



**Dear Crossroads Family,**

The murder of Abel by his brother, Cain, is the second sin and the first murder in human history according to the Word of God. It highlights a rapid escalation in the narrative's depiction of human wrongdoing—moving from eating forbidden fruit in the third chapter of Genesis straight to fratricide (killing a sibling) in the very next chapter.

Cain was angry because Abel's offering was acceptable to God, but his was not. We can only speculate as to the reason for this, but the reason God rejected his gift is insignificant to the story. What is significant is the way Cain responded: not in humble repentance but in angry violence. (Maybe we are to see that it wasn't his offering that was unacceptable but the attitude of his heart when he made the offering.)

After the murder, God spoke to Cain and asked him, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain replied, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9) The pronouncement of God's judgment follows, but the question Cain asked is never answered directly. The implication, however, is obvious. In a family, we are at least somewhat responsible for the well-being of our brothers and sisters.

Certainly, the New Testament encourages us to be our brothers and sisters keepers.

**Gal. 6:2** commands, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

**1 John 3:16-17** says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?"

**Phil. 2:3-4** instructs us to "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

Other verses like **Matt. 18:15**, **James 5:19-20**, and **2 Thess. 3:14-15** also challenge us to "bring back" someone who wanders from the truth, but the heavy emphasis of Scripture is on encouraging and lifting one another up rather than correcting, pointing out faults and tearing each other down (see **2 Cor. 10:8** and **13:10**).

This coming Sunday's sermon entitled "Robotic Religion" will look at how we can be "our brothers' and sisters' keepers" and, at the same time, avoid falling into the trap of becoming fault-finding and judgmental—a very important consideration for a healthy family of believers. (Sermon notes are provided below.)

I hope to see you Sunday in Bible study and worship. Your participation will benefit you and your presence will bless your brothers and sisters in Christ as well. Also, this Sunday we will be observing the Lord's Supper. As is our practice on these Sundays, we will also be collecting a benevolence offering.

But are we our brothers' and sisters' keepers? I think you know the answer.

Love,  
Bro. Doug

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***Robotic Religion***  
***Luke 11:37-12:3***

In Luke 11, we see what happens when faith in God and in His word become merely a set of \_\_\_\_\_ to be followed, and people are \_\_\_\_\_ based on how strictly they follow those external rules.

Jesus responds viscerally to the Pharisees' system that values clean \_\_\_\_\_ over broken \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus had previously shown more restraint when they attacked Him for things more significant than ceremonial washings. This must have been a \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus' diatribe against the Scribes and Pharisees was intended to show what is at the heart of \_\_\_\_\_ religion: \_\_\_\_\_—the tendency to scrutinize and sentence \_\_\_\_\_ while failing to examine honestly your \_\_\_\_\_ before God.

Jesus' list of hypocritical behaviors of the robotically religious all point back to what He said at first: "You Pharisees clean the \_\_\_\_\_ of the cup and dish, but \_\_\_\_\_ you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?" Outward expressions of faith aren't bad in themselves, but they can be \_\_\_\_\_, even deadly when practiced without "\_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of God."

If we ever feel prompted by the Spirit to speak to another person about their spiritual shortcomings, we desperately need to follow the model found in Gal. 6: \_\_ - \_\_.

Jesus warned that those things we \_\_\_\_\_ will someday be made known, and the secrets we keep will be \_\_\_\_\_. He is reminding us that we will all stand before God in judgment someday and the God who looks not on \_\_\_\_\_ appearances but on the \_\_\_\_\_ will know everything about us. I don't want to stand and be exposed before God knowing I have judged \_\_\_\_\_ those whose sins are not that different from my own. Nor do I want to be judged by a God whose word and whose Son I have \_\_\_\_\_. I want to stand before a God in whose Son I have \_\_\_\_\_ and whose forgiveness and grace I have willingly \_\_\_\_\_.

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**A Few Announcements:**

School Supplies assigned to the Sunday School Classes need to be turned in by Friday, July 3.

**Crossroads Monthly Food & Diaper Drive will be postponed one week** due to the upcoming holiday weekend. Be prepared to bring your donations on Sunday, July 12. A shopping wish list is posted on the website.

**On July 5 Crossroads is having a celebration for the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America.** Plan to join us for a patriotic-themed worship service, followed by food and more entertainment in the Fellowship Hall immediately after the service. Everyone is invited!

***Dr. Doug Diehl***  
***San Antonio, TX 78254***