UPC Family Devotional

August – Week 5

Memory Verse of the Week:

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “you are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the one who sees me.” - Genesis 16: 13

Aug. 29 Monday Genesis 16: 1-16

Often, when the Bible recounts someone’s sin, it plainly shows that as a person’s faith in God wavers, their trust in something else takes over. This is what happened in the garden when Eve believed the serpent's words and ate the forbidden fruit. It happens here again when Sarai trusts in the lie that she cannot bear children and must take matters into her own hands. Abram goes along with the plan, trusting in human ability rather than God's promise. We must be careful not to let the lies of the world lure us away from God’s trustworthy word. God will fulfill all His promises to us, no matter what the world or our circumstances seem to say.

What lies are you often tempted to believe over God's word? What promises from Scripture can you cling to when doubt arises?

 Abram and Sarai’s sin effects Hagar and her unborn son. We often forget that sin has a tendency to spread and cause collateral damage. We sin against God first and the foremost, but other people are also affected by our sins. In Hagar’s distress, however, God graciously reveals Himself to her in the wilderness. In the same way, God sees our affliction, whether caused by others’ sin or by our own foolishness. In this passage, we see a glimpse of Jesus’ heart of compassion when he sees us suffer on account of sin. We have a God who is attentive to us, not only when we are doing well, but also in those moments when we are grappling with the painful consequences of sin.

When have you experienced God's presence in the midst of affliction? How do you relate to God when you struggle with the consequences of sin?

Aug. 30 Tuesday Genesis 17: 1-14

Abram falls on his face when the Lord appears to him. We see many people get into this posture throughout the Bible. It expresses humility before the almighty. When we come before God in worship, we must do it with a humble attitude, recognizing His supreme Lordship over all. Abram rightly understands this when God exercises His authority by changing his name to Abraham and speaking His covenantal promises over him. Our relationship with God is one of intimacy as well as deep reverence when we become fully aware of our position before Him. The next time you go before God and worship, remember the privilege that He has given you and approach Him in total humility.

Why does God resist pride? How can you develop a greater sense of reverence for God and His word?

God's covenant with Abraham is not limited to him or even his promised son that will be born through Sarah. The covenant includes all of Abraham’s descendants, both his physical and spiritual children. According to Galatians 3:7, we are spiritual descendants of Abraham, of the same household of faith. God had us in mind when He made this covenant with Abraham, even though we possess no direct link to Abraham’s race or bloodline! It is certainly amazing to think that God was thinking of each one of us when He made this promise long ago. May this truth empower us to go into all the world to bring God’s sons and daughters into His family through the gospel.

How does your connection to Abraham influence the way you read the Old Testament? How do God's promises motivate you to share the gospel?

Aug. 31 Wednesday Genesis 17:15 - 27

When God tells Abraham that he will have a son, Abraham laughs at the highly improbable thought that he would father a child at such an old age. Interestingly, God uses this moment to choose a name for Abraham’s son: Isaac, meaning “laughter”. What begins as an expression of awkward embarrassment will turn into joy when we see God's promise fulfilled. Right now, we may experience tension and uncertainty about how things will turn out in our lives, and we may not always know the right response to the situations we face. But we should be confident that all will be well. When God is finished with his work, we will look back and laugh with uncontainable joy.

How have God's plans for your life differed from your own plans? How should your future hope affect your present concerns?

God tells Abraham that He will establish His covenant with Isaac instead of Ishmael. Ishmael is Abraham’s first born son, but he is the result of Abraham’s efforts. Isaac, on the other hand, will be born out of God's grace. God does not save us because we worked hard and did things according to our own capacities. Rather, He saves us precisely because there's nothing we can do to save ourselves. If we try to accomplish God's plans outside of God's ways, we will fail. But if we walk in faithful obedience to His will, walking with Him step by step and waiting for His timing, then He will demonstrate His power through us so that He can receive all the glory.

When are you tempted to accomplish God's plans through your own efforts? Why is it so important to let God take control of all outcomes?