



## Intro

[**Author Note:** Right before the message, our worship band covered “Bad Blood” by Taylor Swift.]

Begin with an example from your life where you had to deal with someone who was critical, or a “hater.”]

My wife Steph is a teacher at an elementary school in Bellevue. She’s one of the best teachers in her school, and I’m not just saying that because I’m married to her. She’s been asked to be on leadership teams in her school, she’s gotten high marks on her reviews every year, and she’s always one of the teachers at the school that the principle trusts when seeking advice for how to do things better there.

But last year, she had this one kid in her class whose mom would not stop critiquing everything she did. She constantly shifted the blame of her kid not having great study habits onto Steph for not being a good enough teacher. It kept eating away at Steph. Anytime she got an email from this lady, she would tell me about it and how frustrated she was, and in those moments I would look down at my phone and play the recording of one of the greatest philosophers of our time.

I wanted to remind her of the wisdom in the great philosopher’s words:

*“And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate ...  
Baby I’m just gonna shake, shake, shake  
Shake it off, shake it off.”*

No matter where you are or what you do in life, there will be haters. We can’t avoid it. It doesn’t matter what school you go to, what sport you play, or what career you choose, there will always be haters.

## Bridge

Sometimes, those “haters” live in our very own homes. How many of you out there have a sibling, brother or sister, younger or older? Do you ever have times where they just drive you crazy, or you know you are driving them crazy?

With siblings, there’s always those moments of anger and jealousy, and you tend to play these comparison games in your head. Everything is a competition with siblings.

**[Author Note: Share an example of you fighting with a sibling or other family member.]**

For me, it always has been with my brother. We’ve had more fights in my life than I can remember. There’s always been this weird dynamic of competition between the two of us. It’s been at the root of these fights. Maybe some of you can relate to those feelings in your own family.

### **Main Point**

Sibling rivalry goes all the way back to the very first siblings in the Bible: Cain and Abel.

### **Genesis 4:2b–5 (NLT)**

*When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. <sup>3</sup> When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, <sup>5</sup> but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.*

Cain was the first born, Abel came second. Cain was a farmer, Abel raised sheep. As these two brothers grew up, they instinctively knew to worship God. It’s why they would bring these offerings.

We know as humans, gifts are a way we express love, appreciation and gratitude. That’s what these two brothers wanted to do for God.

The question is, why did God favor one offering over the other?

Abel gave his best to God. He gave his firstborn lambs. In simple terms, he gave his offering to God on faith. He took 10 percent of his lambs right when they were born and gave them to God as an offering. It’d be like if you got a check for \$1,000 at the beginning of the month, and right away, you gave God 10 percent. When you do that, you’re saying you trust in Him as your Provider. It’s physically and financially saying God is ahead of everything else in life. He’s number one.

That’s one of the reasons we tithe. It’s a gift to God, and it says, “God, I put my trust in you—that I can live off what’s left until the next paycheck comes.”

Cain, on the other hand, gave the safe offering. It would be like this: He got that same \$1,000 check at the beginning of the month, and he waited until the end of the month to give God whatever was left.

Which is the greater gift? The first tithe at the beginning, or the leftovers at the end? It’s obvious ... nobody wants leftovers.

### **Genesis 4:6–12 (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> “Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected?”<sup>7</sup> You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

<sup>8</sup> One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.<sup>9</sup> Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?” “I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

<sup>10</sup> But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! <sup>11</sup> Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood. <sup>12</sup> No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

In this moment, Cain was angry and probably didn’t understand why his gift was rejected and his brother’s wasn’t. God doesn’t take time in this story to explain the “why”—which I’m sure Cain wanted to know. Why was his brother blessed and not him?

Just like in our own lives, we have moments when we ask God, “Why?” He’s not always interested in answering our “why” questions. He’s more interested in how we cope with the experience!

He wanted Cain to fight off the sin crouching at his door. He wanted him to be able to handle the experience the right way. He wanted Cain to cope the right way, to repent and move forward. God is not up there cheering for us

to fail; He’s up there encouraging us to respond the right way, to fight off sin and temptation.

Unfortunately, Cain’s not listening. In his mind, the anger has already won, the decision has already been made. The competition he had built up in his mind between he and his brother was more important than resisting sin. His pride was more important than his brother’s life. The first murder in the history of the world took place—brother against brother—all because of pride.

Even when God tells Cain his punishment in the story, Cain is not repentant of his sin. He’s only remorseful that he is being punished, only concerned about himself.

### **Application**

The number one thing we can learn from the life of Cain is that playing the comparison game in this world always leads to sin.

Research studies indicate that up to 45 percent of adult siblings have relationships marked by rivalry or distance with one other. Nearly half of America feels distance and rivalry with their siblings. Pride is the great divider.

With our siblings, if we constantly play this comparison game, we will never be content. There will always be another award, another competition, another compliment, or another good grade that we will be jealous of.

Instead, God tells Cain exactly what we need to hear also: it’s not about your brother, it’s about you!

How are you going to respond and live your life? You have a choice. You can choose to be bitter, jealous, and angry, or you can choose to say, “I’m going to live my life the best that I can, and instead of being angry, I’m going to encourage my brother or sister.”

### **1 John 3:11–16 (NLT)**

***<sup>11</sup> This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup> We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing***

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