

YOBL

Year of Biblical Literacy

Week 2: God's Promise

Daily Reading for Week

- Genesis 19-21, Psalm 6
- Genesis 22-24, Psalm 7
- Genesis 25-28, Psalm 8
- Genesis 29-31, Psalm 9
- Genesis 32-34, Psalm 10
- Genesis 35-37, Psalm 11
- Genesis 38-40, Psalm 12
- Video: Genesis 12-50
- Minimum Reading: Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-21, 26:1-5, 35:9-12

Focus of time together

To get acquainted with the beginnings of God's restoration plan which starts to unfold through his covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12, following the prologue about tarnished creation in chapters 1-11.

Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Have one person read Psalm 104 as your opening prayer.

Intro to Discussion

Last week's reading took us through Genesis 1-11, what we called the preface to the rest of the story of God. We read about the creation of the world, the first people God created, and their sinful rebellion that led to the spiral of brokenness and corruption which eventually tarnished the entirety of God's once good creation. This opening picture of a good world that is tragically rotted and rotting because of the introduction of sin is what frames the story from here on out. Sin corrupts the world so deeply that God, in order to preserve good, decides to wipe out almost all of humanity. The preserved family of Noah however goes right back to how things were before the flood. The downward spiral continues, leading to the Tower of Babel story illustrating total societal corruption where humanity in their wickedness tries to build a tower to usurp God. All of this forms an incredible dramatic moment. Essentially, the conflict and suspense builds throughout Genesis 1-11, leading the reader to wonder how the conflict will be resolved. The beginning of Genesis forces an attentive reader to ask, "How will the world be made right and good again?" And then all of a sudden chapter 12 presents an

abrupt pivot, a beginning to the resolution narrative. It opens with, “Now the Lord said to Abram...” In other words, the answer to that question is, this is how: God calls Abram and tells him “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those that bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God makes Abram, who will later be called Abraham, the point person of a great promise of restoration that will drive the whole rest of the Bible forward. The promise goes from Abraham to his son Isaac, to his grandson Jacob, and then to his 12 great-grandsons who form the nation of Israel.

So Genesis is a story of beginnings, but not just about all of creation. The creation poems of Genesis 1 & 2 and the illustrations of humanity’s corruption in Genesis 3-11 together serve as a prologue to the beginning of a very specific story: The story of God’s grand effort to restore and renew the world through a specific people who will eventually be called Israel. The rest of Genesis is an origin story about how Israel came into existence, and the very important narrative of the beginning of God’s great redemption plan.

Read (10 minutes)

Let’s trace the dominant storyline of God making a covenant with Abraham and his family through the book of Genesis.

Read Genesis 12:1-9 & 15:1-21

This is God re-entering the story of the fallen world and proposing a resolution. Through his partnership with Abraham and his wife and future family, God makes a promise to restore the world. He establishes this partnership with a covenant.

Read Genesis 26:1-5

This is God carrying his grand plan and promise forward to Abraham’s long-awaited son, Isaac. The promise is repeated and the covenant is renewed with the next generation.

Read Genesis 35:9-12

This is yet another reiteration of the grand plan and promise, now with Abraham’s grandson Jacob. God then changes his name to Israel, meaning “prevails with God”, and gives him the same directions. Israel goes on to have a huge family with 12 sons who later become the “12 tribes of Israel”. This then is the story of how Israel, the Bible’s second leading character, comes into existence. They will be God’s partner from here on out. Genesis 1-11 begs the question, “how will the world ever be set right?” The story that immediately unfolds from chapter 12 on essentially answers with, “Israel will prevail with God”.

Whole Group Discussion (25-30 minutes)

Questions for Basic Understanding

These questions are to help us interpret and understand the text as it was intended to be interpreted and understood.

1. How would you summarise the portions of Genesis we just read in one or two sentences?
2. How would you summarise the entirety of Genesis in one or two sentences?

Questions for Interacting with Scripture

These questions are to help us slow down, to taste and notice Scripture, savour its richness and meditate on its complexity of meaning.

God made it his mission to restore the world back to the early times of the Garden. He chose to do so through Abraham and his offspring. The redemptive plan begins with Abraham, who slept with his wife's servant and pimped his wife away twice to other men to save his own life. It then moves forward through his grandson Jacob, who stole his brother's inheritance by deceiving him and his father, and through Jacob's cruel sons who sold their own little brother into slavery and lied to their father about it. In light of all of this, how is God's redemptive plan going at this point in Genesis?

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Questions for Examining Ourselves

These questions are to help us look at ourselves, be aware and honest about who we are in light of our interaction with Scripture and consider any appropriate action.

1. This is just the 2nd week of the year and we've already plowed through 47 chapters of Genesis, trying to understand the major theme and story arch of the Scriptures. Take a minute to pause and reflect. As you read this week, did you notice any of these themes we've discussed or was it difficult to sift through?
2. How has this whole project been for you thus far? Intriguing and stimulating or disorienting and overwhelming? Be honest with yourself. There's no need to fake it. This year is a marathon, not a sprint, so it's really important to be thoughtful and reflective as we get going.

Closing Time of Prayer (10 minutes)

Finish your time by praying for one another in your small groups.