

Violence **Gen. 4:1-8**

Introduction:

1. Violence invaded the human scene nearly from the beginning. Two chapters after Cain killed Abel, the Bible says, “Now the earth was corrupt, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11). God destroyed this and other ancient cultures as a result of their violent behavior.
2. Violence provokes the anger of God. In Ezek. 8:17 God asked, “Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here that they fill the land with violence and provoke Me still further to anger?” (ESV).
3. As of May 25, 2018, only 21 weeks into the year, there have been 23 school shootings where someone was hurt or killed (CNN.com Saeed Ahmed and Christina Walker).
4. And it does not seem to matter where you live in the U.S. from NY to FL from CA to NC violence proliferates.
5. And this includes Kentucky where in January in Benton, KY a 15 year old shot 16 people and killed 2 at Marshall County High School.
6. While mass shootings in churches are rare, still they are becoming much more common (Pacific Standard Magazine, Nov. 6, 2017).
7. What causes people to act violently? How are the people of God to respond? What can we do to curb the invasion of violence in our society, in our community and in our own families?

Discussion:

I. What causes people to act violently?

A. For Cain.

1. “The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard.”
2. “So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.”
3. One might blame God for Cain’s angry violence. “If God had regarded him and his offering things might have gone differently.” Cain might have blamed God. OR one might blame Abel. “If Abel had not offered appropriately, then Cain would have had no reason to be angry.”
4. But God called on Cain to do well and then his countenance would be lifted up. It was not God’s fault, nor Abel’s. Cain had a behavioral choice to make and he needed to accept responsibility for his anger and fallen countenance.
5. God said, “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it” (v. 7).
6. We have the capability to master sin. Doing well lifts our countenance and masters sin.

B. In a May 30, 2018 New York Times article entitled “For ‘Columbiners,’ School Shootings Have a Deadly Allure, Fernandez, Turkewitz and Bidgood said, “Investigators say school shootings have become the American equivalent of suicide bombings—not just a tactic,

but an ideology. Young men, many of them depressed, alienated or mentally disturbed, are drawn to the Columbine subculture because they see it as a way to lash out at the world and to get the attention of a society that they believe bullies, ignores or misunderstands them.”

1. Sometimes society does bully, ignore and misunderstand people. And these actions are defined in Scripture as sinful. Scripture teaches us to honor, respect, and to love one another.
2. If we do not do this then we share responsibility for the violent behaviors of those we have bullied, ignored and misunderstood.
3. But it is believing the lies of the devil that leads to angry and violent behavior.
 - a. The devil is a liar from the beginning. He said to Eve, “You surely will not die. Instead you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5).
 - b. There are a lot of things that we do not know about the back story to Cain’s angry violence. What lies has Satan told him? “God prefers your brother? You are disregarded? God is not being fair to you? Your brother thinks he is better than you?” “You have been disrespected and dishonored.”
 - c. And I would add that the devil told Cain, “You have been disempowered.” And so Cain sought to take power and to destroy.
4. There is much discussion about the availability and use of guns today. Some say we need more regulation in this country. Others argue that we need less regulation. Perhaps it is not about guns per se, but about the power they represent.
5. If I am feeling disrespected, dishonored and disempowered, anger is a natural response. A gun gives me power. The Parkland Florida school shooter recorded a video saying, “I’m going to be the next school shooter of 2018.” “My goal is at least 20 people, with an AR-15.” “It’s going to be a big event. When you see me on the news you’ll all know who I am” (Fernandez, For ‘Columbiners.’).

II. How are the people of God to respond? What can we do to curb the violence?

- A. I believe that we are curbing violence when we . . .
 1. Teach people that they are created in the image of God and that they are inherently valuable (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6).
 2. Show respect to people.
 3. When we empower/encourage them.
 4. When we acknowledge their power to make the choices appropriate to their countenance being lifted up.
- B. We need to communicate these principles in our society, in our own community and in our own families.

III. We need to recognize our own violent behaviors. Paul recognized himself as a violent aggressor (1 Tim. 1:13).

- A. When we are feeling disrespected, dishonored, disempowered what lies are we believing?
- B. “What violent behaviors do I have you may ask?” You can be a mass murderer and

destroy all your victims in a short period of time or you may be a mass murderer and destroy all your victims over a long period of time. You may never be on the 6 o'clock news, but you may destroy more lives than one who welds multiple assault rifles.

1. Anger and cursing (Matt. 5:21-26).
 2. Jealousy (James 3:16).
 3. Slander (Eph. 4:29-31).
 4. Blaming.
 5. Threatening (Eph. 6:9; 1 Pet. 2:22).
 6. Physical, sexual, emotional abuse.
 7. Malice, envy, hatefulness (Titus 3:3).
 8. Paying back evil for evil (Rom. 12:17).
 9. Bullying.
- C. We have to go beyond stopping our own violent behaviors. We have to act constructively to do those things that build up and bring healing (1 Thess. 5:14-18; Heb. 12:12-13).

Conclusion:

1. Are you doing your part to reduce violence?
2. You are reducing violence when you show respect. You are reducing violence when you use your power to encourage another.
3. Reducing violence begins in your own life and in your own home and extends outward from there.