UPC Family Devotional

Aug – Week 4

Memory Verse of the Week:

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” - Genesis 15:1

Aug 22 Monday Genesis 12:1-9

Abram's journey with God begins when things seem to have come to a lull. He has relocated to Harran with his family and there's nothing much to look forward to. It is then that God gives him the command to leave and promises to make him into a great nation. It is a command to leave his dead-end, human pursuits and go where God leads so that he might enter into a far- reaching, eternal blessing. Abram responds in faith, gathers his family and sets out for Canaan. God calls us to the same kind of faith, where we may not see the accomplishment of His promise yet but choose to listen, obey, and follow Him.

In what areas of your life is God calling you to obey Him in faith despite uncertainties? How can you overcome your fears and doubts as you seek to follow Him?

Upon arriving in Canaan, God appears to Abram and promises to bless him and give the land to his offspring. In response, Abram builds an altar to the Lord. Traveling further into Canaan, Abram settles near Bethel and once again builds an altar. This time, he calls on the name of the Lord, pledging his loyalty to God. In our walk with God, we need to regularly pause and recognize His presence, guidance, and provision in our lives. We may not build literal altars today but we can consecrate ourselves for God and worship Him for every milestone and chapter of our life journey as we demonstrate the faith that we have in His promises.

How do you regularly recall and respond to God's guidance and provision over your life? How can you dedicate every new chapter of your life to Him?

Aug 23 Tuesday Genesis 12: 10-20

On the journey to which God has called us, we can be certain that unforeseen circumstances will get in the way and our weaknesses will be exposed. When famine strikes the land, Abram leaves Canaan and heads to Egypt in search of more favorable conditions. There, his priority of self-preservation leads him to lie to Pharaoh to acquire his favori, but this comes at the expense of being separated from his wife and relinquishing his personal integrity. When we rely on ourselves instead of trusting God, we make ourselves more vulnerable to temptation, which can lead us down a dark path. Let us keep our eyes fixed on God's promises and not let fear replace faith in our lives.

When has fear caused you to act in ways that compromised your integrity? What attitudes do you need to develop that will help you withstand difficult circumstances?

While this passage says nothing about Abram’s state of mind when Sarai is taken to Pharaoh’s palace, he must deal with the consequences of his actions. After discovering the truth about Sarai, Pharaoh rebukes Abram and expels him from Egypt. It is a humiliating lesson and one of many Abram will learn on his journey of faith. God will sometimes allow us to bear the consequences of our failures, even if, in His grace, He causes some blessing to result from it. When we face our weaknesses, let us not be discouraged but run back to Him and learn the lessons He has for us so that we can mature to be the people He has called us to be.

What are some lessons that you have learned when your faith has faltered? How did God use those times to strengthen and purify your faith?

Aug 24 Wednesday Genesis 13: 1-18

Since his first encounter with God, Abram's faith has been sure ups and downs. While he did leave the safety of his family’s home in response to God's call and promise, he also buckled under fear in Egypt, misleading Pharaoh to think that Sarai was his sister. As God continues to bless him, however, Abram’s faith strengthens, as seen in him allowing his nephew, Lot, to take the first pick of lands in which to settle. Abram is confident that God will continue to prosper him even in a land that is not as fertile. In contrast, Lot chooses to settle near wicked cities and will later reap the consequences. Let our trust in God supersede our ambition and quest for material gain.

What are some decisions you have made that required great faith? What are you willing to lose for the sake of God’s higher purposes for your life?

In a way, the departure of Lot represents Abram’s final separation from his past life. He has left his father's household but still ventured out with his nephew at his side. With Lot now gone, Abram has severed all ties to his homeland. It is in this setting that God reappears to Abram and expands upon the promise He made in Genesis 12, challenging Abram to envision his descendants as an uncountable multitude living in a vast territory. As Abram settles into this foreign land, he builds an altar to the Lord as an act of faith and devotion. Let us not cling to our past but trust in God's promises, knowing that what He has for us is far better than whatever we have left behind.

What things from your past is God challenging you to relinquish? What promises of God can you give the strength and the courage to let go?

Aug 25 Thursday Genesis 14: 1-16

When Lot chooses what appears to be prized land, he could not have predicted that he would one day get caught up in a battle involving several kingdoms! Yet, the biblical author suggests that Lot’s willingness to move into a notoriously wicked city was an unwise decision from the start. All the treasures of the world are not worth the potential devastation that comes with spiritual compromise. Lot’s poor judgment is a sobering reminder to us of the need to seek the Lord when making major decisions that impact us and others. Simply seeking wisdom from Scripture and godly counsel can spare us considerable pain and lead us into an abundance of blessings.

Which of your recent decisions could have benefited from more prayer and godly counsel? How are you learning to trust God with major decisions?

By God's Providence, Abram has developed great relationships with his neighbors. Although they are small in number, they become powerful allies when Abram initiates and leads a strategic attack on Lot’s captors. When we are partnered with God in His purposes we are able to overcome what would otherwise be in surmountable odds. This does not mean that we should demand the success and prosperity as our right in all our endeavors, for Christians are also called to suffer for the sake of Christ, and our own spiritual growth often happens through trials. But as we walk in God's will and join Him in His mission, we should expect God to provide for us and give us favor in the sight of those around us, as His plan requires.

How have you seen God empower you to accomplish things you thought were impossible? How can you use your testimony to bless and encourage others?

Aug 26 Friday Genesis 14:17-24

Not long after Abram’s victory, he is met by Melchizedek, who is both the king and priest of Salem- from which is derived the name of Jerusalem. Melchizedek rightly understands that Abram’s victory is the result of God's blessing upon his life. While he appears only in this brief exchange with Abram, Melchizedek is mentioned in Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7 as a type of Christ. Like Melchizedek, Jesus is both king and Priest, and His priesthood is superior to that of the Levite's. When we walk in the call of the Lord, God will continue to reassure us with his presence and promises. Let us be expectant that God can turn even the most fleeting, barely noticeable occurrences into a great blessing.

How has God revealed Himself to you through seemingly small and insignificant events? What practical things can you do to keep track of God's promises and affirmations over your life?

In contrast to the joyful celebration and divine blessing that Abram enjoys with Melchizedek, the king of Sodom comes to engage in worldly business. Again we see Abram rise to the occasion and remain steadfast in his belief that God alone is the source of true blessing. Abram’s refusal of the king of Sodom's wealth serves to reinforce his deep and unyielding dependence upon God. Wisely, Abraham also make sure that the men who fought alongside him received their due reward. Sometimes God calls us to forego what may be immediately profitable to us so that he can bless us with something greater later. Let us trust that He will complete His good work in us!

How do you prioritize your spiritual and secular commitments? What are some profitable ventures that God may be calling you to surrender so that you can receive a greater blessing?

Aug 27 Saturday Genesis 15: 1-11

Abram risked everything to rescue Lot, which may have reminded him that he has no son of his own to inherit his estate. It is in this moment of fear and concern about his legacy that God appears to him and establishes one of the most important covenants in history. To rekindle Abram’s faith, God instruct him to look at the stars in the sky as another reminder of the multitude of descendants he will one day have. Abram takes God at his word: he can and will do the impossible. Surely, this step of faith can only come from God Himself. His step of faith becomes the model for all who would be saved through the gospel.

What are some major ways you have trusted God this year? How has God proven Himself to be faithful?

Faith always procedes and undergirds ceremonial rituals. When Abram is instructed to kill the animals, he knows that God is establishing a covenant with him. Covenants were solemn bonds upheld by two parties. They include blessings and curses, which correspond to the promises and penalties that are stipulated in their agreement. The severed carcasses are a visual reminder of what will happen should one party violate the terms of the covenant, so Abram fully understands how serious that is. At the same time, however, it is astonishing that the Creator of the universe would even bother to lower Himself and enter into such a bond with sinful creatures. This alone should give us confidence that God will be faithful to His promises.

How do you respond to God when you experience His loving commitment towards you? How do you express the seriousness of entering into a covenant with God?