UPC Family Devotional

September – Week 2

Memory Verse of the Week:

“Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.”

-Genesis 22:13

Sep. 12 Monday Genesis 22:15-24

Abraham’s faithful response to God's command results in yet another confirmation of God's great plan for the world: all nations will be blessed. At first glance, it may sound as if the promise is conditional on Abraham’s obedience. But we know this is not the case, for God’s planning and providence stand behind all of Abraham’s actions. This test gives Abraham a glimpse of God's overarching plan of redemption - a promise that would ultimately be fulfilled through the offering of His own son, Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, we are invited into the blessing of imitating him in his death and resurrection and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, who produces the fruit of righteousness in us.

How has God invited you to participate in His plans for the world? In what ways have you experienced God fulfilling His promises in your life?

The testing of Abraham abruptly transitions into a seemingly unrelated account of his brother Nahor's children. However, the introduction of Rebekah from Nahor’s family signals that God’s divine plan will continue to unfold through the generations, even after Abraham’s story ends. In the following chapters, we will see how God begins to fulfill His promise to Abraham through his son, Isaac, and Isaac’s wife, Rebekah. We may sometimes feel that God is slow to fulfill His promises, and it can be difficult for us to perceive any changes in our circumstances or in the world around us. But rest assured, His divine work goes on and guarantees our future. Let us remain hopeful, for the day of fulfillment will certainly come.

How has God been faithful to your family through the generations? When have you realized God's work in your life as you reflect on the past?

Sep. 13 Tuesday Genesis 23:1-20

When Sarah dies, Abraham takes time to mourn and weep over devastating loss of his beloved wife. Anyone who has lost a loved one will understand the pain and grief Abraham would have experienced. But feeling the sting of death also presents us with an opportunity to reflect on our life’s purpose and mission here on earth. For Christians, death is not the end but a transition into a new life in eternity; it is our rest from the labors and suffering of this fallen world. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ give us hope and assurance that death will give way to final victory and everlasting life.

How has your faith in Jesus sustained you through the loss of a loved one? How did the experience of loss reorient your perspective on life and death?

Up until Sarah’s death, Abraham was still a foreigner in Canaan and did not have any land in his name. By purchasing a field to bury his wife, he officially lays claim on a piece of land in Canaan, and what seems like a simple legal transaction is actually the hand of God working to fulfill His promises to Abraham. Even in the midst of tragedy, God can bring about unexpected opportunities to fulfill His purposes for us. God is always working in hidden and the powerful ways regardless of our circumstances. Wherever you are in your life's journey, ask God to open the eyes of your heart that you might see what God is doing and be courage.

In what areas do you need God's wisdom and guidance today? When has God worked for you in unexpected ways?

Sep. 14 Wednesday Genesis 24:1-9

Abraham is getting old but has received much favor from God. He now wants to make sure that his son Isaac finds a wife but not among the Canaanites, who worship false gods. He, therefore, tasks his servant with going back to his country and finding a bride for Isaac among Abraham’s relatives. As believers in Christ, every decision we make must be shaped by our commitment to the Lord. God cares deeply about who we marry, where we work, and how we raise our children, but it is easy to be swayed by worldly values when faced with these choices. Let us make God's glory and his Kingdom our highest priority in our decision-making, so that we and our families can experience the blessing of living in His well.

How does your faith in Jesus shape your life choices? What upcoming decisions do you need God's guidance for?

Abraham’s servant is concerned that the woman he finds for Isaac might be unwilling to return with him to Canaan. Abraham reassures his servant that God will work things out in their favor. The servant then puts his hand under Abraham’s thigh as a pledge of his loyalty and commitment to accomplish the task assigned to him. Just like this servant, we might have fears and uncertainties about the mission our Lord has given us. But Jesus promised that he will be with us everywhere we go as we work to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Trusting in this promise, let us give Him our loyalty and commitment and look forward to the victory that He has secured for us.

In what role has the Lord called you to serve Him? In what ways can you demonstrate your loyalty to God?

Sep. 15 Thursday Genesis 24:10-27

Abraham’s servant sets out for the long journey to search for a wife for Isaac. It will be a difficult task to find a woman who will be willing to travel with him to a foreign land to marry an unknown husband, but he trusts God to guide him. His deep faith in the God of Abraham is revealed in his prayer that acknowledges that the Lord has already chosen a wife for Isaac and will reveal her to him in a clear and simple way. There will be times in life when we, too, are faced with tasks that seem impossible. But if we surrender to God in prayer and trust that He will make a way for us, we may be surprised at how easy the solution turns out to be.

How do you tend to respond to situations that are beyond your control? What helps you to trust in God through uncertainty?

When the Rebekah comes to the well, she encounters Abraham’s servant who asks her for a drink of water. She responds with generous kindness, and through their conversation he is able to discern that she is the one God has chosen. How we discern God's will is one of the most frequently asked questions within the church, but often the answer is sitting right in front of us. The will of God is not only revealed in signs and wonders; it is found in simple conversations with His people, the circumstances He orchestrates, and the world He has given us. All we need to do is quiet our hearts and listen to His voice.

When have you discovered God's will in an unexpected way? What spiritual practices have helped you to seek His guidance?

Sep 16 Friday Genesis 24:28-53

After Rebekah's encounter with Abraham’s servant at the well, she reports her experience to her brother, Laban. Laban notices the nose ring and bracelet she has been given and goes up to meet the man, invites him into their home, and calls him blessed. When God assigns us a Kingdom task to accomplish, He not only guides us on the journey, but He also blesses and provides for us. He will give us everything we need, and often He provides us with favor and refreshment that goes beyond the bare necessities. We are God's servants, but we are also His dear children, and He is generous in His loving care for us.

When has God shown His loving care for you through surprising provision? How can you bless others around you through the same generosity?

Abraham’s servant is invited for a meal with the family, but he will not eat until he declares the purpose of his journey. He tells them of the assignment his master Abraham had given him and shares how he prayed for God's guidance before meeting Rebekah at the well. The attitude of the servant is exemplary, remaining focused on his mission and not allowing any distractions to get in the way. Furthermore, he clearly acknowledges how God has led him and revealed His will to him. Let us have the same attitude as we serve the Lord, putting His mission ahead of our own pursuits and giving Him glory for every success.

What mission has the Lord given to you? What helps you to stay focused on your divine calling?

Sep. 17 Saturday Genesis 24: 54-67

Sometimes, the minor characters of a story makes the biggest impact. Most Christians are probably familiar with the names Abraham, Isaac, and Rebekah, but many have forgotten Abraham’s nameless servant who plays a pivotal role in this part of the biblical narrative. He faithfully embarks on his mission and it refuses to be deterred until it is complete! Through his obedience, Abraham’s family will continue to grow and take hold of God's promise. Although we may not receive the recognition we want from the world, God has chosen each one of us to be His servant. Let us therefore embrace whatever part He has called us to play for His glory. May God use us powerfully as we make ourselves available to Him and His Kingdom.

What are some unique ways God has worked through you? Who are some faithful brothers and sisters in Christ that inspire you?

The story of Isaac and Rebekah union seems like a scene straight from a movie but if you think about it, the idea of two complete strangers marrying as soon as they meet each other is hardly romantic. And yet, the Bible specifically notes that Isaac loved his wife. Here, we find an important truth about the reality of marriage: while romance, attraction, and compatibility all have a part to play, ultimately, marriage is a choice to love the person God has chosen for you. No marriage is perfect because no person is perfect. But if we view marriage as a calling to love our spouse despite their flaws and failings, it becomes a beautiful opportunity to experience the grace and glory of God.

How can a loving marriage be a good witness and testimony to unbelievers? What are some signs of a healthy marriage that you have observed among godly couples?