

OFFERINGS

My sons are 22 months apart in age. One year I combined their annual check-ups and had the doctor check them both during one office visit. My younger son had turned seven two months before; my oldest had just turned nine. The nurse took them without me to weigh and measure them as well as check their eyesight and hearing. When my younger son returned, I asked him if they made him pee in a cup. He proudly answered, “Yes, and mine was higher!” I was amused and horrified. How could he be so competitive that he would see his urine sample as evidence of his superiority over his older brother? What made him so fixated on being “the winner” in everything he did?

That moment reminds me of two other brothers who got into trouble when one compared his offering to the other. In fact, these were the very first siblings to inhabit the earth: Cain and Abel. If you remember the story, Adam and Eve first had Cain and sometime later, Abel. When the boys were older, they brought offerings to God from their individual work. Scripture says that, “Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.” So Abel brought the Lord fat portions and Cain brought some fruit of the soil. The Lord looked on Abel’s offering with favor but was not pleased by Cain’s. Having his brother receive approval when he did not

made Cain angry and led him to kill Abel. And Cain's life went down the tubes from there.

The thing that intrigues me about this story is that Cain seemed more upset by the fact that his brother came off better than he did. He doesn't seem convicted at all by the Lord telling him that, "If you do what is right, will you not be acceptable?" Cain convinced himself that it was Abel's *offering* that made him look bad instead of realizing his offering revealed his own selfish heart.

I know that I spend way too much of my time comparing myself to other people instead of looking to God to see how I'm doing. It's not that God is grading us to decide if He'll save us, but He does want us to become more and more like Christ. Christ is the yardstick we are supposed to measure ourselves against, knowing we will always come up short. That knowledge should drive us to the cross more and more as we see the depth of our sin. Measuring ourselves against other people keeps our eyes off Jesus and fools us into thinking we can be righteous through what we do.

Just like my son felt pride in his "offering" because it somehow beat his brother's specimen, we can get our security from the fact that our Christian walk seems better than other people we know. Comparing ourselves to others is not how God wants us to evaluate ourselves. Knowing that we are sinful to the core

and able to be self-righteous about something as silly as having a fuller bladder should humble us. And a humble heart is one offering that God never turns down.

