



Week One Devotions

Provided by the Ministry and Program Staff of
The Presbyterian Church of Stanley

Day 1

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-Genesis 16:16

Genesis 9:15-17 "I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

After the great flood, God made a covenant with Noah and all his descendants that He would never again destroy the earth to wipe out her wickedness. This is very important for the story of the Bible and for you and me. God cannot abide sin. Sin and God cannot co-exist. Faced with a sinful creation, He must make a choice—destroy it or redeem it. In the flood, God destroyed the earth to begin again with Noah's family. After the flood, God covenants with all flesh to never destroy the earth again. This leaves one choice for God: He will redeem the earth. This is His promise for our life. God's end game for us is always redemption, even though that path to redemption runs through ruin. The Bible is the story of God's great love affair with His chosen people in which redeems us from our sin.

In Genesis Chapter 12, we see God execute His plan for the redemption of the earth in Scripture. God calls Abram, a herder from a land called Haran. The Lord says, "Go...to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation...so that you will be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Gen 12:1-3)

And so the story of our redemption begins.

Eric Laverentz, Senior Pastor

Day 2

Scripture: Genesis 17:1-Genesis 28:19

Genesis 17: God establishes a covenant with Abraham and describes through their actions what a covenant with Him looks like. It is a covenant filled with grace, justice, and the demand for obedience. The Grace of God is revealed in his provision of a child for Abraham and Sarah.

We come to understand God's justice when he rains down sulfur from heaven, obliterating Sodom and Gomorrah. And, we are given a unique glimpse into God's demand for obedience when Lot's wife, who was given the command to neither stop, nor turn back (Genesis 19:17), disobeys by turning and is destroyed.

Biblically, 'to turn' is particularly significant in reference to our relationship with God. Turning toward God and away from sin is a sign of repentance. Turning away from God back to our old life, as Lot's wife did, is a sign of disobedience.

God despises disobedience and later tests Abraham to see if he would be obedient to his every command, including the command to sacrifice his own son. Though Isaac was spared, we see in Christ that God would never ask anything of us that He does not demand of Himself. When we covenant with God through Jesus Christ, we know that just as God was willing to give all, He demands all, and has an expectation that we will give it and never turn back.

Reading in Genesis from chapter 12 to 50 can sometimes seem like reading a Soap Opera. It is one account after another about the people that God has chosen as his. So what's the purpose is reading about these people who lived so long ago?

Part of that answer comes when you understand the name of the book itself. "Genesis" is a transliteration of the Greek word *geneseos*, the Greek word that translates the Hebrew *toledot*. This Hebrew word is the key word in identifying the structure of Genesis, and the translators have usually rendered it "account" or "generations." This book is meant to tell the story of God's love for all the generations of his people including us today. In Genesis 28:20-21 we find Jacob reaffirming the commitment that his ancestor's made when he says, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God." Our God is a faithful God who has demonstrated his active presence in the lives of his people through the generations and desires an active relationship with us just as he did with Jacob. So ask yourself today if God is the LORD of your life? Jacob's answer was yes, what's yours?

Bo Burgener, Associate Pastor for Mission & Evangelism

Day 3

Scripture: Genesis 28:20-Genesis 40:11

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Molly Jones, Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Day 4

Scripture: Genesis 40:12-Genesis 50:26

Through the years since Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph changed from the brash favored son and annoying brother into a man who saw God's hand moving in every aspect of life.

After Joseph's father Jacob died, his brothers feared that Joseph would take retribution on them for the wrong they had done to him. In 50: 19-20 Joseph said, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Even when we cannot see why something is happening, we can believe that God is working. The more we try to see God's hand in every day events and in the people God puts in our lives, the more we can be at peace in all circumstances.

Jan Zimmerman, Children's Ministries Director

Day 5

Scripture: Exodus 1:1-Exodus 15:18

The Plagues of our lives

What do the plagues of your life look like? Work challenges, friendship challenges, marriage challenges, church challenges, or maybe even personal inner challenges. Are these challenges plaguing your everyday life? Much like the plagues, these challenges can create havoc in our relationship with God. Do we create our own challenges by our own stubborn or self-serving ways? Maybe our challenges are created by our fear to really follow Jesus. The fear that God could never forgive us for what we have said and done.

The plagues and challenges will always exist in our lives. Jesus tells us there will be trouble in this life. The challenge for us as people of PCOS? Taking the time to listen to the thin silence of God's love, sincerely investing in our faith life, and trusting that God is bigger than any plague or challenge. Perhaps we too can be "filled with awe before Him" and lead a life of faith-courage.

Harlan Harper, Youth Ministries Director

Day 6

Scripture: Exodus 15:19-Exodus 28:43

Exodus 15:19 "When Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground."

God stands between us and our circumstances just as he stood between Pharaoh's horses and the Israelites. Sometimes in our life, God will allow us to be hemmed into situations where it is humanly impossible for us to get ourselves out. In other words, sometimes in life we find ourselves in situations where we cannot go forward and we cannot go backward unless we walk with God.

In Exodus the Israelites course was to take a direction which in a very short time would place them with the Red Sea on one side, on the other side trackless wilderness and in front a barrier of mountains. They were boxed in, there was no escape! The future looks impassible and the present seems impossible.

But you need to understand that they have been led to the place they now stand, not by Moses, not by coincidental wandering, but by God Himself.

What we need to see is that coming to the Red Sea is just as much a part of God's plan as crossing it. A predicament in God's hands is only a highway to the Promised Land. Our act of faith is taking that first step from the shore to the dry bed of the sea and trusting God to hold the waters back as we cross. Because it often takes these tight places to get us to look up to Him for our help and trust that he is present in the moment with us just as he was present with the Israelites as they crossed the Red Sea.

Molly Jones, Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Day 7

Scripture: Exodus 29:1-Exodus 40:38

Moses' prayer of intercession:

"O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes, then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance." Ex. 34: 9

No people in all history had witnessed so many miracles in such a short space of time as had the Israelites. Yet, while Moses was away they turned to the corruption of worshiping idols. Upon his return, he was so overcome with grief and disappointment he threw down the stone tablets of law written by the hand of God. Moses returns to Mt. Sinai the next day interceding on behalf of the people to rescue them from God's wrath and destruction. Moses offered himself for his people to save them, but he could not even save himself, as he too was a sinner. He could not die as payment for their sin but another would die for our sin, "when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the rights of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus was the only adequate substitute for sinners. His future death was the reason God did not destroy the people of Israel at Sinai. Moses interceded for the people of Israel delivering them from destruction. Jesus interceded for us by sacrificing Himself on the cross so that we might be saved from our sins and come to know Him as our personal Savior and the way to eternal life.

If you love people you will intercede for them as Moses interceded for the Israelites. Pray for other people; plead for the lost and hurting souls; intercede for the sinners. God hears them and answers them according to His will. The Bible says that the prayers of righteous persons are "powerful and effective" James 5:16

Robyn Hartfield, Music Director

