

Genesis 4 God hit Cain where his pride was.

Genesis 4 takes us straight to the nursery with the very first human births. The two sons take two different routes in providing for their families. Abel would tend the livestock providing meat and clothing, whereas Cain chose the nutrient dense pathway of vegetable farming. Both jobs were important for survival. Neither one of these paths was the wrong choice. It was what they chose to do with their vocation that made the difference. When they made their sacrifice, they brought the fruits of their labor. Abel brought a lamb; Cain brought the fruit of the land. Both represented what they did but God only accepted the animal offering. It was a closer and better picture of Jesus Christ and atonement. God killed an animal to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, laying an important precedent for what He would expect in the future. Cain was wrong in his choice. When God refused his sacrifice, Cain should have immediately struck a deal with Abel to trade some good produce for a lamb for the next sacrifice. Obviously, this isn't what he did. He did what many people do today, and he took God's rejection of his sacrifice as God rejecting him as a person. Cain made the huge mistake of confusing who he is with what he does. He wanted to continue to serve God in a way that reflected himself and he didn't think it was fair that God would have a preference about it. Which sums up a lot of people today. They want to sing songs they like, serve God only in ways they find comfortable. In the flesh we tend to want to serve God in ways that please us.

Cain became surly at God and at those around him. His pride was hurt, and he lacked the restraint to get over it. God comes to address the young man's foul mood teaching him that if he were to do things right, everything would be good. Cain rejected God's advice, and he kills his brother Abel. Abel who did it right, Abel the legalist, Abel the golden child. We hear these phrases today describing people who swallow their pride and do what they are supposed to. To the twisted mind it's unfair that those that do well get rewarded that the disobedient are victims to the success of well doers. This is one of a thousand reasons we are told to not conform to the world around us. If you do the right thing, good will happen, if you do the wrong thing, bad things happen. Cain wasn't a victim of Abel's success; he just refused to see this as a learning moment.

Pay close attention to how God punishes Cain. The first punishment was that the ground would no longer yield to him. Cain was proud of his crops. Cain made war against God and his family when that pride was hurt, so God took it away from him. This is a theme that we see throughout scripture and often in the lives of people in our lives. God removing the source of their pride. You might even be able to point to something in your life that fed your pride too much and God took it away. As I have often told my children concerning their toys, if you can't behave with them, I will take it away/ground you from it. He doesn't do this to compete or battle us; He's just removing the tool we sin with.

Conclusion: If you want to keep it, use it to the honor of God. God has a very particular way He wants to be served and worshipped. He has expectations for how those purchased by the blood of His Son behave. When we fail to meet those expectations, we need to expect chastening. When that chastening comes, we must reject Cain's idea of getting angry about it and understand that that correction is for our own good. It's even something we do for our children. So, if you don't want to lose a career, hobby or interest, keep your behavior towards it God honoring.