

Where Did Cain Get His Wife?

Most of us know the story of Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve. Cain was a farmer, whereas Abel was a keeper of livestock. So when the time came to bring an offering to God in worship, Abel brought a lamb from his flock, whereas Cain presented Him with vegetables from his garden. Genesis 4 says Cain's offering did not please God, but Abel's offering was precisely what God wanted.

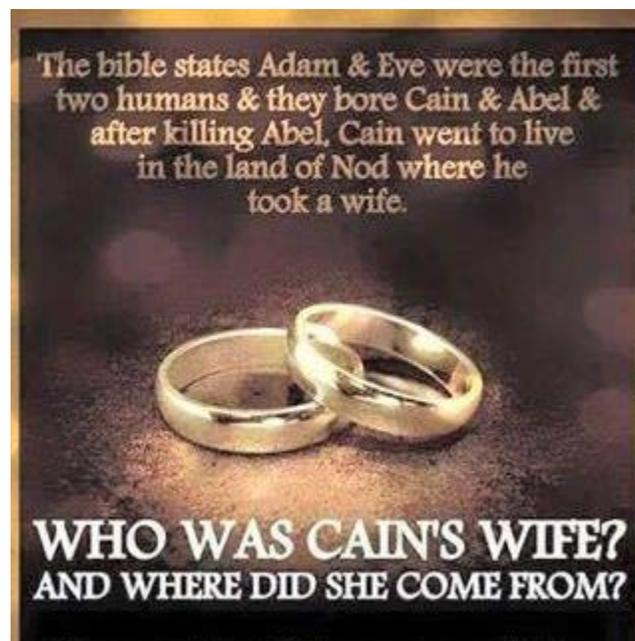


Two reasons are usually given: 1) The Scriptures do not say, but it is generally assumed that God had previously revealed to Adam's family that only a blood sacrifice, foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ would please God. After all, how could a just God require something He has never explained? 2) Furthermore, Hebrews 11:4 adds that Abel's gift was given in faith, but Cain's was not.



So, filled with jealousy and rage, Cain proceeded to kill his brother, despite being warned by God about the dangers of anger. The result was that Cain was driven from God's presence and forced to wander in the land East of Eden, a destiny that left him filled with fear and loneliness. But his loneliness did not last long, for God is gracious even with great sinners. Genesis 4 says Cain took a wife and raised a family with her, building a great civilization East of Eden with his children and grandchildren. For as Jewish tradition suggests, Cain lived to be 500 years old.

But back to our original question. Where did Cain get his wife? In the land of Nod? No, for there were no people anywhere on earth except those God created. Then maybe God created a wife for him, as He did for Adam? That is a nice idea, but there is no evidence of it in Scripture. Furthermore, in order to procreate children, Cain's wife had to have the same human DNA as the rest of us.



The short answer is: He got her from the same pool of candidates from which we get our wives and husbands—from the children of Adam and Eve. The Bible is clear. Adam was the progenitor of the human race, and Eve was “the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20). No human being has ever been produced who was not a son of Adam or daughter of Eve.

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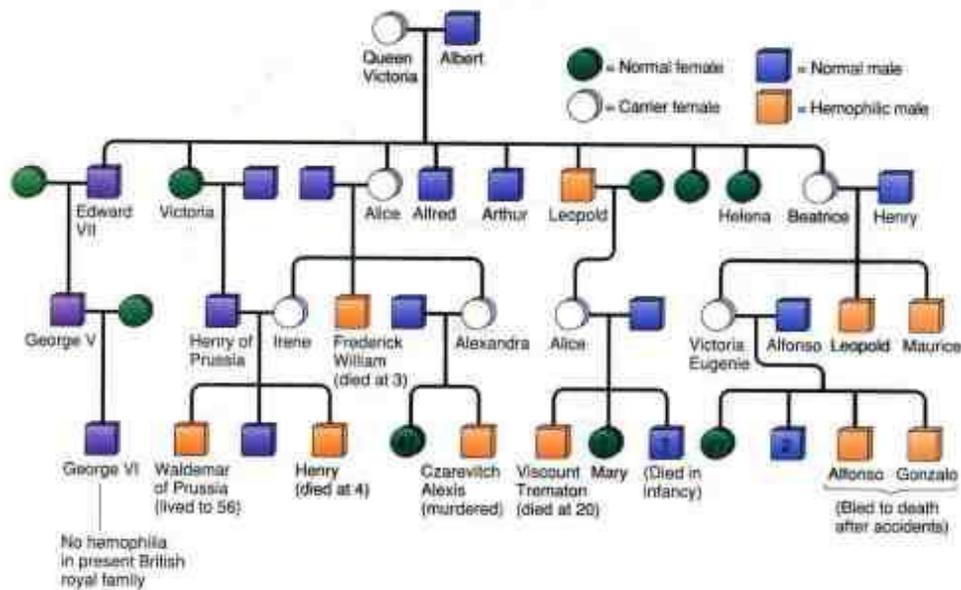
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But 6,000 years later, this confuses us. After all, haven't we been rightly taught that incest is repulsive? No one in his right mind would think of marrying his sister! For we know the danger of marrying close relatives. Close relatives are more apt to carry the same genetic flaws we have. Marriage with them therefore increases the odds of passing those flaws onto our children in the form of birth defects and genetic disorders. Most of us are aware of the skeletal weaknesses, eye problems, and skin disorders suffered by designer dogs bred too closely.



Similar problems also develop among humans. Haemophilia is a well-known genetic disease that figured prominently in the history of European royalty in the 19th and 20th centuries. Britain’s Queen Victoria, through her daughters, Princess Alice and Princess Beatrice, passed the mutation on to the royal families of Spain, Germany, and Russia. Victoria’s son Leopold, Duke of Albany, suffered from it as well. For this reason, Haemophilia was called “the royal disease”. Tests on the remains of the Romanov imperial family reveal that the form of Haemophilia passed down by Queen Victoria was likely the relatively rare Haemophilia B.



But Cain had no need to be concerned about these issues. For one thing, the gene pool hadn’t had time to deteriorate by then. Nor had God forbidden marriage with close relatives. In fact, most of the patriarchs married close relatives. Abram married his half-sister Sarai. Isaac and Jacob married their cousins. It wasn’t until the Law was given to Israel that God enacted taboos against incest, to safeguard his people from birth defects (the gene pool having further degraded by then) and from adopting the immoral practices of their pagan neighbors.



So Cain married his sister. Genesis 5:4 says that in addition to Cain and later Seth, Adam and Eve had many other children. Jewish tradition says Eve bore Adam 23 children. Of course, she had longer to do that mothers today. If Adam lived 930 years, it's likely that Eve lived a long life too, giving her hundreds of years to raise her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

As for Cain, Genesis 4:16-24 goes on to trace seven generations of his family, many of whom were successful in their careers. Jabal ran a profitable business making tents and raising livestock. Jubal was the father of those who compose music and craft musical instruments. Tubal-Cain made everyone's lives more comfortable by developing the technology to forge bronze and iron.

Cain's descendants

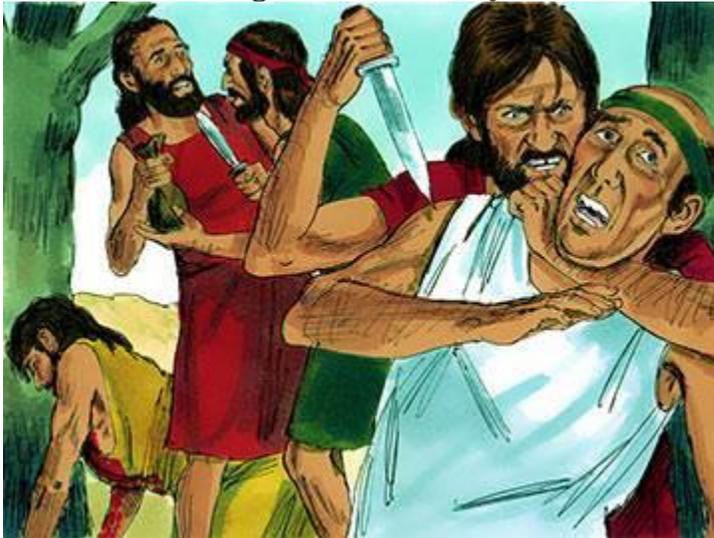
- ◆ Genesis 4:17-24
 - What does this passage say about their lives?



But it wasn't a happy family. For Cain's family were people of the earth without a love for God. Genesis 4:26 says it wasn't the birth of Seth that "men began to call upon the name of the Lord." Cain's family felt they could settle down and find happiness in this world, rather than the world to come. John later warned why this is impossible. He said, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17)



Second, they suffered from the same selfish, violent character as Cain. Moses, the author of Genesis, picks a representatives from both the line of Cain and the line of Seth to contrast the character of their kids. Genesis 5:24 says that Enoch, seventh from Adam through Seth, walked with God and was taken to heaven without dying because his life pleased God. But of Cain's family, nothing is said about their love for God, for they had none. Instead, it says Lamech, seventh from Adam through Cain, took two wives (the first polygamist), murdered a young man for wounding him, and boasted that if Cain is avenged seven times, then "Lamech is avenged 77 times." Quite a little family, huh?



So now we know where Cain got his wife. He married one of his many sisters

born to Adam and Eve. But then, knowing the character of the family he raised, you may think it would have been better if Cain hadn't found a woman to marry him. Careful! Don't jump conclusions. One of the beautiful truths we learn in the Sermon on the Mount is that God is a good God who provides good things to both the righteous and the unrighteous. "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:44-45)

One of the most gracious things God has given to all peoples, good or bad, is the gift of marriage. In the beginning, He said it was not good for man to be alone. So He created marriage. As Psalm 68:6 puts it, "God sets the lonely in families." He even cares about the loneliness of unbelievers. What a gracious God!



Just when he thought he never would, Don found his sole mate.

A final question is in order, then. If you or a loved one is not yet married, where is the best place to find a spouse? First, it is important to pray and ascertain if God wants you to get married at this time. Why pray? Because God not only answers prayer, but He also uses delays in answering prayer as a means to purify our motives and develop our patience, which we surely need if we do get marriage. To help answer this question, read 1 Corinthians chapter 7 which offers the

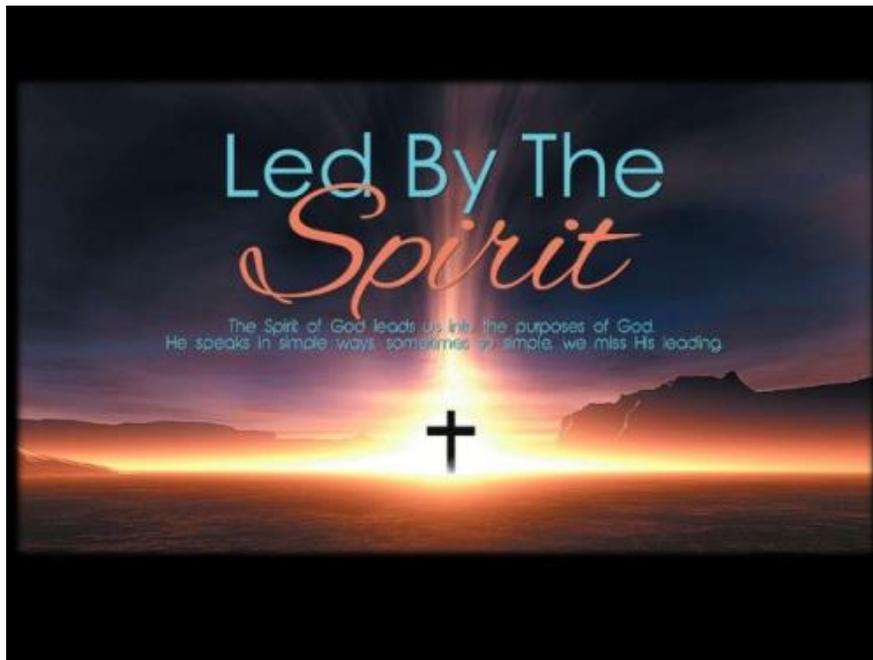
clearest guidelines on this topic, revealing that there are a few whom God calls, at least for a short time, to serve Him as single adults. This gives them more time and freedom to serve Him than their married friends.

But if you have determined through prayer and the counsel of wise friends that it's God's will for you to marry, where should you look for a partner? If you love Christ, the best place to look is while serving faithfully in a church or Christian ministry. This not only puts you on a path where God is able to bless you and guide you; it also puts you in a context where other Christian singles may be present. But don't search with desperation. Trust God and pray. Even if there aren't singles in your church or ministry right now, God can bring them to you. I have seen this happen countless times as a pastor and a missionary.



Maybe our story will encourage you. I was 20 years old at the time, a new Christian, not attending church yet, and living in Tacoma. Cheryl was 18, became a follower of Christ as a child but was working in Southern California. Both of us wanted to get married, but how would our paths ever cross? The first thing God did was lead me to pray and join a Bible-teaching church. I'll never forget the night I knelt down and told God I was sorry for trying to find my own wife, that I knew a wife is a gift from God, and that I would henceforth stop looking for a mate and let Him decide who I should marry, prayerfully waiting for Him to bring her into my life.

Providentially, that week a pastor was shopping at the store where I worked, invited me to church, and I went. I didn't meet any single women, but I did get baptized, grounded in my faith, and ready for the right woman when God brought her my way.



Not coincidentally, it was at that same time that the Holy Spirit began to give Cheryl a desire to return home to her church in Tacoma. One of the first things her friends did upon her return was invite the two of us to a 4th of July picnic where no other singles were invited. It was a setup. But we found that we liked each other, spent the afternoon talking together, and I asked her to go out with me. In fact, from that point on we were inseparable, and 13 months later I married the love of my life.

That was 43½ years ago, and I thank God that in spite of my immaturity and the adjustments that come with marriage, she has always remained my best friend and I haven't been lonely since. I should mention that she turned out to be the pastor's daughter with wisdom that has helped me throughout my ministry as a pastor. But our greatest joy are the two daughters God has given us, who also love Christ and are both serving Him with their husbands in their churches.

So trust God and pray believing that He loves you and will meet your needs in His way and time. And He will!