UPC Family Devotional

Aug – Week 2

Memory Verse of the Week:

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

-Genesis 3: 21

Aug 8 Monday Genesis 4: 1-15

The Lord gives Cain a stern warning: if he does not promptly deal with his anger, he will go down a regretful path. While we do not know the specifics of why God accepted Abel’s offering over Cain's, Hebrews 11: 4 tells us that Abel presented his sacrifice “by faith”. But in Cane, we see only unbridled emotion that festers as he refuses to heed God's words. His harbored bitterness brings him to the verge of committing a great sin. Danger awaits when we face temptation and ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit that come from His word. Cane’s heinous act of murder serves as a reminder of the evil of which we are all capable when we ignore the Lord’s council.

Do you currently hold a grudge against someone? What warnings of Scripture should you heed regarding this issue?

Cain's downward spiral continues unabated, and it shows in the half-hearted reply he gives to God's question. The more we continue in sin, the more callous we become, not only toward God but also toward others. Sin causes us to become antisocial as we abdicate responsibility for those who suffer as a result of our rebellion. We pile up excuses that diminish people's worth in our eyes, or we downplay the severity of our actions. And even though God displays remarkable mercy by sparing and protecting Cain’s life from further acts of violence, Cain’s lack of empathy causes him to display nothing more than self-pity at the consequences of his own sin and rather than engaging in true, heartfelt repentance before the Lord.

How has sin caused you to be less loving and generous toward others? How do you express genuine repentance before God?

Aug 9 Tuesday Genesis 4: 16:26

Despite God's mercies toward Cain, sin always comes with consequences. Cain becomes a wandering fugitive, forever consigned to toilsome labor. While God is merciful and eager to forgive, we may have to suffer sin’s devastating effects, whether physically, emotionally, or relationally. And yet once again, we see sin does not destroy God's plans for humanity. Cain's descendants continue to develop culture in remarkable ways, such as music and metallurgy. Although we are all sinful by nature, human beings continue to reflect God's image in our intellect, ingenuity and spiritual awareness. In whatever situation or vocation we find ourselves, we have the opportunity to bring God maximum glory when we align our lives to His will.

When have you suffered consequences as a result of your sin? What gifts has God given you, and how can you use them to serve your community?

Lamech exhibits a sinful pattern that is all too familiar in Cane’s family line: an unjustified act of murder. But Lamech’s attitude toward his sin and his quest for self-preservation is intensified far beyond that of his recent ancestor. When we see wickedness as such a rate, it is easy for us to throw our hands up in despair and wonder if is any hope left for the world. And yet, in this same passage, the birth of Seth hints at a new thing that God is doing as people begin to call upon the Lord. Let us remain faithful and not lose heart, believing that God's plan to establish His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven cannot be stopped.

What recent events caused you to despair and lose heart? How does God's plans for His Kingdom inspire you to take action?

Aug 10 Wednesday Genesis 5:1-32

After the death of Abel, we now turn to Seth’s descendants, among whom is a figure named Enoch, a man who walked faithfully with God. What an honor to be remembered in this way! And while we may not be whisked away to heaven like Enoch was, we know that our final destination is the same. His close relationship with God captures the fullness of what it means to bear God’s image on this earth. While the world around him sinks deeper into godlessness and moves closer toward judgment, Enoch continues with God for the remaining 300 years of his life. May his example encourage us to dwell in the presence of our Lord day by day, moment by moment until He returns.

What does walking with God look like in your life? What makes it difficult for you to walk steadfastly with Him?

And the end of the genealogy, we see that a man named Lamech becomes the father of Noah, who is born into a world that is increasingly dark and chaotic. Lamech’s name means poor or lowly, and Noah's name means rest or comfort. Even in the worst, sin-soaked times, God's eyes are on His lowly ones. And although we may feel that we are few in number and weak as we face constant threats from this rebellious world, we are God's precious remnant. He remembers us, knows our names, and the promises to comfort us in His presence. May we respond to His promises by entering into His rest and providing comfort to others with the blessings that we have received.

In what ways do you feel vulnerable in today's world? How can you be a comfort to God's people as they face trials?

Aug 11 Thursday Genesis 6:1-10

Although humans are multiplying, they are not living in the way that God had intended. The sanctity of marriage has been lost through the sinful practices of those who should have been examples of godliness. Ultimately and more grievously, the human heart is continually bent on evil and violence. There are moments when hearing about wars, crimes, and injustice leads us to think our society has hit rock bottom, becoming more and more like the world of Genesis 6. But just as God was still active in restraining the evil of that world, He is still at work today through His children living as salt and light in a world that would otherwise be hopeless.

What sinful thoughts or practices do you need the Holy Spirit to correct in your life? Into what areas of darkness can you bring the light and hope of Christ?

Sometimes the Bible describes God's response using human emotions. Here, God is grieved to the point of regretting having made humankind. These descriptions are meant to illustrate the gravity of the situation and cast no shadow on God's omniscient character. He sees all possible outcomes but still grieves over the fallen and broken condition of His creation. The good news is He has a plan for salvation. We are introduced to Noah, whom God has set apart for a time such as this. Likewise, the grace of God is fully revealed through the sacrifice of His son, who shows us the love of the Father not only by expressing human emotions, but by becoming human Himself.

When have you been comforted by the knowledge that God knows every emotion you are going through? What about God's character gives you hope when everything around you seems bleak?

Aug 12 Friday Genesis 6:11-22

The violent inclinations of humankind yield a world full of wickedness. Humankind’s sinful desires and ways have brought life on earth to a point where God determines to put an end to the corruption that is destroying his creation. But unexpectedly, God's first step in judging the world is to secure a way out for those who are His. He discloses his plans to Noah and commands him to build an ark that will preserve his family from the flood. As our world increases in godlessness, we are not unaware of God's coming judgment. But as Christians, we can take heart, knowing that God has provided another ark for us: Christ's body which bore God's judgment on our behalf.

Where do you see God's grace at work in the midst of increasing evil in the world? How does your security in Christ inform how you live in this world?

Who is Noah that the God of the universe would make covenant with him? Readers of Genesis will later find out that Noah was a sinner just like everyone else, yet to God, in His grace and mercy, sets him apart for salvation. His obedience will result in not only the salvation of his family, but also the preservation of creation. In His Amazing Grace and wisdom, God takes the initiative in making a covenant with Noah, and Noah's obedience overflows into a blessing for the whole world - a clear foreshadowing of the gospel. The multiplication of sin only results in misery and destruction, but God can use one person’s faithful obedience to bless many.

How can your salvation be a blessing to others? What does God’s action of setting Noah apart say about His concern for creation?

Aug 13 Saturday Genesis 7:1-12

What is noteworthy in these verses is how detailed God is instructing Noah about building and loading the ark- even letting him know the timeframe of events to come. God does not leave Noah to figure things out after giving him this daunting assignment. Rather, He walks with Noah and teaches him what to do. This is true of our discipleship as well. When we receive Jesus, God does not just leave us to navigate through life on our own but gives us His Holy Spirit to be with us and to lead us step by step. His words revealed to us in Scripture are precise and clear, and he has appointed shepherds, teachers, and fellow disciples to guide and walk alongside us.

How is God discipling you step by step? When have God's instructions in Scripture helped you navigate a challenging situation?

God fulfills His words exactly as He told Noah: after seven days, the flood waters come upon the earth and the ark preserves Noah, his family, and the animals that are inside. Noah is 600 years old when the flood begins, and seeing that he was 500 years old when his sons were born, there is a long period of time before God’s plans for him come to fulfillment. We can only imagine the ridicule Noah must have endured as he built the ark and called his wicked generation to repentance. Similarly, Christians may suffer scoring from the unbelieving world. However, God is true in all that He says. His plans for us and for this world will come to pass.

What are some promises of God that you are waiting for Him to fulfill? How do you keep courage as you wait?