

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

■ GENESIS 1:28 ESV

Reminder of
GOD'S MANDATE
for mankind

MARCH 2015

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

GENESIS 1:28 ESV

COVENANT EFC

2015 Memory Focus

FROM GENESIS (ESV)

JANUARY

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

FEBRUARY

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God
He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:27

MARCH

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28

APRIL

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:5

MAY

“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 12:3

JUNE

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

Genesis 18:25

JULY

He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

Genesis 22:2

AUGUST

“I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that You have shown to Your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.”

Genesis 32:10

SEPTEMBER

And there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

Genesis 35:7

OCTOBER

“He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

Genesis 39:9

NOVEMBER

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Genesis 49:10

DECEMBER

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Genesis 50:20

Foreword

BY SENIOR
PASTORS

2015

marks our Jubilee Year as a nation. God is the ultimate reason for Singapore's 50 years of peace and prosperity, safety and security, shalom and success. Indeed God alone deserves all praise, honour and thanksgiving for all the blessings from above!

Jubilee has been called a super-Sabbath. God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way. Those who are intentional about a stronger foundation, a closer walk and a deeper life. Those who are tired of their hit-and-run, hide-and-see, touch-and-go relationship with Him. This Jubilee Year, will you intentionally and zealously commit yourself to be among the first fruits of this new Jubilee generation by scheduling personal time alone with God?

Psalm 1:2-3 speaks of the blessed person as one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers".

The Psalmist finds great joy in relating to the Word of God...

He meditates upon the Word when day comes and when night falls...

Far beyond outward prosperity, the Psalmist desires the inward prosperity of his soul...

We invite you to take this year to grow deeper in faith and in His Word. Deal decisively with distractions in your life. Cut yourself off from habits and modern gadgets that displace communion with God. Fast from social media. Overhaul your schedule. Remove activities that desensitise you to the gentle promptings of the Spirit.

There is a dailyness in discipleship – soaking daily in His Word, applying His truth, reaping the fruits and passing them on.

Some years ago when Jerry Bridges was in Singapore, he talked about encountering God daily in the Word and especially the Gospel. When asked what it was like, Jerry said, "God always shows up."

What an assurance! This Jubilee Year 2015, draw near to Him. Linger in His presence. Allow Him to refresh you, renew you and restore you – a people prepared for the Day of His Visitation.

Jesus is Our Jubilee!

Ps Tony Yeo and Ps Tan Kay Kiong

God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way.

Guide to Using This Devotional Journal

1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

The English Standard Version (ESV) is the default Bible version unless otherwise specified.

2 Allow God to S.O.A.P. you with His Word and Spirit

- **Scripture** – *Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.*

- **Observation** – *Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You can use the guiding questions provided.*

What's New in 2015?

A "Deeper Reflection" section has been introduced to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.

- **Application** – *Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.*

- **Prayer** – *Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.*

What's New in 2015?

- Suggested prayers are included twice weekly to serve as an aid to those who may find them helpful in their prayer response.
- On Sundays, you may want to meditate on the Psalms, the Gospel or the Scripture passage of the sermon. This may be followed by reviewing and reflecting on the past week and then responding in prayer. Examining your life is essential in your faith journey as a redeemed disciple of Christ.

February
2015
—

Worship Songs

TEACH ME TO WORSHIP YOU

Teach me to worship You
Teach me to adore You
I want to love You
With my whole being
To learn to praise Your name
Each day to do the same
Teach me O Lord the way
To worship You

I want to worship You
I want to adore You
I want to love You
With my whole being
To forsake my sinful ways
To look upon Your face
And understand Your grace
O Lord my God

Words & Music: Li Huan Quek

10,000 REASONS (BLESS THE LORD)

Chorus 1

Bless the Lord O my soul
O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

(Ending)

Worship Your holy name
Lord I'll worship Your holy name

Word & Music: Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman

Year & Publisher: © 2011 Said And Done Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

sixsteps Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

Thankyou Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

worshipotogether.com songs (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

SHOUT! Music Publishing

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GIVE ME JESUS

In the morning when I rise
 In the morning when I rise
 In the morning when I rise
 Give me Jesus

Chorus 1

Give me Jesus give me Jesus
 You can have all this world
 But give me Jesus

And when I am alone
 Oh and when I am alone
 And when I am alone
 Give me Jesus

And when I come to die
 Oh and when I come to die
 And when I come to die
 Give me Jesus

Chorus 2

Give me Jesus give me Jesus
 You can have all this world
 You can have all this world
 You can have all this world but give me Jesus

Words & Music: Fernando Ortega
Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain; Music: 2000 DeJamesolo Music
(Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)); Word Music, LLC
(Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
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BE THOU MY VISION

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
 Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art
 Thou my best thought, by day or by night
 Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word
 I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
 Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son
 Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise
 Thou mine inheritance, now and always
 Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
 High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art

Chorus

Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight
 Be Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied
 Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight
 Be Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied

High King of heaven, my victory won
 May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun
 Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
 Still be my vision, O Ruler of all

"Be Thou My Vision" Words & Music: Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne
Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain
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THE LOVE OF GOD

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell

The guilty pair bowed down with care
God gave His Son to win
His erring child He reconciled
And pardoned from His sin

Chorus

O love of God how rich and pure
How measureless and strong
It shall forevermore endure
The saints and angels' song

Verse 2

When years of time shall pass away
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall
When men who here refuse to pray
On rocks and hills and mountains call

God's love so sure shall still endure
All measureless and strong
Redeeming grace to Adam's race
The saints and angels' song

Verse 3

Could we with ink the ocean fill
And were the skies of parchment made
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade

To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky

Words & Music: Frederick Martin Lehman | Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai
Year & Publisher: © Words: 1917, Renewed 1945 Nazarene Publishing House
(Admin. by Music Services, Inc.); Music: 1917, Renewed 1945 Nazarene Publishing House
(Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
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COME HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit fall on me now
I need Your anointing
Come in Your power
I love You Holy Spirit
You're captivating my soul
And every day I grow to love You more

Chorus

I'm reaching for Your heart
You hold my life in Your hand
Drawing me closer to You
I feel Your power renew

Nothing compares to this place
Where I can see You face to face
I worship You in spirit and in truth

Year & Publisher: City Harvest Church

MAKE A CERTAIN BREAKTHROUGH

In my life of searching
For the plain and simple way,
Many paths were so winding,
The roads were never straight

Then the Spirit of God broke through
And healed my broken wings
And showed me the way into His heart

Chorus

And I know that God is leading
In a clear and certain way
My one life for Your purpose, Jesus
I offer up this day

To follow You completely
To do all that You say

Cleanse my life, fill me up
And use me this day
Make a certain breakthrough
Make it today

In these days of danger
Lord, we rest upon Your grace
With Your tender and skillful hands
You shape this stubborn clay
Yes You calm my inmost being, giving courage to hope again
And to build this one life in power and faith

*Words & Music: Ps Ann Chan, Ruth Ling
Year Publisher: Feb 20016 @ CEFC*

FOREVER

Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King,
His love endures forever
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm
His love endures forever
For a life that's been reborn
His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise

Chorus

Forever God is faithful
Forever God is strong
Forever God is with us
Forever and ever

From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever
And by the grace of God we will carry on
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise

Bridge

His love endures forever
His love endures forever
His love endures forever
Forever

*Words & Music: Chris Tomlin
Year & Publisher: © 2001 sixsteps Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)
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PREPARE THE WAY

He has come
To bring light into the darkness
He has come
To bring freedom to the captives

He has come
To restore the brokenhearted
It's time to proclaim
The year of the Lord

Chorus

Prepare the way
Prepare the way for our Redeemer
Prepare the way
Prepare the way for our Restorer

Make ready your heart
Make ready your home
Make ready the people of God
Prepare the way

He has come
To bring hope to the hopeless
He has come
To comfort all who mourn

He has come
To heal our every sickness
It's time to proclaim
The year of the Lord

Words & Music: Darrell Evans | Eric Nuzum
Year & Publisher: © 1999 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)
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AARONIC BENEDICTION

Verse 1

May the Lord, may the Lord bless and keep you
May His grace and His face shine upon you
May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you
And give you peace
And give you peace

Verse 2

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha
Yaer panav alecha vichuneka
Yisa Adonai panav alecha
V'yaseml'cha shalom v'yaseml'cha shalom

Bridge

This is the way
You shall be blessed
From day to day
He'll be your rest

Ending

And give you peace
And give you peace

"Aaronic Benediction" Words & Music by Misha Goetz
2009 Misha Goetz Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)
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The Church Beyond

■ FOCUS OF THE MONTH: **REGIONAL IDMC CONFERENCES**

Regional IDMC Conference 2015 – Surabaya
Theme: “A Certain Kind”
27-28 March 2015

In 1995, Covenant EFC hosted her first IDMC Conference in Singapore to make a clear trumpet call for intentional disciple-making in the local church. Now approaching its 20th anniversary, the conference has grown from 300 to over 3,000 participants!

The IDMC Conference has influenced leaders and pastors beyond the shores of Singapore. One of these is Elder Sindu Prawira, an elder in Gereja Kristen Indonesia – Pregolan Bunder (GKI-PB) in Surabaya, Indonesia. He eagerly desired for his church to become a disciple-making church, but sensed that it was not the time to implement radical change in GKI-PB. Instead, Elder Sindu decided to “think big, start small and build deep”. He brought different leaders to IDMC Conferences year after year. Over five years, Elder Sindu had influenced the rest of his church board in favour of disciple-making.

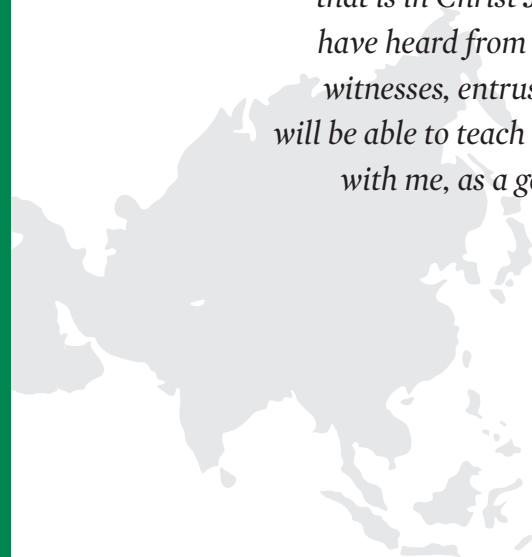
By divine appointment, as the leadership of GKI-PB grew in resonance, Covenant EFC Missions began seeking overseas partnerships. In 2012, Covenant EFC signed a partnership with GKI-PB in discipleship and missions. Soon thereafter, Surabaya was chosen as the first Regional IDMC Conference in Southeast Asia. It was a dream come true for this faithful elder and a testimony of God’s perfect timing.

PRAY

- For our partner church in Surabaya, GKI-PB, who is anchoring this conference, and for faith for the planning committee as this is the largest event ever organised by this church.
- For the 1,000 participants, many of whom will be hearing about authentic discipleship and intentional disciple-making for the first time.
- For the team coming from Singapore.
 - a. The plenary speakers: Rev Edmund Chan and Ps Ann Chan.
 - b. The workshop speakers: Rev Tony Yeo (Leading an IDMC Church), Ps Barney Lau (Discipleship in the Marketplace) and Ps Matthew Lo (Discipleship of the Next Generation).
 - c. The missions leadership, including the regional coordinators and missions governing board.
 - d. The Covenant EFC members who will be coming to volunteer as interpreters, ushers and hosts.
- That a discipleship movement will begin within the Surabaya churches and go beyond to other Indonesian cities.

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-3 (NIV)



March 1
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
March 2015 - Week 1

JEALOUSY HURTS

Jealousy will hurt our relationships with others.

Scripture - Genesis 4:1-26

1. Activity Bite

Ask each other this question: "Have you ever been jealous of your brother, sister or friends before? What were you jealous about?"

2. Chat Time

Q1: Is it true that most of the time we get jealous over things that others have and we don't?

Q2: Why do we get jealous?

Q3: Can you think of one good way of not getting jealous too easily?

3. Learning Point

We tend to compare ourselves with others. We compare the kind of toys we have, how expensive our shoes are or how beautiful our drawings are. We get jealous when we feel that we should be getting better things than others. But jealousy will hurt our relationships with other people when we keep it in our hearts. Knowing that all good things come from God and being thankful for what we have is a sure way of getting rid of jealousy. We will then be able to love others more easily.

4. Action Point

List down all the nice things that you already have like toys or story books. Start giving thanks to God for each of these items.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I am sorry that I get jealous of my friends because of the good things they have. Please help me not to. I want to thank You instead for all the things I already have. Amen.

March 2
Monday
2015

Being Truly Human

■ Scripture

Genesis 5:1-2

■ Observation

Why does the narrator begin the “written account of Adam’s descendants” (Ge 5:1a, NLT) with a description of God’s creation of humans (vv. 1b-2)?

Deeper Reflection

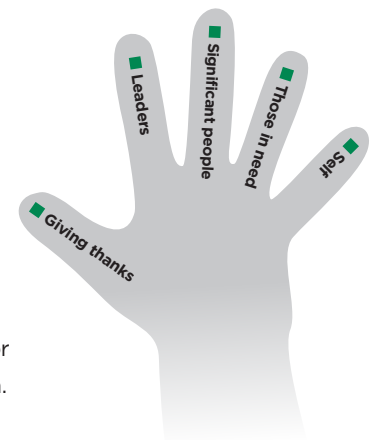
When the narrator writes the “written account of Adam’s descendants” (Ge 5:1a, NLT), he begins with a description of God’s creation of humans (vv. 1b-2). He is recapturing Genesis 1:27. He is not making a historical recollection of how God created the first human beings. But rather, he is making a theological affirmation. Preceding Genesis 5:1-2 is Genesis 3-4, which show the swift progress of sin: Adam’s sin (Ge 3), Cain’s sin (Ge 4:1-8) and Lamech’s sin (Ge 4:23-24). The theological point is this: Fallen humans, however sinful they are, still bear the image of God. What is most significant and important about a human being is that he or she is created in God’s image. To be truly human as God created us to be is to consciously look at ourselves and other human beings as created in God’s image. How we view human beings will determine how we value them. James warns against the incongruence in our tongue: With the same tongue we bless God and curse men (Jas 3:9a). And James tells us why we should not curse men: they have been made in the likeness of God (Jas 3:9b).

■ Application

How conscious am I when looking at people of all kinds as created in God’s image?

■ Prayer

Creator God, help me to look at human beings and their God-given worth through the eyes of Jesus who, being God, emptied Himself and took on human form and lived among us;¹ who was made, for a little while, lower than angels to suffer death so as to taste death for everyone for their salvation.² Amen.



¹ Philippians 2:6-7

² Hebrews 2:9

March 3
Tuesday
2015

God of the Remnant

■ Scripture

Genesis 4:25-26; 5:1-8

■ Observation

What is the significance of God replacing Abel, who was killed by Cain, with Seth (Ge 4:25-26; 5:3-8)?

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Deeper Reflection

God began to work out His redemption of fallen humanity through the seed of the woman (Ge 3:15). When the righteous Abel was killed by Cain (Ge 4:1-8), the line of the woman's seed was broken, for Cain was a seed of the serpent (cf. 1 Jn 3:12). But God "appointed" Eve "another offspring in place of Abel" through Seth (v. 25), and the line of the woman's seed was restored (vv. 3-8ff). And it was Seth's descendants who "began to call upon the name of the LORD" (v. 26). Here is the beginning of the divine principle of God's remnant that God will use again and again in the subsequent history of God's people. We see later in Genesis 6 how "all flesh [including Seth's descendants] had corrupted their way upon the earth" (6:12). "But Noah found favour in the eyes of God" (6:8) – a remnant! So often in the history of God's people since biblical times, it was God's own people who hindered God's purposes by failing to walk with God faithfully. But the faithful God will always keep for Himself a faithful remnant. May we be that faithful remnant!

■ Application

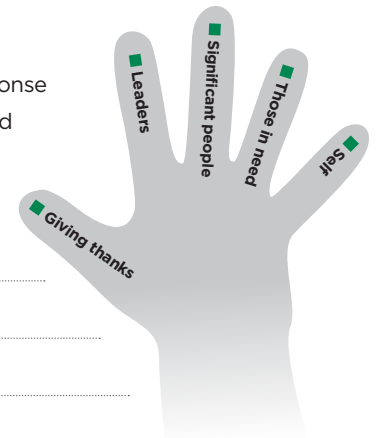
How can I be part of the faithful remnant in God's purposes?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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March 4
Wednesday
2015

“Begot... Lived...Died”

■ Scripture

Genesis 5:3-20

■ Observation

What does the repeated “begot...lived...died” pattern in every generation in Adam’s genealogy in Genesis 5 tell about humanity under sin (vv. 3-20)?

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Deeper Reflection

Adam’s genealogy in Genesis 5 consists of 10 generations. Every generation, except for Enoch (Ge 5:21-24), is described by three repeated words: “begot...lived...died” (e.g. vv. 3-20). These three words sum up a human life under sin. “Begot” has two sides: giving birth and being born. A human life comes out of the womb with the certainty of ending in the tomb someday. Genesis 5 with its repeated “begot...lived...died” seems to portray human life as so mundane, without meaning, purpose and significance. Our lives can be just like that. But it need not be so when our life motto is: “To live is Christ, to die is to be with Christ.” This was so for Paul: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Php 1:21) – and “gain” because death means “to be with Christ”, which is “very much better” than living (Php 1:23). It is CHRIST that determines meaning, purpose and significance for life and death. And this is possible because Jesus, unlike all other human beings, was born to die – to die for our sins so that we may have eternal life.

■ Application

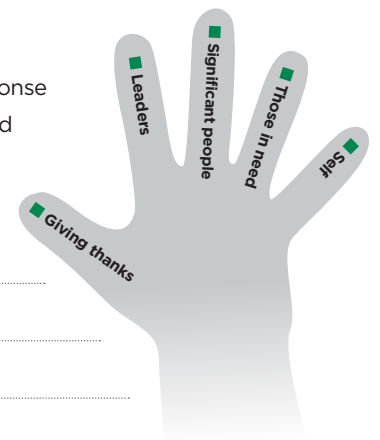
How can I make “To live is Christ, to die is to be with Christ” (Php 1:21) my life motto?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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March 5
Thursday
2015

How Do I Live?

■ Scripture

Genesis 5:21-24

■ Observation

What do you observe as significant in Enoch's life (vv. 21-24)?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 5:21-24, a short but significant biography of Enoch, is an “astonishing paragraph that ‘shines like a single brilliant star above the record of this chapter’”³. Enoch had the shortest lifespan among all the characters mentioned – 365 years (v. 23). Interestingly, his son, Methuselah, had the longest lifespan of 969 years (v. 27), and his father, Jared, had the second longest of 962 years (v. 20). His life is the only one that does not end with “and he died” as the rest. Only for Enoch are we told of his spiritual life: He “walked with God” (repeated twice, vv. 22, 24). “Walked with God” “portrays the intimacy that is the essence of Old Testament piety”⁴. Enoch walked with God in an ungodly world filled with “ungodly deeds which they [did] in an ungodly way” and “all the harsh things which ungodly sinners” spoke “against Him [God]” (Jude 14-15), which became full-grown three generations later (Ge 6:1-5). For Enoch, his “lived” (v. 21) is “walked with God” (vv. 22, 24). It is not how long I live that matters, but how I walk with God.

■ Application

How do I want my life to be like Enoch's?

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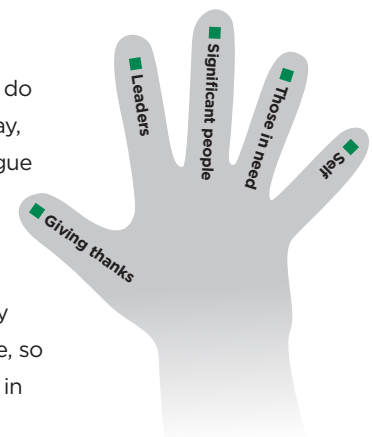
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■ Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give You my hands to do Your work, my feet to walk Your way, my eyes to see as You see, my tongue to speak Your words, my mind that You may think in me, and my heart that You may love in me, our Father and all people. I give You my whole self that You may grow in Me, so that it is You, Lord Jesus, who lives in me. Amen.



³ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1976), 80

⁴ Derek Kidner, 81

March 6
 Friday
 2015

Be Faithful Until the End

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 4:25-26; 6:1-8

■ **Observation**

How did humanity change as they multiplied and populated the earth from Genesis 4:25-26 through Genesis 5 to Genesis 6:1-8?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 5:1 – 6:8 is one literary unit. Genesis 5 is a record of Adam’s descendants through Seth who “began to call upon the name of the LORD” (vv. 25-26), with 6:1-8 as its conclusion, which shows the utterly deplorable state of fallen humanity. The “earth” (vv. 4, 5, 6) refers to humanity formed by the descendants of both Cain (cf. Ge 4:16-24) and Seth. It means somewhere in the ten generations of Seth, his descendants stopped calling upon God’s name. While Genesis 5:1 – 6:8 is a story about many generations, it can be taken as a theological picture of an individual’s life. The story presents a discipleship call: Be faithful to God until the end. One cause or effect of not being faithful to God until the end is the corruption of good things and God’s blessings. Humankind multiplying (v. 1) is divine blessing (Ge 1:28; 9:1). But “when men began to multiply” they corrupted what was good: “the sons of God”⁵ taking the “beautiful” (same Hebrew word for God’s “good” creation in Genesis 1) “daughters of men” (v. 2) “to satisfy their baser instincts”⁶, which led to divine judgment in the form of total global destruction (vv. 5-7).

■ **Application**

How can I keep myself from corrupting the good things from God and His blessings in my life?

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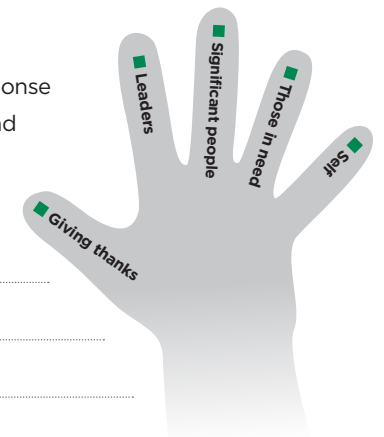
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■ **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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⁵ There are diverse interpretations of “the sons of God”, and none is without interpretive problems. But whichever the view, the main thrust of the text is clear: Sin had become full grown and that called for divine judgment of total destruction.
⁶ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker, 1988), 182

March 7
Saturday
2015

The Genesis 6:5 Heart

■ Scripture

Genesis 6:5

■ Observation

What is the significance of the way the narrator describes the sinful human heart in Genesis 6:5?

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Deeper Reflection

“There is hardly a stronger statement in the Bible about the evil of the human heart”⁷: “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (v. 5). Every single word here calls for our attention. Can my heart be like this? 2 Samuel 11 tells us. David slept with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, one of David’s own mighty men. Then came the bad news: Bathsheba was pregnant. David plotted to make Uriah responsible for the pregnancy; he recalled him from combat duty go home and spend time with his wife. But Uriah’s strong sense of duty and comradeship with his fellow soldiers made him refused such pleasure. Then, David invited Uriah for dinner and made him drunk. But even then David couldn’t make Uriah go home to his wife. Now desperate, David would resort to anything. He sent a letter through Uriah to General Joab containing this order: “Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he will be killed.” Uriah did not know that he was carrying his own death warrant! Even a man after God’s heart can have a Genesis 6:5 heart.

■ Application

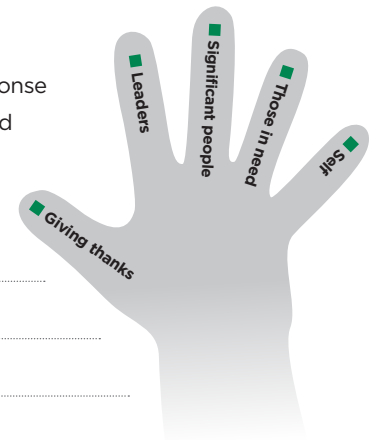
How can I guard myself from having a Genesis 6:5 heart?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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⁷ Allen P. Ross, 184

March 8
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
March 2015 - Week 2

UGLY SIN

Sin will turn everything ugly in life.

Scripture - Genesis 5:1-32

1. Activity Bite

Props: Paper, felt-tip multi-coloured markers

Draw a simple outline of a rainbow on two pieces of paper. On the first piece, use the multi-coloured pens to colour the rainbow. On the other piece, use only the black marker to colour the rainbow. Which one is uglier?

2. Chat Time

Q1: If your life is all black or dull instead of colourful, how would you feel?

Q2: Can you name some of the “ugly” things that people do to each other because of sin?

Q3: How then can we avoid doing things that are sinful?

3. Learning Point

God created all things good in the beginning but when sin entered the world, it turned all things bad and ugly. People began to hate and hurt each other. Jesus came to save everyone from sin and teach us to do good things to one another. So let’s be careful not to allow sin to make us do “ugly” things.

4. Action Point

Think of some of the “ugly” things you have done or said to someone. Share with everybody. Decide that you will not do them again. You may write them down on a piece of paper and keep it in your Bible.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I don’t want to let sin make me say or do ugly things to everybody. I want to have only good things coming out of my life. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

March 9
Monday
2015

On God's Word, In God's Ways

■ Scripture

Genesis 5:28-29, 6:5-7

■ Observation

How does the human hope expressed in Lamech's words in Genesis 5:28-29 match with the divine act in Genesis 6:5-7?

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Deeper Reflection

Lamech's speech in naming Noah (vv. 28-29) reveals how "life under the curse was very painful for these early bearers of the curse, and so he hoped for relief and comfort through Noah"⁸. Lamech's allusion to the toil on cursed ground as mentioned in Genesis 3:17 "may be a sign that he treasured the promise of 3:15"⁹. Lamech's hope was based on God's Word. The three verbs that describe God in Genesis 6:6, "sorry...made...grieved", "reproduce the three Hebrew roots of 'rest...work...toil' at 5:29,¹⁰ immeasurably widening the scope of Lamech's words"¹¹. Lamech sought for "rest" from "work" and "toil", but God felt "sorry" and "grieved" at the humans that He had "made". "Man longs for temporal relief; God must have things right."¹² "The hopes that Lamech set on his son were realised in a manner far different from that which he had imagined."¹³ The "rest" Lamech hoped for, God brought it about through judgment (v. 7). We base our hope on God's Word; but God fulfils His Word in His own ways that are often different from ours (cf. Isa 55:8-9).

■ Application

What does it mean to me to be living my life on God's promises that He keeps in His own ways?

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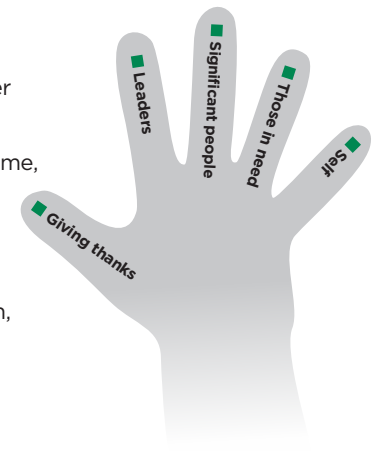
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■ Prayer

Thy way, not mine, O Lord, however dark it be. Lead me by Thine own hand, and choose out the path for me, be it smooth or rough, it will be still the best; winding or straight, it leads onward to Thy rest. Be Thou my guide, my strength, my wisdom, my all.¹⁴ Amen.



⁸ Allen P. Ross, 176

⁹ Derek Kidner, 81

¹⁰ Parallel terms in Hebrew in Genesis 5:29 and 6:6: "rest" and "sorry"; "work" and "made"; "toil" and "grieved"

¹¹ Derek Kidner, 86

¹² Derek Kidner, 86

¹³ Derek Kidner, 86 – citing U. Cassuto

¹⁴ Adapted from a prayer of Horatius Bonar (1808-89)

March 10
Tuesday
2015

Living Under God's Grace

■ Scripture

Genesis 6:8-9; 9:20-23

■ Observation

What do you think of Noah as described in Genesis 6:8-9 and 9:18-23?

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Deeper Reflection

Noah found “grace” in God’s eyes (v. 8, NKJV) – “not in spite of sin but because of his righteousness”¹⁵ (v. 9; Ge 7:1b). The story of Noah (Ge 6:9 – 9:29) begins with Noah as “a remarkably complete man of God”¹⁶: “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (6:6b). “Righteous” is “primarily manward” and “blameless (‘wholehearted’) is Godward”¹⁷. Noah’s obedience to God’s commands, “Make an ark” (6:14) and “Enter the ark” (7:1a) is summed up as “Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did” (6:22; 7:5). However, “Noah’s righteousness is not his own but a gift of God’s grace...God works in Noah as in all the saints both to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Php 2:13).”¹⁸ Noah’s story ends with him being “drunk, and exposed himself” (9:21) that “occasioned his younger’s son’s sin”¹⁹ (9:22). The narrator “condemns”²⁰ Noah’s conduct, just as the prophets “censor nakedness in connection with being satiated with wine (Hab 2:15; La 4:21)”²¹. Realistic discipleship is three steps forward, two steps back. And faithfulness to God and forgiveness of sins are both gifts of God’s grace.

■ Application

How am I living by God's grace in my three-steps-forward, two-steps-back walk with God?

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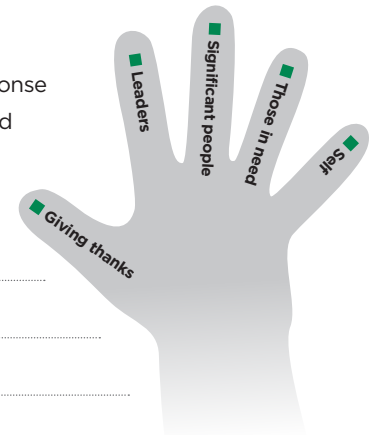
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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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¹⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001), 119
¹⁶ Derek Kidner, 87
¹⁷ Derek Kidner, 87
¹⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 119
¹⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 148
²⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 148
²¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 148

March 11
Wednesday
2015

God's Redemptive Heart: "I Will Never Again Destroy"

■ Scripture

Genesis 8:20-22

■ Observation

Why did God say what He said in Genesis 8:21?

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Deeper Reflection

The simplicity of what God did and said in Genesis 8:21 pales greatly in comparison to the severity of the Flood that destroyed the whole earth. What God said was: "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things" (v. 21b, NLT; cf. Ge 9:11, 15). The Flood "effects no fundamental change in humanity"²². Fallen humans remain incorrigible. But God wasn't giving up or giving in to depraved humanity. What God said was due to what He did: He "smelled the pleasing aroma" of the sacrifice offered to Him by Noah (vv. 20-21a). Here, "God seems too lightly propitiated"²³. "Human sin inflicts pain upon God's heart" (Ge 6:6) – "only because He graciously humbles Himself to become fully involved with humanity. Now that pain and indignation is assuaged by the atoning sacrifice."²⁴ But the real atoning sacrifice, in the mind of God, was the sacrifice of Jesus, "a fragrant aroma" to God (Eph 5:2). Only through this sacrifice the evil human heart can be redeemed and transformed.

■ Application

What does it mean to me to personally know the redemptive heart of God?

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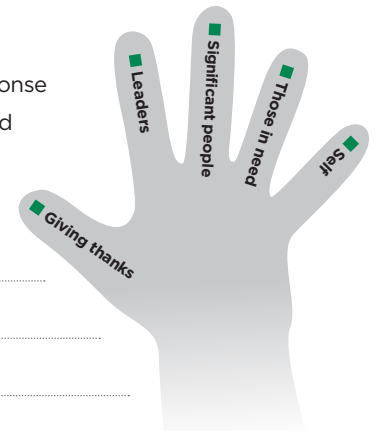
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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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²² Bruce K. Waltke, 143

²³ Derek Kidner, 93; "propitiated" means that the righteous indignation of God against sin is pacified.

²⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 142

March 12
Thursday
2015

Value of Human Life: “I Will Require Your Lifeblood”

■ Scripture

Genesis 9:1-7

■ Observation

Why does the narrator repeat the divine “I will require” thrice in Genesis 9:5?

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Deeper Reflection

After the Flood, humans are permitted to eat meat (v. 3) under the command “only you shall not eat with its life, its blood” (v. 4). Life is in the blood (Lev 17:11). God gives this command because He is the Creator of life, and all life belongs to Him. God has “absolute lordship over every life”²⁵. Thus, for every premeditated killing, God says, “Surely I will require your lifeblood” (v. 5). “I will require” is repeated three times in that one verse. The emphasis is obvious. “Something more than retribution is in mind here.”²⁶ God’s intent is to underscore the value of human life: “in the image of God He made man” (v. 6). Violence increases and intensifies from Cain’s murder of Abel (Ge 4:8) to Lamech’s killing two persons who just hurt him (Ge 4:23-24) to “the earth was filled with violence” (Ge 6:11, 13). Genesis 9:5-6 implies that violence will continue. God’s demand “I will require your lifeblood” “also prepared men to appreciate the use of blood in sacrifice. Belonging to God, it could be seen as His atoning gift to sinners”²⁷ – for “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22).

■ Application

What area(s) do I need to pay attention to with regard to the theological value of human life and human beings?

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■ Prayer

In Your justice, O righteous God, You require the lifeblood of man who kills another man. But when it is me in my sins who killed the Son of God, You do not require my lifeblood. On the contrary, it is the very lifeblood of Your beloved Son that was shed for this sinner that makes it possible for You to forgive me and cleanse me of all my sins!



²⁵ Allen P. Ross, 205

²⁶ Derek Kidner, 101

²⁷ Derek Kidner, 101

March 13
Friday
2015

God of All Grace: “I Establish My Covenant”

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 9:8-11

■ **Observation**

How does God show His grace in making a covenant with His entire creation after the Flood (vv. 8-11)?

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Deeper Reflection

After the Flood, God said to Noah, “I Myself do establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you; and with all the living creatures” (vv. 9-10). The word “covenant” is repeated seven times in Genesis 9:8-17 (cf. 6:18). The emphasis here is obvious. “This first explicit covenant is remarkable for its breadth (embracing ‘every living creature’), its permanence [‘for all successive generations’, v. 12; ‘everlasting’, v. 16] and its generosity – for it was as unconditional as it was undeserved. For good measure, its sign and seal [the rainbow, vv. 12-17], a feature of all covenants, was such as to emphasise God’s sole initiative, far out of man’s reach.”²⁸ God’s covenant promise is “all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood” (vv. 11, 15) – but only until the time when God will destroy the earth by fire (2 Pe 3:5-7), and followed by “new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pe 3:13). Until then, God “is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pe 3:9). This is the grace of “the God of all grace” (1 Pe 5:10).

■ **Application**

How will the grace of the God of all grace teach and help me to be a gracious person?

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■ **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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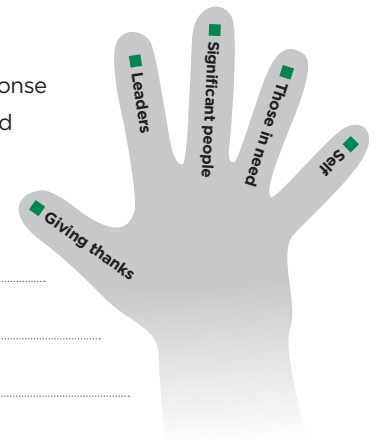
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²⁸ Derek Kidner, 101

March 14
Saturday
2015

Faithfulness of God: “I Will Remember My Covenant”

■ Scripture

Genesis 9:12-17

■ Observation

What is the emphasis in Genesis 9:12-17?

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Deeper Reflection

The emphasis in Genesis 9:12-17 cannot be missed: God will “remember” His covenant (vv. 15, 16) when He looks upon “the sign of the covenant” (vv. 12, 13, 17) – “My bow in the cloud” (vv. 13, 14, 16). The emphasis is all the more pronounced in “MY covenant” (v. 11) and “MY bow” (v. 13). The God who can never forget promises will “remember” (cf. Isa 49:14-15). What a way God declares His faithfulness! Commentator Marcus Dods elaborated on the covenant sign: “They accepted it as a sign that God has no pleasure in destruction, that He does not give way to moods, that He does not always chide, that if weeping may endure for a night joy is sure to follow. If anyone is under a cloud, leading a joyless, heartless life, if anyone has much apparent reason to suppose that God has given him up in catastrophe, and lets things run as they may, there is some satisfaction in reading this natural emblem and recognising that without the cloud, nay, without the cloud breaking into heavy sweeping rains there cannot be the bow, and that no cloud of God’s sending is permanent, but will one day give place to unclouded joy.”²⁹

■ Application

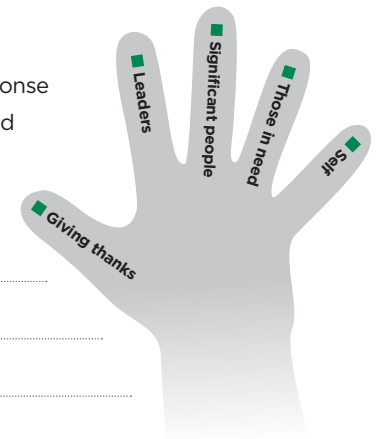
What area(s) in my life right now do I need to trust in God’s covenant faithfulness for?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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²⁹ Allen P. Ross, 206

March 15
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
March 2015 - Week 3

THE BIG FLOOD

Choose to do good when others won't.

Scripture - Genesis 6:1-9:28

1. Activity Bite

Play a game of opposites. Someone says an adjective (like "big", "strong" or "kind") while others reply with the opposite of the adjective mentioned (like "small", "weak" or "mean"). Whoever is slower in saying the opposite word loses a point.

2. Chat Time

Q1: Have you found it difficult to do what is right when everyone tells you to do something wrong?

Q2: How did you feel as the odd one out?

Q3: Why did Noah stand firm when others were doing all the wicked things?

3. Learning Point

It is easy to give in to our friends when we are the only ones not doing what everyone is doing because we don't want to be embarrassed or called names. Noah was called a righteous man. He stood firm when others jeered at him. He knew who he was worshipping. He feared God but not man. We should follow Noah's example as a righteous man who does what is right even when others don't.

4. Action Point

Is there a right behaviour or a good deed that you are not doing because you are afraid that others will laughed at you? Tell your parents about it and ask them to pray for you, trusting God that He will give you the courage to do it.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, please help me do what is right even when others don't. I want to please You only. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

March 16
Monday
2015

All Under One Creator

■ Scripture

Genesis 9:25-27; 10:1, 32; 12:3

■ Observation

What does the narrator want his readers to understand concerning the nations in Genesis 9:25-27 and 10:1, 32 in light of Genesis 12:3?

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Deeper Reflection

From Noah's three sons "the whole earth was populated" (Ge 9:19), particularised in Genesis 10. Historically, certain nations with a sense of racial, cultural, economic and technological superiority, appeal to Genesis 9:25-27 (Ham's descendants as "cursed", Shem's and Japheth's as "blessed") "to justify slavery and racial discrimination"³⁰. Like one reformed theologian put it in 1948: "There has been what we may call a national election, or a divine predestination of nations and communities to a knowledge of true religion and to external privileges of the Gospel. God undoubtedly does choose some nations to receive much greater spiritual and temporal blessings than others. This form of election has been well-illustrated in the Jewish nation, in certain European nations and communities, and in America. The contrast is very striking when we compare these with other nations such as China, Japan and India."³¹ The point of Genesis 10 is "mankind is one, for all its diversity, under one Creator"³² (back to Ge 1-2). Nations are formed by human beings created in God's image (Ge 1:27-28; 5:1; 9:6-7). Genesis 9:25 – 10:32 must be viewed in light of God's redemptive intention of blessing the nations (Ge 12:3).

■ Application

What are my attitudes toward other races, cultures or religions that I need to change in light of the Scripture teaching that "mankind is one, for all its diversity, under one Creator"?

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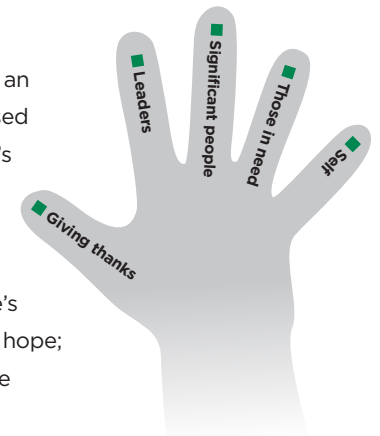
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■ Prayer

Lord, who is our peace,³³ make me an instrument of Your peace, for blessed are the peacemakers who are God's children.³⁴ Where there's hatred, let me sow love; where there's injury, pardon; where there's discord, reconciliation; where there's doubt, faith; where there's despair, hope; where there's darkness, light; where there's sorrow, comfort. Amen.



³⁰ D. Stuart Briscoe, *Genesis, The Preacher's Commentary* (Nelson, 1987), 103

³¹ Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (1948) – in Millard J. Erickson, Ed., *Readings in Christian Theology* Vol. 3: The New Life (Baker, 1979), 47

³² Derek Kidner, 104

³³ Ephesians 2:14

³⁴ Matthew 5:9

March 17
Tuesday
2015

Towards One New Man

■ **Scripture**

Ephesians 2:11-18

■ **Observation**

How does God show that He highly values the unity of humankind in Ephesians 2:11-18?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 10 shows “the unity of mankind”³⁵ in its diversity under the creation order. The diversity (vv. 5, 20, 31) consists of each people’s unique historical (“the sons of...”), territorial (“lands”), social (“families”) and cultural (“languages”) identities, which is God’s sovereign doing (Ac 17:26). However, breakdown and disharmony in human relationships marked much of general human history, and the history of God’s people. Joseph’s own brothers’ hostility toward him is one early example (Ge 37). God’s redemptive movement of blessing the nations through Abraham (Ge 12:3) culminates in Jesus Christ, “the son of Abraham” (Mt 1:1). The redemptive blessing is reconciliation in both relationship between God and man, and between man and man. God intends to in Jesus Christ, who is “our peace”, make humanity “into ONE new man, establishing peace”; reconciling us “in ONE body to God through the cross, by having put to death the enmity”, so that “through Him we both have our access in ONE Spirit to the Father” (Eph 2:14-18). Unity in Christ (in marriage, family, church) is a vital redemptive distinctive, which requires humility, gentleness, patience, loving tolerance and diligence to preserve (Eph 4:1-3).

■ **Application**

How do I contribute to the redeemed unity of humankind in Christ as God intended?

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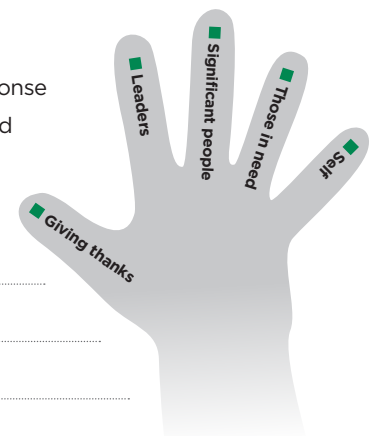
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■ **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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³⁵ Derek Kidner, 102

March 18
Wednesday
2015

Christ in “Cursed be Canaan”

■ Scripture

Genesis 9:25-27; Galatians 3:13-14

■ Observation

How do you understand “cursed be Canaan” (v. 25) in light of Galatians 3:13-14?

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Deeper Reflection

The “curse placed upon Canaan [v. 25] links him with the curse on the Serpent (Ge 3:14) and on Cain (Ge 4:11)”³⁶. Behind Noah’s prophecy is “the concept of corporate solidarity. The ancestors reproduced after their own kind [cf. Ge 1:11-12]. Noah’s righteousness is reproduced in Shem and Japheth, his immorality in Ham [cf. Ge 9:21-22].”³⁷ So, Noah is in part responsible. But the curse on the Canaanites “pertains to their morality, not to their ethnicity as such”³⁸. The curse on Canaan must be viewed in light of God’s intention to bless the nations (Ge 12:3). Do the nations include Canaan? Yes. The Canaanites would be given “four hundred years” to repent of their sins (Ge 15:13, 16). When the curse began to take effect through Joshua destroying the Canaanites and possessing their land, Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute, was spared and saved (Jos 2:8-13). But more than that. Christ had to “become a curse for us...in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations” (Gal 3:13-14). Canaan’s curse is to be “a servant of servants” (v. 25). To save cursed sinners, Jesus became a servant to them (Mk 10:45).

■ Application

How can I be a servant of the Servant of servants so as to be a blessing to others?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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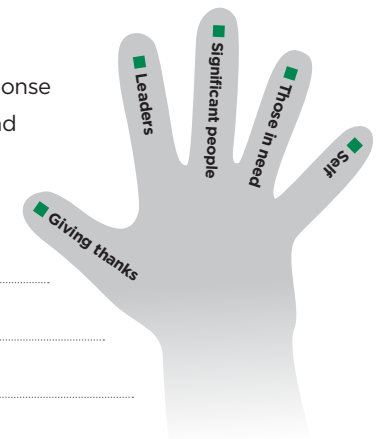
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³⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 150

³⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 46, 150

³⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 150

March 19
Thursday
2015

Nimrod “before the Lord”

■ Scripture

Genesis 10:8-12

■ Observation

Why does the narrator give such a detailed description of an individual named Nimrod in Genesis 10:8-12?

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Deeper Reflection

In the table of 70 nations³⁹ in Genesis 10, Nimrod is singled out for special mention (vv. 8-12). *What Nimrod is:* Nimrod means “We shall rebel”⁴⁰. Thrice he is described as “mighty”, a word linking him to “the infamous tyrants of Genesis 6:4”⁴¹ – “a mighty warrior” (v. 8, NIV), “a mighty hunter” (v. 9). *What Nimrod does:* As a warrior, he conquers to build “his kingdom” (v. 10) – the first mention of a kingdom in the Bible. Nimrod “achieved his ascendancy by aggression; he is not characterised by spreading out”⁴² as decreed by God (Ge 9:1). His dominance is extensive “on the earth” (v. 8). *Nimrod “before the LORD”:* He is mighty “in God’s estimation...signifying him as a hunter to be greatly feared”⁴³. God is mentioned only here in Genesis 10, which bears theological significance. God is silent towards Nimrod’s ambitious accomplishments – but only for now. God is sovereign, and He sees – Nimrod is always “before the LORD”. Therefore, Nimrod never lasts. This is true for any Nimrod, whether its dominance, however extensive, is political, military, social, economic, moral or cultural.

■ Application

What are the “Nimrods” around me and how do I face them?

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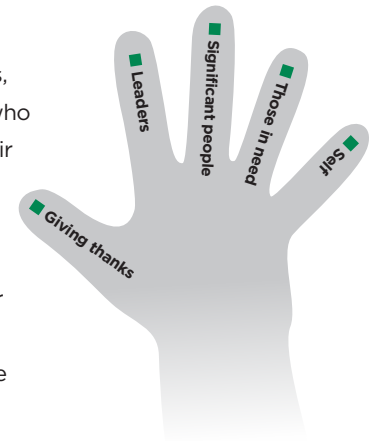
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■ Prayer

Sovereign Lord of men and nations, we pray for rulers and statesmen who are called to leadership among their fellow countrymen; give them vision to see far into issues of their time, courage to uphold what they believe to be right, integrity in their words and motives, and may their service to their people promote the people’s welfare.⁴⁴ Amen.



³⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 164

⁴⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 169

⁴¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 169

⁴² Bruce K. Waltke, 169

⁴³ Bruce K. Waltke, 169

⁴⁴ Adapted from *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer* (SPCK, 1995), 173

March 20
Friday
2015

The Self-idolising Humanity

■ Scripture

Genesis 11:1-4

■ Observation

How is the prominence of the “self” of fallen humanity portrayed in Genesis 11:1-4?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 11:1-4 presents a self-idolising humanity which perpetuates until today, only increasingly more extensive and intensive. The language of the self is prominent: “Come, let us build for ourselves a city...let us make for ourselves a name” (v. 4). “Come” is a “rare exclamation” that underlines “wilful resolve”⁴⁵. Building a “tower that reaches to the heavens” (v. 4, NIV) “shows they are vying with God Himself”. God, not humankind, dwells in the heavens (1 Ki 8:30). It is the “be like God” spirit of Genesis 3:5. Babel and its tower “represent the human spirit to achieve significance and security through the collective technology, independently of God. At the heart of the city of man is love for self and hatred for God. The city reveals that the human spirit will not stop at anything short of usurping God’s throne in heaven. Today, self-idolising humanity is storming outer space, hoping to subdue even the heavenly bodies, and through genetic engineering has the potential to clone and shape humanity according to its own imagination. What had historically been the prerogative of God alone has now come under the dominion of depraved humanity. The prospect is frightening.”⁴⁶

■ Application

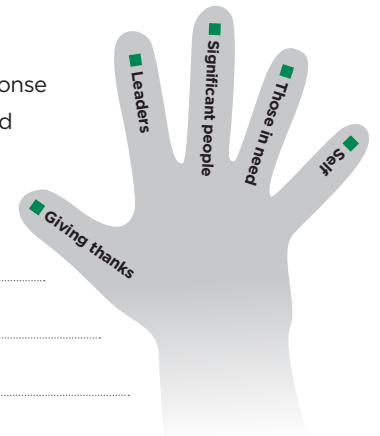
How can I keep myself from becoming part of the self-idolising humanity of today?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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⁴⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 179
⁴⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 182-83

March 21
Saturday
2015

The Lord Comes Down

■ Scripture

Genesis 11:1-9

■ Observation

What does the story of Genesis 11:1-9 tell us about God and self-idolising humanity?

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Deeper Reflection

Indeed, the evil that technologically advancing self-idolising humanity is capable of doing is frightening. But God is sovereign: He knows what's going on, what to do and when to act. Genesis 11:1-9 is divided into two parts with a theological turning point in the centre: human construction of the city (vv. 1-4), divine deconstruction of the city (vv. 6-9), and the turning point is "The Lord came down" (v. 5). The divine deconstruction of the human construction is seen in four sets of contrasts. The story begins with all the earth speaking the same language (v. 1) and ends with it speaking diverse languages (v. 8). Humanity "settled" in one place (v. 2), and then "scattered abroad the whole earth" (v. 8). They spoke to one another and understood each other (v. 3), and then they did "not understand each other's language" (v. 7). Man said, "Come let us make bricks...Come let us build for ourselves a city" (vv. 3-4), but God said, "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language" (v. 7). Any "human societal threat to divine dominion"⁴⁷, symbolised by Babel and its tower, God will never tolerate. He will intervene eventually.

■ Application

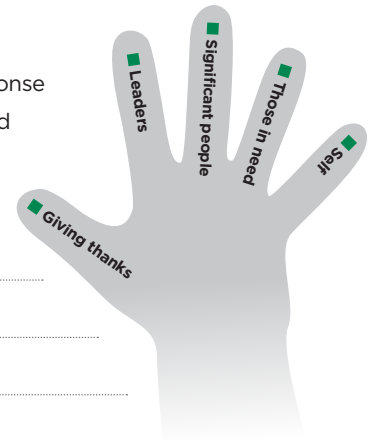
How can I anchor myself in God in today's world of prevailing evil created by self-idolising humanity?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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⁴⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 177

March 22
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
March 2015 - Week 4

THE BIG BOAST

Pride says that it is better than anyone else, even God.

Scripture - Philippians 2:3

1. Activity Bite

Have a boasting competition. Tell the others why you are better than them. Whoever has the most boasts wins.

2. Chat Time

- Q1:** Why is boasting bad for our relationships with others?
- Q2:** What will our attitude towards others be when we feel we are better than them?
- Q3:** What does Philippians 2:3 say about how our attitude should be?

3. Learning Point

Men and women continue to sin against God because they want to feel strong and be in control. They don't want to feel weak as it will make them feel useless. So they boast to each other of what they can do or achieve. That is pride and it will prevent us from recognising that we need God to help us daily. Be humble instead and know that God is in control. We will be blessed if we do that.

4. Action Point

Instead of boasting, tell of how God is good to you and how He has blessed you with all the good things or abilities.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)
Dear God, I am sorry for having so much pride in me. I want to learn to be humble like Jesus. So please help me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

March 23
Monday
2015

Detecting the Divine Movements

■ Scripture

Genesis 11:10-26

■ Observation

Why is the refrain “and he died”, which is found in Genesis 5:1-32, omitted in Genesis 11:10-26?

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Deeper Reflection

God is not mentioned in “the generations of Shem” in Genesis 11:10-26; however, we can detect the divine movements in it. God suffered His first “setback” in His first creation (Ge 1-7) with human depravity becoming full-grown, leading to total destruction. In God’s second creation after the Flood, humankind rebelled against Him, resulting in Him scattering them (Ge 8:1 – 11:9). But Genesis 11:10-26 depicts “a fresh movement”⁴⁸. Behind “the generations of Shem” is “the God of Shem” (Ge 9:26). “Shem” in Hebrew means “name”. The tower builders who seek to “make for ourselves a name” (Ge 11:4) “have no names, and the city they built receives the shameful name ‘Confusion’”⁴⁹ (Ge 11:9). Then, there’s a divine twist: “God gave the elect of Shem an everlasting name in this genealogy, and above all, He will exalt the name of the faithful descendant Abraham (Ge 12:2).”⁵⁰ The refrain “and he died” found in the Adam-Noah genealogy in Genesis 5 is omitted here, to focus “on birth and future hope, not on inevitable death”⁵¹. The goal of Genesis 11:10-26 is “Abram” (v. 26), through whom God will bless the nations (Ge 12:3). Silently but surely, albeit slowly, God is at work. Oftentimes, that’s how God works.

■ Application

What are the silent and slow divine movements that I can detect in my spiritual pilgrimage with God?

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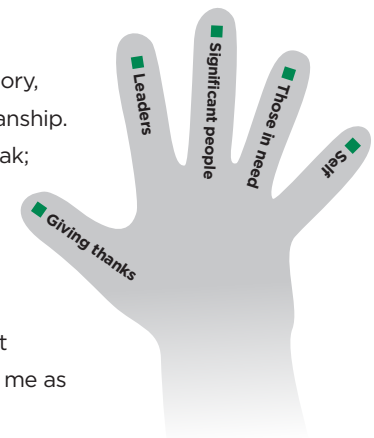
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■ Prayer

Lord, the heavens proclaim Your glory, and the skies display Your craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make You known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard.⁵² In the same way, You are working in my life. Unseen now, but You will graciously make known to me as You please.



⁴⁸ BW. H. Griffiths Thomas, *The Pentateuch: Chapter by Chapter* (Kregel, 1985), 41

⁴⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 187

⁵⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 187

⁵¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 187

⁵² Psalm 19:1-3

March 24
Tuesday
2015

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

■ Scripture

Genesis 11:27-32

■ Observation

What is the significance of the narrator saying “Sarai was barren; she had no child” (v. 30) in Genesis 11:27-32?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 11:27-32 is an introduction to the story of Abraham with theological significance, even though God is not mentioned. It consists of three pairs of parallel descriptions with a theological centre. It begins with Terah becoming a father (v. 27) and ends with his death (v. 32). Terah’s family living in “Ur of the Chaldeans” and his son “Haran died” (v. 28) parallels his family leaving “Ur of the Chaldeans” and settled in “Haran” (v. 31b). Abram and Nahor “took” wives for themselves (v. 29) parallels Terah “took” Abraham, along with Lot and Sarai (v. 31a). The theological centre is “Sarai was barren; she had no child” (v. 30), with a double emphasis – “barren” and “had no child.” Barrenness is “an effective metaphor for hopelessness...no human power to invent a future”⁵³. Sarah’s barrenness “emphasises the fact that God’s grace is beyond human imagination. She will bear children not by natural generation but by supernatural life that faith engenders. Through this childless couple, God will bring into being a new humanity that is born not of the will of a husband but by the will of God.”⁵⁴

■ Application

How will I face my “barrenness...had no child” life situation?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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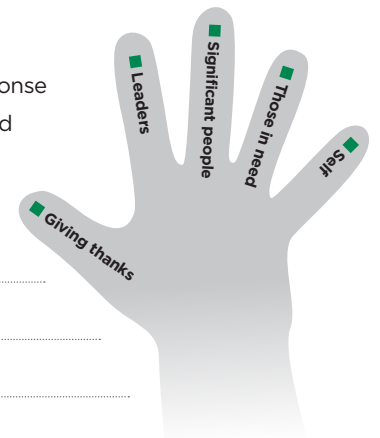
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⁵³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox, 1982), 116

⁵⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 201

March 25
Wednesday
2015

God Begins with His Word

■ Scripture

Genesis 12:1-3

■ Observation

What is the significance of the narrative proper of Abraham beginning with “Now the LORD said to Abram” (v. 1)?

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Deeper Reflection

The history of redemption in Genesis, like that of creation, begins with God speaking: “Now the LORD said to Abram” (v. 1). “The same word that summoned cosmos into existence now summons Abraham to bring a nation into existence”⁵⁵ (v. 2a). Before that there was a long divine silence. “The gracious God’s broad strokes to bless the earth come suddenly and brilliantly upon the canvas of sacred history. The Lord has not spoken to His saints since His covenant with Noah, in which He resolved to bless the earth and never again to treat it with contempt (Ge 8:20 – 9:17). Now suddenly His creative word to bless the tribes and nations – which He has scattered – redirects the course of history. This word of benediction [vv. 2-3] counterbalances His words of malediction against the tower builders”⁵⁶. Not unlike Abraham, Christians today open Scripture and hear God’s Word. Christians are “people of the ear, not of the eye. God does not appear to be seen but speaks to be heard. God is always present in words that bind. The community of faith is built around these speech acts.”⁵⁷

■ Application

What does it mean for me personally to hear God speaking to me through Scripture?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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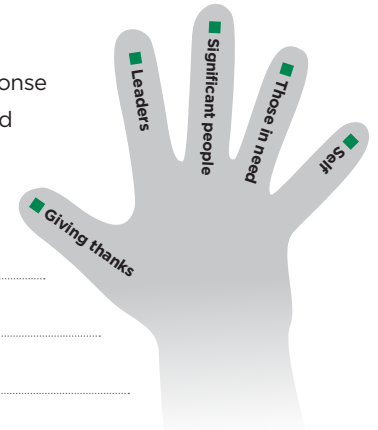
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⁵⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 204

⁵⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 202

⁵⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 209

March 26
Thursday
2015

Faith Journey to Life Destiny: What Abraham Leaves Behind

■ Scripture

Genesis 12:1-4

■ Observation

What does it mean for Abram to obey when God commands him to leave and go to “the land” in Genesis 12:1?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 11:27 – 25:11 is about Abraham’s faith journey to his God-given life destiny. It begins with God’s command: “Leave your country...” (v. 1, NIV). “Leave” means “determinedly dissociating oneself”, or “leave by yourself”⁵⁸. What Abraham leaves behind: Ur, his country (Ge 11:28), was “a well-developed city...Educationally the people were well-advanced – they understood mathematics to the extent that they could calculate square and square roots and figure out geometric problems...they could do all these without calculators!”⁵⁹ And “the thousands of clay tablets which have been unearthed give fascinating details of the well-developed cultural, business and legal aspects of life in Ur”⁶⁰. Abram’s choice is “between Ur and its refinements and Canaan with its much more primitive culture”⁶¹. The essence of God’s faith-demanding command is: “I command thee to go forth with closed eyes... until, having renounced thy country, thou shalt have given thyself wholly to Me.”⁶² God also calls Abram to leave his beloved people (cf. Lk 14:26). It must be emotionally hard when Abram “went forth as the LORD had spoken to him” (v. 4).

■ Application

What are the things I am unwilling or find it hard to leave in order to follow the Lord?

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■ Prayer

Lord Jesus, You died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for You who died and rose again on their behalf.⁶³ Help me to continually make You the centre of my life, saying “no” to all that keeps me from following You, and “yes” to all that brings me closer to You. Amen.



⁵⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 205

⁵⁹ D. Stuart Briscoe, 113

⁶⁰ D. Stuart Briscoe, 113

⁶¹ D. Stuart Briscoe, 114

⁶² Bruce K. Waltke, 205 – citing John Calvin

⁶³ 2 Corinthians 5:15

March 27
Friday
2015

Faith Journey to Life Destiny: What Abraham Lives By

■ Scripture

Genesis 12:1-4, 7

■ Observation

What does Abraham live by in his faith journey to his life destiny that God has called him to (vv. 1-3)?

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Deeper Reflection

What Abraham lives by in his faith journey to his life destiny: God's promises – "I will." *Promise for the unknown*: "I will show you" (v. 2) – the land God calls Abraham to go to. "By faith Abraham obeyed...went out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb 11:8). The faithful God keeps His promise at the right time and right place as He leads him: "To your descendants I will give this land" (v. 7). *Promise for the unable*: "I will make you a great nation" (v. 2). Abraham was 75 (v. 4): "Ten years beyond modern retirement, Abraham begins his new venture."⁶⁴ And Sarai was "barren...had no child" (Ge 11:30). It is beyond Abraham's imagination how he can become "a great nation" as he faces the hard reality of his life condition. But it is GOD who will make, and God WILL make. *Promise to be unusual*: "I will bless you, and make your name great" (v. 2). "In the ancient Near East, a name was not merely a label but a revelation of character. Thus, a great name entails not only fame but high social esteem 'as a man of superior character.'⁶⁵ It means "You are the light of the world" (Jn 8:12; Mt 5:14-16).

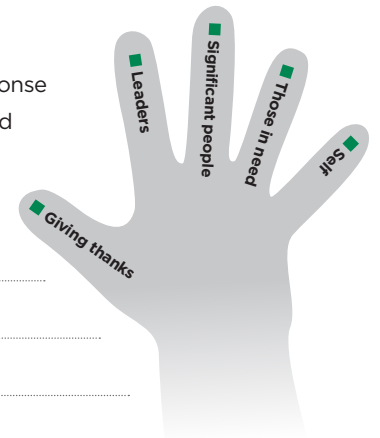
■ Application

In what ways are God's promises to Abraham in his faith journey towards his life destiny relevant to my life?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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⁶⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 207

⁶⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 205

March 28
Saturday
2015

Faith Journey to Life Destiny: What Abraham Lives For

■ Scripture

Genesis 12:2-3

■ Observation

What has God called Abraham to live for (v. 3)?

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Deeper Reflection

What Abraham lives for: God’s purposes – “I will bless you...and so you shall be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (vv. 2-3). That is Abraham’s life destiny – one of “eternal consequence, worldwide scope and monumental import”⁶⁶. The word “you”, a repeated “key word”⁶⁷ in verses 1 to 3, underscores this: “One individual will bring universal blessing and salvation”⁶⁸ – an impotent individual at that. Every Christian is a descendant of Abraham in Christ, having a personal God-given call and role in “all the nations will be blessed in you” (Gal 3:7-9). “In the highly mobile society in which we live today, people move because they prefer the climate, or they have a chance of promotion, or they feel a change of environment may solve some of their problems. Without suggesting that these may not be valid reasons for moving on, it may be healthy for us to consider whether we have ever made a move in faith based on what God has been saying to us about His eternal purposes and the role he expects us to play in their fulfillment.”⁶⁹ How do you live, move and exist?

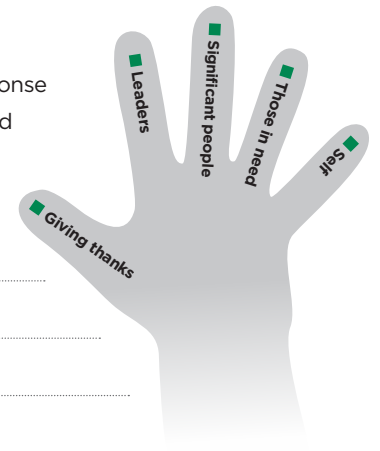
■ Application

How do I live, move and exist?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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⁶⁶ D. Stuart Briscoe, 117
⁶⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 203
⁶⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 203
⁶⁹ D. Stuart Briscoe, 118

March 29
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

RESPOND

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
March 2015 - Week 5

GOD CALLING US

God wants to speak to us daily.

Scripture - Genesis 11:27-12:9

1. Activity Bite

Props: Pens, sticky notes

Think about things or questions you want to say to one another. Instead of telling the person, write them down on pieces of sticky paper and stick them on the wall. When you are done, look through each other's papers.

2. Chat Time

Q1: Were you surprised by the things that were written?

Q2: If God were to write down things He wants to tell you, what do you think these would be?

Q3: Where can you find all the things that God wants to tell us?

3. Learning Point

God wants to talk to us daily. But we are often too busy or distracted to listen to Him. He speaks to us in many ways. One of the ways He does so is through the Bible. That is why we encourage everyone to read the Bible daily. When we hear what He says in His Word, we must be quick to obey them.

4. Action Point

If you have not been reading your Bible, try making it a goal to read one chapter of a book each day. You can start from the book of Genesis. Pray before you read to ask God to speak the things He wants to tell you.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I want to hear You speaking to me daily. Help me to know how to listen to You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

March 30
Monday
2015

“Come and See” Jesus

■ Scripture

John 1:35-39, 43-49

■ Observation

What is the significance of the words “come and see” in Jesus’ early disciples’ encounters with Him in John 1:35-39, 43-49 (note vv. 39, 46)?

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Deeper Reflection

The central theology of the Gospel of John is: God reveals Himself in Jesus – “No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is Himself God and is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us” (Jn 1:18, NLT). Corollary to this definitive divine revelation is seeing Jesus. For Jesus says, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (14:9). The turning point in John’s Gospel is this: After Jesus had performed “many signs” to reveal Himself as God, many people “were not believing in Him” (12:37), because “they would not see with their eyes” (12:39). As a result, Jesus “hid Himself from them” (12:36). Two disciples of John the Baptist sought to know where Jesus was staying (1:37-38). Jesus’ response was “Come and you will see”, and they “came and saw” (1:39). When Philip told Nathanael that he had found the Messiah, “Jesus of Nazareth” (1:45), Nathanael was sceptical: “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (1:46a). Philip’s response was, “Come and see” (1:46b). Nathanael came and saw “the Son of God...the King of Israel” (1:49). Let your daily devotions be “come and see” Jesus, so that you may know Jesus and God – for “this is eternal life” (17:3).

■ Application

How can I make seeing Jesus and knowing Him the focus of my daily devotions?

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■ Prayer

Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits Thou hast won for me, for all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me. O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may I know Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly, day by day.⁷⁰



⁷⁰ St Richard of Chichester (1197-1253)

March 31
Tuesday
2015

Seeing Jesus: Nazareth

■ Scripture

John 1:43-49

■ Observation

Why does God reveal Himself in His Son as “Jesus of Nazareth” (vv. 45-46)?

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Deeper Reflection

Nathanael’s response to “Jesus of Nazareth” as “the Messiah” was “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (vv. 45-46). “Nazareth” has great theological significance in John’s Gospel with God revealing Himself in Jesus as its theological centre (Jn 1:18). It begins with “Jesus of Nazareth” who is “the King of Israel” (vv. 46, 49), and ends with this inscription on the cross, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews” (Jn 19:19). Why is God’s most definitive revelation of Himself in “Jesus of Nazareth”? What lies behind Nathanael’s scepticism is “not that the town had a bad reputation but that it was considered totally insignificant”⁷¹. Nazareth was “a town mentioned nowhere in the Old Testament or in literature of Nathanael’s time”⁷². “As Galileans were frequently despised by people from Judea, so it appears that even fellow Galileans despised Nazareth.”⁷³ “Jesus of Nazareth” “reflected the self-abasement of the man from heaven.”⁷⁴ Come and see Jesus of Nazareth, and be compelled to put on the “mind” of Christ – a “humility of mind” (Php 2:3, 5).

■ Application

How does knowing and following “Jesus of Nazareth” shape the way I live?

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■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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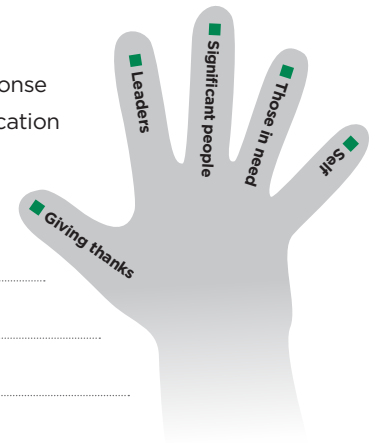
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⁷¹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1997), 88
⁷² Herman Ridderbos, 88
⁷³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), 160
⁷⁴ D. A. Carson, 160

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