and actions because we love the people they harm. Jesus loved people, but he also called them out of their sin.
- We are our brother’s keeper, and God wants us to call each other out when we don’t line up with his desire for our lives.
- Our Creator God who has a standard for us. He gives us our operating instructions in his word, the Bible. And we are either going to follow him, or do whatever we think is best for ourselves.

2 Corinthians 13:11 "*Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*"

- I know of only one way to be of one mind...when we all agree to live together according to God’s absolute truths. (See also Ephesians 4:15-16)

Love can’t stand back. It must engage. It must take action.

- Gary Rehm was three months shy of retirement when he died on the USS Fitzgerald on June 17. At thirty-seven, he was by far the oldest of the seven sailors who perished. When the USS Fitzgerald collided with a container ship, Rehm said, “If my kids die, I’m going to die.” By various accounts, he saved at least twenty of them. He then went down to save more and perished with six others.
- The sailors saved by Gary Rehm will spend the rest of their lives knowing that someone loved them enough to give his life for them. Imagine the sense of personal worth and significance such knowledge would bring. (John 15:13).

READ: John 15:13. Jesus gave his life for you, to save you from sin. This is the essence of Christianity. It’s the whole reason we follow him.

- When it comes to love taking action...to being your brother’s keeper...it isn’t just about saving someone physical death or harm.
- It’s about doing your part to protect them and guard their heart and mind from sin and the deceitful lies of those who tell them to do whatever they want.
- Truly loving someone...really being your brother’s keeper, is pointing them to God’s perfect love and God’s perfect law and gently holding them accountable.
- Give yourself to being keepers of other people. It’s counter-cultural. When God calls us to look after each other, we risk being rejected by the one we’re watching out for. But it’s God’s command to us.
- When it’s all said and done, I want others to say, “thanks for watching out for me even when I didn’t want it” not, “You knew the truth, why didn’t you lift a finger to help me?”