FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

"From a 'C' to an 'A' Christian, Part 2"

January 15th, 2012

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.

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Our text for this second sermon in our series is **James 1:19–20**:
19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;
20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Thank you for listening and thinking with me as we study God's Word to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series, "From a 'C' to an 'A' Christian" comes from **Philippians 2:14**, which tells us to:
14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,
15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

In our last lesson we discussed the negative aspects of anger. Anger is a real problem for Christians, as our text tells us. [1] **James 1:19–20** says:
19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;
20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

The Scripture makes it clear that it is unlikely that our anger produces a situation in which the glory of God is revealed. It is clear, as Paul tells us, in **Romans 3:23**:
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Unfortunately, people tend to not read or hear the Scripture accurately. Most people think that the Scripture actually says, **for y'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

Although we are all sinners, most of us have the propensity to rationalize our own sinful behavior while condemning our brother or sister for their sinful behavior. [2] We seem to be able to justify our sinfulness because of our personal situation while at the same time condemning our brother or sister for committing the same sin in the same situation. When the Lord was here, he termed our propensity to rationalize our own sins while condemning the sins of others as "hypocrisy".

There is a familiar example of this behavior in **John 8:2–5**:

2 Now early in the morning [Jesus] came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and [Jesus] sat down and taught them.
3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,
4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.
5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

There can be no question that adultery is sin. Moses tells us, in **Exodus 20:14**:

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

God tells us, in **Hebrews 13:4**:

4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

So we have both Old and New Testament confirmation that adultery is a sin. While the Law of Moses does call for death as the punishment for this sin, the Law of Moses is not the real motivation for those that brought the woman to Jesus. The real motivation for those that brought the woman to Jesus is their desire to prove themselves to be closer to God than was Jesus.

Psychologists believe that human beings are born with a propensity to a behavior called "sibling rivalry". [3] Sibling rivalry occurs when an older sibling concludes that a younger sibling is taking his or her place in the affection of their parents. Generally, the older sibling is too immature and self-centered to recognize that his or her parents have the capacity to love more than one child.

Children, being totally dependent on their parents for survival, may become consumed by this desire to not lose status. The immature mind of the older child that concludes that his or her parents are more attentive to a sibling other than himself is threatened by the thought that his or her parents will abandon him or her in favor of their sibling. The older child is not able to objectively recognize that parents only very rarely abandon their older children to focus exclusively on their younger children. Thus, the older child is threatened by the fact that a sibling is getting the attention that they themselves crave and formerly received.

Now, were you an immature child, and younger new sibling was receiving the attention that you craved, how would you deal with the situation?

Genesis 4 tells us of the episode of the two adult brothers Cain and Abel. Cain was a farmer, while Abel was a sheep herder. The two of them were trying to gain attention and approval, not just from their parents, but from God. **Genesis 4:3–5** records:

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,
5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Both brothers brought a sacrifice to God, but Cain's sacrifice was not accepted. Cain's logical solution should have been to determine the type of offering that God wanted and offer it, but Cain chose to react emotionally, with the emotion of anger. So, in **Genesis 4:6–7**:

6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?
7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

God criticized Cain because his offering was not done well. [4] When we choose to have an emotional reaction to criticism, be it from God or whomever, we are in danger of committing sin.

God tells us that sin desires us. [5] It is the glory of the devil to tempt us into sin. To do so is his fondest desire. But back in Genesis chapter 2, God gave mankind dominion over the earth, dominion meaning that God has given us the responsibility to make decisions to rule over our sinful desires.

The scribes and Pharisees brought the woman to Jesus because she had committed adultery. As I said earlier, adultery is a sin, but adultery is not the ONLY sin. Jesus says, in **Matthew 5:22**:

22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

Cain had no cause to be angry with Abel. Cain knew the parameters of a good offering, but for whatever reason, Cain chose to not provide one. That Cain failed to provide a good offering was in no way the fault or the responsibility of Abel. Abel was, for all intents and purposes, an innocent bystander to Cain's failure.

Had Cain been mature, he would have listened to God, took responsibility for his error, and corrected his mistake. It is clear, as Paul tells us, in **Romans 3:23**:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Paul tells us that it makes no sense for us to either pretend that we never mess up, or to blame someone else for our decision when we sin. Once we make a mess, the only sensible thing for us to do is to clean up our mess as best we can.

Cain, go get another offering and offer it up to God. That will solve the problem, and that is all you have to do. Christian, if you sin, just confess your sin and repent. John tells us, in **1John 1:9**:

9 If we confess our sins, [Jesus Christ] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus is willing to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness. Jesus does not qualify the word ALL; He does not say, “almost all unrighteousness” or “all unrighteousness within reason”, but ALL unrighteousness.

[6] Husband, if you do something that you ought not do to your wife, confess your sin, be cleansed from your unrighteousness and receive forgiveness. Wife, if you do something that you ought not do to your husband, confess your sin, be cleansed from your unrighteousness and receive forgiveness. To do so is the correct response.

But Cain chose to not respond correctly to his sin. Cain should have said, “I’m sorry, Lord, because my sacrifice was not done according to your instructions. Please forgive me and accept this more sufficient sacrifice”. But Cain did not. **Genesis 4:8** tells us:

8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

James 1:20 tells us:

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

And that is true. Our anger, generally speaking, is simply our incorrect response to our own sin. An angry response to being chastened for sin does not change the nature of our sin in the slightest. God desires righteousness in His people, and our anger has no power to change God’s desire.

Cain knew that he could not prevail in a dispute with God. It’s not possible. So Cain picked a target over whom he could prevail, that being, his brother. Cain vented his spleen, but even in so doing, he did not escape God’s jurisdiction. **Genesis 4:8–12** tells us:

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” [Cain] said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”
10 And [the LORD] said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.
11 So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.
12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”

Yes, indulging your anger may bring you some temporary satisfaction, even a feeling of being able to do something about your rejection, but in the final analysis, we all are under God’s jurisdiction and have to answer to Him. Although we may feel sibling rivalry, the fact is that harming our sibling will not make our parents, or God, love us more. A child’s parents are not going to allow the child to hurt his little brother or sister, and if the child does so, he will have to suffer some severe consequences.

Now, brothers and sisters, understand that sibling rivalry is a stage in the psychological development of a CHILD. Sibling rivalry is a function of immaturity, and we SHOULD grow out of this level of immaturity. But, like Cain, sometimes

we don't. Sometimes we choose to continue to relive our childhood insecurities during our adulthood.

Children are actually dependent on their parents, but once we reach adulthood, that dependency ends. However, in certain situations, adults revert back to immature childhood thinking and react childishly.

When God told Cain to improve his sacrifice, Cain made the conscious decision to handle the situation as though he and Abel were still children and God was the parent that liked Abel better than him, rather than handling the situation maturely. Unfortunately, a childish adult has the ability to do a great more damage than a childish child. The child Cain might have hit his brother and hurt him; the man Cain hit his brother and killed him.

Cain was an example of sibling rivalry, as he decided that his rejection by God was because God liked his brother better than him. The scribes and Pharisees that spoke to Jesus in **John 8** considered themselves rivals with Jesus for God's affection; they wanted to prove that neither God nor the people should like Jesus better than them.

Cain was willing to kill his brother thinking that he could get closer to God by doing so, and the scribes and Pharisees in John 8 were willing to kill a woman to show that they were closer to God than Jesus. This woman was obviously set-up; it is not possible to invade the privacy of someone in the act of adultery and bring them to a waiting tribunal unless you know that the act of adultery is taking place.

The scribes and Pharisees threw down the gauntlet to Jesus. "God said to stone this woman for her behavior", they said, "We agree with God, but what is Your position? Do you agree with God as we do, you who eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

The scribes and Pharisees were stung by Jesus' popularity with the people because of Jesus' effort to save people rather than to condemn them. The people hailed Jesus as a man sent from God when the scribes and Pharisees thought that they should have that honor, as they were the ones sitting in Moses' seat as the religious leaders of the nation. Jesus' leadership was being judged worthy, as was Abel's, while the leadership of the scribes and Pharisees was being judged unworthy, as was Cain's. So, like Cain, the scribes and Pharisees looked for someone to kill.

But Jesus did not agree with the scribes and Pharisees that the woman deserved death. Jesus was not looking for someone to kill, but, as **Luke 19:10** tells us:

10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The woman was lost, as were the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus did not come to kill her, but, as **John 3:16** tells us:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

While the scribes and Pharisees advocated killing the woman in a fit of pique, Jesus' answer to them showed His reasoned maturity. Jesus did not respond angrily to the challenge of the scribes and Pharisees, but continued with his writing. Finally, when the scribes and Pharisees became vehement with their demands for His answer, in **John 8:7**:

7 So when [the scribes and Pharisees] continued asking [Jesus], He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

Cain, having killed Abel did not make your sacrifice more acceptable or make you any more loved by God. Scribes and Pharisees, stoning the woman would not make your sin any more acceptable or make you any more loved by God. No, God's position is completely different. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, in **Matthew 9:13**:

13 But go and learn what this means: [7] 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Jesus' calling tax collectors and sinners to repentance frustrated the scribes and Pharisees, who could not stand Jesus' success drawing people into the Kingdom of God. Jesus provided a stark contrast to the scribes and Pharisees, who were never able to convince the people or even themselves that they were nearly as close to God as was Jesus. The rivalry between the scribes and Pharisees and Jesus escalated, because Jesus was clearly God's favorite, until the scribes and Pharisees, much like Cain, finally couldn't stand the fact that Jesus' sacrifices to God were being accepted while theirs was not.

Eventually, the scribes and Pharisees, like Cain, felt it necessary to kill Jesus. That was the only way that they could see to win the rivalry that Jesus caused and reestablish the order that Jesus upset by being forgiving and loving rather than advocating force to keep the people in line.

Brothers and sisters, it is important to understand that sibling rivalry is for children. Sibling rivalry is a psychological phenomenon that occurs when children are too immature and self-centered to understand that their parents can love more than one child. As we mature, however, we should learn to recognize that sibling rivalry is immature and wrong. We should become independent from our parents and not feel the need to compete for our parent's affection. **Genesis 2:24** tells us:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

A mature adult is not dependent on his or her parents, but on his or her spouse. As we mature, our focus is supposed to change and we are supposed to become parents, not rely on our parents for approval and affection, as would a child. A mature adult should not be rivals with his brothers and sisters, but all of the siblings should be peers.

However, in this case, the psychological development of the scribes and Pharisees was stunted. Paul tells us, in **1Corinthians 13:11**:

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

But the scribes and Pharisees did not put away the childishness of sibling rivalry. They refused to recognize that God has work for all of us and that [8] we ought not envy someone else's blessing, but to work to develop our own. The scribes and Pharisees were psychologically stuck in childhood; they refused to grow up and recognize the good work that Jesus was doing, but rather remained competitive with Him. And their [8] competitiveness caused them to become more and more angry with [Jesus], until their anger boiled over. **Matthew 27:22–23** records:

22 Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"
23 Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

Even the Roman procurator knew that Jesus was innocent. Even the Roman procurator could see that there was no fault in Jesus. And before the Roman procurator sentenced Jesus to death, he washed his hands of the matter to make it clear that Jesus' death sentence was only being carried out in response to their wishes. **Matthew 27:24–25** records:

24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."
25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Jesus died on Calvary's Cross to save us from our sins, but the proximate reason for Jesus' crucifixion was the anger of the scribes and Pharisees, And our text, **James 1:20** tells us:

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

But as another victim of sibling rivalry, Joseph, told his brothers, when his brothers came to reconcile with him after selling him into Egyptian slavery, in **Genesis 50:20**:

20 But as for you, [9] you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Our lesson for today is for those of us that are adult to grow up. Sibling rivalry is not relevant to our adult situation. Our parents are not providing for us as they did when we were defenseless children, so it is appropriate that our allegiance to our parents changes. Rather than becoming angry and punitive when someone else in our family does better than we do, we need to learn to rejoice with them. Rather than dwell on past hurts and perceived slights, we must utilize adult thinking, recognize that we ought no longer be in competition for our

parents affection because we have our own families and are parents ourselves, and work cooperatively rather than competitively to have the best relationships that we can with others.

Everyone has two chances for a good parent/child relationship. The first chance is one over which we have no control. We did not get to pick out our parents or our siblings, but we do get to pick our spouses and train up our own children. But we need to give up our dependence on that first relationship in order to maximize the second.

It is impossible to swim across the pool while holding onto the side of the pool where you first jumped in. It is impossible to drive forward safely looking in the rear view mirror.

Jesus' Passion experience matured Jesus and prepared Him for leadership. **Hebrews 5:8–9** tells us:

8 though [Jesus] was a Son [of God], yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.
9 And having been perfected, [Jesus] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

And Paul tells us that we, also, have to put away our our immaturity, in **1Corinthians 13:11**:

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

We ought not let childhood things negatively influence our behavior. [10] We must mature, grow and take authority over the responsibility that Jesus Christ has given us. It is not ours to look back at the slights we feel from our history, but to move on to our destiny. Jesus tells us, in **Matthew 28:18-20**:

18 "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

And we can not make disciples as adults while still fighting the squabbles of children. **Hebrews 12:1–2** tells us:

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus looked forward to the joy, not backwards to the Cross. Let us emulate His example, grow into maturity, and raise our grades as Christians.

Questions:

1. Of all of the products that anger (meaning wrath) produces, what is NOT one of them?

2. What is hypocrisy?

3. What is sibling rivalry?

4. Why did Cain become angry when God criticized his offering?

5. When does the Bible mean when it says that sin desires us?

6. What is the correct response of a spouse to their sin against their spouse?

7. Why is it that killing the woman for adultery would be the WRONG response?

8. What are the two childish traits of sibling rivalry that the scribes and Pharisees exhibited?

9. How does the scribes and Pharisees' motive in crucifying Jesus' contrast with that of God?

10. What should be our response when our emotions are stirred by behavior that reminds us of our childhood?

Answers:

1. The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

2. Justifying our sinfulness while at the same time condemning our Christian brother or sister for committing the same sin.

3. Sibling rivalry occurs when a child is too immature and self-centered to recognize that his or her parents have the capacity to love more than one child.

4. Cain had an emotional reaction to God's objective criticism.

5. It is the glory of the devil and his fondest desire to tempt us into sin.

6. Confess the sin, be cleansed from unrighteousness and receive forgiveness.

7. God desires mercy, not sacrifice, as He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

8. Envy and competitiveness.

9. The scribes and Pharisees meant evil against Jesus; but God meant crucifixion for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

10. We must mature, grow and take authority over the adult responsibility that Jesus Christ has given us. We ought not look backward, but forward.

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