

# JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

## ON BEING HUMAN STORY

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Being human means having a capacity to speak and do both good and evil things and plenty of things in-between.
- Good and evil aren't forces that can exist in a vacuum. They are consequences of our actions which are influenced by many factors in our lives. We have to live with the consequences of all our actions, both good and evil and everywhere in between.
- Unitarian Universalists commit themselves to discerning good from evil using our own hearts and minds and to standing on the side of goodness and love.

### Lesson Materials

- *Cain and Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
- Two flip charts and markers
- Blank books
- Writing tools (pens, colored pencils)

### TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Even on this small stage we have our two sides, and something might be done by throwing all one's weight on the scale of breadth, tolerance, charity, temperance, peace, and kindness to man and beast. We can't all strike very big blows, and even the little ones count for something.

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

"Are there, infinitely varying with each individual, inbred forces of Good and Evil in all of us, deep down below the reach of mortal encouragement and mortal repression - hidden Good and hidden Evil, both alike at the mercy of the liberating opportunity and the sufficient temptation?"

- Wilkie Collins

"The forces that tend for evil are great and terrible, but the forces of truth and love and courage and honesty and generosity and sympathy are also stronger than ever before."

"War with evil; but show no spirit of malignity toward the man who may be responsible for the evil. Put it out of his power to do wrong."

- Theodore Roosevelt

"It is a man's own mind, not his enemy or foe, that lures him to evil ways."

-Siddhartha Buddha

"Men do not differ much about what things they will call evils; they differ enormously about what evils they will call excusable."

- GK Chesterton

"All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing."

- Edmund Burke

**Reflect** on your own perspective on good and evil. What has your life taught you about human nature? Do any of the above ideas conflict with or reflect your own beliefs? As a Unitarian Universalist, what is your relationship to these forces, to the struggle between them, both within and without?

## **GATHERING AND FOCUSING**

🕒 2-3 minutes

As a check-in, invite each child to share something in the past week that they did that was good and kind or something they did that was bad or unkind. Did anyone do or say things in both categories?

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE**

### **STORY: CAIN AND ABEL**

🕒 15-20 minutes

This is an old, old story from the Old Testament of the Bible and from the Qur'an. It imagines what the very first opportunity to choose between good and evil might have been like.

- With younger children, read the book by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso.
- With older children, feel free to read aloud from the text in Genesis or create a retelling with your own embellishments. A suggested retelling, compiled from different sources and retellings is attached.

#### **Wondering Together**

- I wonder where things in this story went wrong?
- What might make a person think that Cain's actions were evil?
- What decision might have been a decision for good?
- I wonder if this story *has* to be about two brothers? Could it be about sisters? A brother and a sister? Two friends?
- I wonder if Abel might have also been able to do an evil thing?
- I wonder if Cain went on to do many more evil things? Do you think he could still do good things? Why or why not?
- I wonder if God is something that speaks to people, like in this story?
- Is it easy to tell the difference between the good things people do and the evil things people do?
- If we could step into this story, I wonder how and where we might have been able to make a change for good?
- How do you tell the difference between good and evil?

## **REFLECTING**

🕒 10 minutes

“Good” and “evil” are pretty hard words to define. Some people think that neither word could exist without the other word. What are some ideas and words that go with “good” and “evil”? Let's brainstorm together.

### **YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES**

- 
- 
- 
- 
-

On two flip charts, write a big titles across the top of two separate top sheets, one labeled “Good” and the other “Evil”. Give each child a stack of self-sticking notes and a marker to write with. Set an amount of time to write down words that are associated with, mean the same thing as, represent or describe goodness and evil. As kids have ideas, they can write each on a sticky note and stick it on the appropriate flip chart. Turn the page and start fresh if you fill up the space. Younger children may need help writing and sharing their words. Encourage productivity by letting each class know how many words the previous class had and challenging them to match that amount or exceed it if they can.

After the set time is up, take a moment to read all the words on each page. Invite comments. Older children may be interested in debating certain ideas.

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO**

🕒 15-20 minutes

In pairs, we’ll rewrite the story of Cain and Abel so that Cain chooses goodness over evil and we’ll see how our own endings turn out.

- Invite kids to find a story buddy or you can pair them up by counting off, etc.
- Give each pair a blank book and a set of writing utensils.
- Challenge the kids to rewrite the Cain and Abel story so that Cain chooses goodness over evil. They can start from the beginning or pick up at a certain point, as long as the important moment where choice comes into play is included.
- The authors can feel free to illustrate with drawings, even simple stick figures, if they like. Emphasize the importance of the words in telling the story. Remind the kids that at Sunday School, spelling and punctuation are not a really big deal. Sharing ideas is the most important thing.
- After writing, invite kids to share their stories with you, the teacher, or with other kids and their parents.

**Wondering Together** (pose these questions before writing to help brainstorming and again after writing to facilitate sharing).

- When in the story do we have to change things so that Cain makes a better choice?
- Does Abel have to do something different in your version of the ending? Does God have to do something different?
- Does Cain need help to choose goodness or can he do it on his own?
- What are the consequences of Cain’s new and improved decision? Do things work out better for him or not?

## **CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other’s hands and speak these words responsively, teacher beginning and children responding:

Inside us all is a seed of hate and a seed of love

*I will water the seed of love.*

Inside us all is a seed of anger and a seed of calm

*I will water the seed of calm*

Inside us all is a seed of violence and a seed of peace

*I will water the seed of peace*

Inside us all is a seed of evil and a seed of good

*I will water the seed of good*

- inspired by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh

## **SOURCES: THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL**

1. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.
2. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
3. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.
4. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
5. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.
6. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?
7. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.
8. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.
9. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?
10. And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.
11. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;
12. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.
13. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.
14. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.
15. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.
16. And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.
17. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

\* **Source: Genesis 4:1-17, King James version.**

Truly when they offered an offering, and it was accepted from one of them, and was not accepted from the other, that one said, "I will surely kill thee."

He said, "God only accepts from those who fear. If thou dost stretch forth to me thine hand to kill me, I will not stretch forth mine hand to kill thee. Verily, I fear God, the Lord of the worlds. Verily, I wish that thou mayest draw upon thee my sin and thy sin, and be of the fellows of the Fire, for that is the reward of the unjust."

But his soul allowed him to slay his brother, and he slew him, and in the morning he was of those who lose. And God sent a crow to scratch in the earth and show him how he might hide his brother's shame [bury his naked corpse], he said, "Alas, for me! Am I too helpless to become like this crow and hide my brother's shame?"

And in the morning he was of those who did repent.

\* **Source: The Koran 4:27-31,**

Cain, having committed the fratricide, became exceedingly troubled in his mind, and carried the dead body on his shoulders for a considerable time, not knowing where to conceal it, till it stank horribly. And then Allah taught him to bury it by the example of a raven, who, having killed another raven in his presence, dug a pit with his claws and beak and buried him therein.

\* **From Palestinian folktales**