

**“Am I my brother’s caretaker?”** In the beginning, the Creator made heaven and earth. He separated light from dark, atmosphere from ocean, and land from water. He filled space with the sun, moon, and stars. He filled the atmosphere with birds and the ocean with fish. And he filled the land with plants and animals. The final animal he created was man. He made humanity male and female, breathing his very spirit and breath of life into them. He made them—male and female—in his **“own image.”** He made them for one purpose—to **“serve and protect”** the creation he had made. He made them to be his reflection, to fill his role in the creation, to be his embodied and incarnate presence in the creation.

But the smartest, most clever, and most intelligent of all the animals led the man and woman to seek something beyond this calling from the Creator. They wanted to be **“like god”** in a different way, they wanted power and control, they wanted to **“not die.”** So instead of submitting to the Creator as the only **“good,”** as the only source of **“good,”** they decided to choose for themselves what was **“good and evil.”** They ate of this fruit and in the process they severed themselves from the Creator. They began to hide from him and not rely on him. They began to try and **protect** themselves. They began to try and **provide** for themselves. Their relationship with the creation was shattered in the process. They were divided from **each other**—man and woman became fearful and harmful to each other. They were divided from the **animals**—they were scared of the animals and the animals were scared of them. They were divided from the **land**—they worked against the land and no longer with it and the land fought them back. There was division and animosity everywhere in their relationship to the Creator and his creation.

The man and woman had two sons. The oldest was Cain. Cain chose to be a **farmer.** He looked at the creation and decided he knew what was **“good,”** what was best for it. So he clear-cut the land and tried to control it—planting only the plants he wanted, the ones that he thought were **“good.”** He was a caretaker of nothing. Everything was an object for his selfish use and gain, otherwise it was disposable and tossed aside. The second son was Abel. Abel chose to be a **shepherd.** He wandered the land as a caretaker of his sheep. Instead of trying to control the creation, he lived in harmony with the creation as he found it, as best he could.

The Lord did not approve of Cain’s way of life or the fruit of his labors. But the Lord did approve of Abel’s way of life and the fruit of his labors. This made Cain angry and he turned within—he turned his gaze deeper into himself and his focus became even more selfish than it had been. The Creator asked Cain, **“Why are you turned in on yourself? You did not live in the right way—you were selfish. Stop looking at yourself. Turn away from yourself and you will control yourself.”** Then Cain took his brother Abel out into the fields, the very fields where he had clear-cut the trees and all of the Creator’s original creation. There he cut down his brother as well—he killed him. Instead of turning away from his selfish, hurtful, and controlling way of life, he further entrenched himself in it. The Creator came to Cain and asked him, **“Where is your brother?”** Cain responded, **“Am I my brother’s caretaker?”** Cain did not see himself as his brother’s caretaker. Cain was only worried about himself. He had been humiliated, hurt, and rejected. His brother was the least of his problems. He had to take care of himself.

This violence and selfishness further isolated Cain. But he refused to learn from his mistake, he refused to turn away from himself. Instead he went out and had a **family** in his own image and built the first **city,** naming it after his son. At every turn Cain turned more **within.** At every failure Cain turned more **within.** Selfishness was added to selfishness. And he became more and more isolated. But Cain was determined to protect himself, so he built walls to protect himself and an economy to take care of himself—he built a family, he built a city, he built Civilization. Cain thought he knew better than the Creator—who was the Creator to tell him what to do and how to live, what was **“good”**?

But Cain was **afraid**—all the time. He had seen what he could do to the land, to the animals, and to his own brother—what might **others** be capable of doing to **him** and his **family** and **city**? So Cain needed to protect himself. Everyone who came into contact with him needed to know he was to be feared, not to be messed with. He would use force and violence to keep himself safe. **“Am I my brother’s caretaker?”** No, Cain was his own caretaker—he only cared about himself, and as an extension, the family and city he had built. And he built a world where everyone just looked out for themselves. He and his offspring began using and abusing the creation to develop technologies that could control the creation even more. But Cain and his family lived in **fear,** they were scared and terrified—everything they did was to try and make themselves feel safe and secure amidst their endlessly accumulating **worry** and **anxiety.**

**“Am I my brother’s caretaker?”** Sadly, we are children of Cain. We have been born to parents and a world that has chosen to turn within, to selfishly seek one’s own **“good”** and to control everything around us. We live in Cain’s world—the world of the city—the world of Civilization. We are taught from birth to turn within and focus on ourselves. We have even inherited this epigenetically from our parents and grandparents. We have been taught to see the creation and each other as objects for our use and pleasure. We don’t take care of each other, we take care of ourselves. Everything we do is self-serving. And the Creator asks us everyday, **“Why are you turned in on yourself?”**

Thankfully, Christ Jesus entered into the world of our selfishness and self-centeredness and became his **“brother’s caretaker.”** Like Abel, Christ was struck down by Cain—by us. But Christ refused to give in to selfishness. He refused to turn within. He constantly turned to his heavenly Father and lived in awareness and consideration for every creature in his Father’s creation. Christ took care of his brother—of us—even when he had to sacrifice himself. Christ took care of his brother—of us—even when it meant his own death. Jesus was the human we were called to be. Jesus was the caretaker of the creation we were called to be. Jesus was the caretaker of our brother we were called to be. With every word and action of his life, Christ declared, **“I am my brother’s caretaker.”**

**“Am I my brother’s caretaker?”** Yes you are. This is why you were made. This is your purpose in life. You and I have been made in the image of our Creator. He made his creation and continues to care for it and watch over it everyday. And the Creator asks you to be a caretaker alongside him—he is asking you to **“serve and protect”** his creation in the place in which you live. Jesus has **saved** you and me from ourselves—from the path of Cain. He has saved you from looking within, saved you from the selfishness that permeates all of Civilization. Jesus has poured out his **Spirit** upon you. He has breathed into you again so you might be reborn as a caretaker of his creation. The Creator is the ultimate caretaker of us all and it is his Spirit that now dwells within you. **“So stop looking at yourself. Turn away from yourself and you will control yourself.”** If you turn within—in selfishness—you will hurt all those around you and be miserable like Cain. But if you seek the Creator and take care of his creation, you will find joy, even as you suffer for your love. Become like Christ, breathe in and be filled with his Spirit, and with your life declare everyday, **“I am my brother’s caretaker.” Amen.**