UPC Family Devotional

Aug – Week 3

Memory Verse of the Week:

“Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you- the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground, so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.”

-Genesis 8:17

Aug 15 Monday Genesis 8:1-12

God remembers Noah and all the animals that are with him in the ark, and He makes a wind blow over the earth so that the waters begin to recede. When the Bible speaks of God “remembering,” it is often a saving action that fulfills a divine promise. We see this in Exodus 2: 24, when God hears the Israelites groaning and remembers His covenant with Abraham to deliver His descendants and lead them into the promised land. Throughout the Old Testament, we see God remembering His promises, which all find their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ. Our God is a covenant- keeping God, who brings redemption by remembering and fulfilling His promises. We can rely on His faithfulness in all circumstances.

What promises of God do you often call to mind when you go through a difficult situation? How has God fulfilled His promises in your life?

Thus far, no actions have been guided solely by God’s direct commands: building the ark according to precise measurements, gathering the animals, and entering the ark. Here, we see that God does not give a direct word to Noah regarding what to do while the waters are receding. So, Noah conducts his own experiments, sending a Raven and then a dove to see if the waters have abated. Rather than unbelief, this suggests Noah's expectation that dry land will soon appear, which is confirmed by the olive leaf in the dove’s beak. In the same way, let us also wait for God with a patient and active anticipation that He will fulfill His promises as we exercise wisdom to discern His timing.

What is your attitude during seasons of waiting? What are some things that you can do to remind yourself of God's promises as you wait for Him?

Aug 16 Tuesday Genesis 8:13-22

After many months on the ark, Noah looks out and sees that the ground is dry. At God's command, he steps out of the ark together with his family and all the living creatures to fulfill God's purposes for them. The season of judgment and confinement is over. It is a fresh start. Our God is a God of second chances. Sometimes we can go through devastating times that leave us battered and fearful, but God opens new doors for healing and renewal. When this happens we need to step out in faith and embrace the abundant life that He calls us to, firmly believing that He who has begun a good work in us will surely bring it to completion.

In what ways has the Lord sheltered you through life storms? What new doors do you sense the Lord opening for you?

The first thing Noah does after leaving the ark is to build an altar and offer a burnt offering to the Lord. This act of worship pleases the Lord, who promises to never again destroy the earth with floodwaters. God is aware that humankind is inherently sinful and rebellious, yet He still promises not to curse the ground on account of our waywardness. God is merciful and does not treat us as we deserve. He is always patient with us, waiting for us to turn to Him. Our appropriate response to His mercies should be to love Him above everything else and obey Him with hearts of gratitude. He has given us life, so let us live for Him.

How has the Lord show mercy to you lately? How will you express your love for God and your gratitude toward Him?

Aug 17 Wednesday Genesis 9:1-17

God renews the original creation blessing to Noah and his descendants: they are to multiply and subdue the earth. God also ensures that the sanctity of human life is reinforced because humankind has been created in the image of God. Consequently, any human who takes the life of another shall be judged severely. In one sense, we are like the rest of creation because we all drive our existence from God and share similar characteristics with other creatures. However, God's image in human beings makes us unique. We have a special status in this world and a divine calling to steward all of creation. We are also to treat one another with dignity regardless of our external differences.

In what ways can you exercise stewardship over God's creation in your context? What does the fact that we are made in God's image mean for how we ought to treat one another?

God makes a covenant with Noah, his descendants, and all creation. He vows to never again destroy the entire world with a flood, and the sign of the rainbow serves as a reminder to us of this promise. This does not mean that God resigns as judge of the world, but it assures us that God will restrain His wrath upon the earth until the final judgment comes. This covenant is God's own initiative and is unconditional. It is an act of mercy as God works out his plans to save us through the gospel. We are sinful and undeserving of grace but God has not given up on us. When we feel lost or discouraged, let us always remember the mercy and faithfulness of our Lord.

What are some things that regularly remind you of God's promises? How does God's restraint inform the way you live your life?

Aug 18 Thursday Genesis 9:18-29

After the catastrophic flood, Noah and his children go on with life and resume their day-to-day activities. Noah goes on to plant a vineyard and harvests the grapes to make wine. For the first time in a long time he gets to enjoy the fruit of his labor. When we go through traumatizing situations, we sometimes tend to freeze emotionally and stop living freely and abundantly. But our God of second chances wants us to live life to the fullest. Sometimes it may require us to take baby steps before we can do the things we fear. But we can rely on God's grace to carry us through those moments when we cannot move forward on our own.

What life-altering situations have you been through which almost crushed you? How do you guard your heart against giving up after traumatic experiences?

Ham sees his father drunk and naked in the tent, and he goes out to tell his brothers. In this ancient culture, Ham’s act displays considerable disrespect toward Noah, a man of God. The two other brothers find a way to cover their fathers nakedness instead of carrying on about this shameful incident as Ham has done. Noah responds by cursing Ham’s son Canaan and speaking of blessing upon Shem and Japheth. God had only recently affirmed the dignity of human life and commanded humankind to show decency toward one another, in contract with the violence that enveloped the antediluvian world. Rather than taking pleasure in another’s shame and publicizing it, we ought to grieve for them and find ways to protect their God-given dignity.

When are you tempted to gossip or feel superior about someone else’s humiliating mistakes? How can you guard your heart against the sin?

Aug 19 Friday Genesis 10:1-32

Year after the flood, Noah's sons and their descendants multiply, and what we began as a small nuclear family grows into nations. Nimrod, the son of Cush, becomes a prominent descendant of Ham-an exceptional warrior, hunter, and city-builder. As with Cain’s lineage, God’s image is discernible in people despite their sinful ancestry. When we see the success and brilliance of infamous or even scandalous individuals, we may be tempted to dismiss their accomplishments as inherently sinful and to be avoided. Rather than evaluating cultural achievements with automatic suspicion and fear, however, Scripture challenges us to see development and progress as evidence of God's common grace. We can and the should celebrate the worthy contributions we see in others, for they reflect the excellence that resides in God.

What skills or abilities of others impress you the most? How does Scripture teach you to see all things in light of God’s goodness?

The sons of Shem and Japheth also become nations in fulfillment of God's blessing on Noah to multiply and to fill the earth. We, too, have an obligation to multiply and fill the earth, not necessarily with biological children but, more importantly, with spiritual descendants and godly influencers that impact society. We accomplish this by preaching the gospel of God’s saving grace to all people groups on earth. We live at a time when there is a great need to complete the task of reaching the world and partnering with God in His reconciling work. Every context presents unique challenges and opportunities to preach the gospel, but we must all be committed to filling the earth with children of God.

What opportunities are available to you to share the gospel? In what ways are you committed to nurturing and edifying fellow believers?

Aug 20 Saturday Genesis 11:1-9

There is such a thing as an unhealthy unity, a single-minded quest that can undermine God's purposes. We see it in this passage, where, in disobedience to God's command to fill the earth, humanity decides to settle in one place and make a name for themselves. Their project of building a city and a tower reaching to the heavens is self-serving. The unity they seek is based on a godless and worldly ambition that defied God’s revealed will. Going along with the crowd to follow the fallen inclinations of the human heart is a tragic tendency that is perhaps even more prevalent in our day. As God’s people, may we hold fast to His commands even if the world goes in the opposite direction.

What are some cases in which unity can be destructive? When are you most tempted to follow the crowd against God's will?

There is power in unity, even when it is misdirected. God plainly says that because of their unity, there is nothing that people cannot do. However, since their plans are opposed to His commands, God determines to disrupt their quest by confusing their language, thereby forcing them to abandon their project and to fill the earth as He commanded. Although language barriers remain to this day, God has brought his people together in a unity that transcends mere verbal communication. It is a unity grounded in our common faith in Jesus and the power of His Spirit, who enables the church to bring the gospel to all nations and languages. May we unite our hearts around God's plan and purpose!

When have you experienced Christian unity across different languages and cultures? What can you do to help cultivate unity in your local church?