



***Becoming Fully Devoted Followers
by Studying the Followers Before Us***

WEEK 1
ADAM'S FAMILY

JANUARY 1-7, 2007



Glenkirk
church

Connecting people to abundant life.

THE READINGS

DAY	DIRECTED READING	DEVOTIONAL READING	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i> READING
Monday	Genesis 1	Psalms 1	Genesis 1 & Job 1-2
Tuesday	Genesis 2	Psalms 2	Genesis 2 & Job 3-5
Wednesday	Genesis 3	Psalms 3	Genesis 3 & Job 6-8
Thursday	Genesis 4	Psalms 4	Genesis 4 & Job 9-11
Friday	Romans 5:9-19	Psalms 5	Genesis 5 & Job 12-14

Directed Reading: Generally these readings will not be more than a chapter in length, focusing on the life of the particular character being studied. These readings are designed for those who for one reason or another do not feel they can read the WHOLE Bible through in a year but want to follow along with others. Obviously we will not cover everything about a character in these readings but we will look at some of the high points.

Devotional Reading: This will be a Psalm or Proverb to be read and meditated on each day.

Through the Bible Reading: This is for those desiring to read through the whole Bible this year. I have designed this section so that we read the Old Testament between now and the end of summer, starting the New Testament as we kick off the year in September. I have also outlined these readings in five day segments, allowing you the weekend to catch up. Some weeks are longer than others in order to keep us moving chronologically as much as possible, not straying too far from the specific character being studied.

READ

Genesis 1

REFLECT

Many argue about whether to take Genesis One literally or not (i.e., did God create the world in seven 24-hour days, or take billions of years). Personally I have been on both sides of the conversation. Most theologians will tell you that Genesis 1-11 was never meant to be a literal history of creation but meant to teach us significant truths about God, Man, Creation, what's wrong with the world, the meaning behind God's actions and the purpose of man. In short, it is more like a poetic narrative that speaks of events that really happened, just not in the way we could write them if we were writing a modern history. My latest take on Genesis One came after spending time in Banff, Canada and Yosemite this last summer. After years of siding with what many call the young earth theory, I was awestruck by the diversity of God's creation and thought to myself "What fun is there in doing all this in 24 hours; like an artist painting a masterpiece, wouldn't it be more fun for God to take billions of years painstakingly creating each unique earth form in all its beauty and diversity?"

What is important is what Genesis One teaches: that God was purposefully behind all of creation. That all that was created is good. That God created out of nothing. And that Man is at the pinnacle (crown) of creation. Furthermore, Man is created in the image and likeness of God in order that we might be in relationship with Him. We are of great value to God.

All too often we don't associate having a good time, feeling good or being of value with being spiritual. Some even feel guilty about having

such thoughts or feelings. God, though, wants us to feel good about ourselves. He wants us to enjoy His creation and His gift of life. When you are not feeling good about yourself or life, where are those feelings coming from? If the source cannot be traced back to God, might it be that those ill feelings are neon signs calling you back to God, helping you see that in some way you have gotten off track?

What does it mean that we are created in the image and likeness of God? What does it mean specifically to you? Yesterday did you reflect God's image and likeness or the image and likeness of the adversary? How might you better reflect His image and likeness today? To be in the image and likeness of God is to have not only soul and spirit, but to be able to reason, create, to have a conscience, to understand beauty and emotion, to love and worship, to display all the fruits of the Spirit, and all without sin.

What jobs did God give us to do? In what ways are you doing what you were created to do? Are there things you should not be doing? What does this passage teach us about caring for the environment?

Thirty two times in this chapter, God is called *Elohim*, emphasizing God's majesty and power. Where do you need to take hold of God's majesty and power in your own life? Remember God created out of nothing, and He can create new things out of the nothing areas of your life. But remember God is God, He is at the center of all that is and will be. He alone is worthy of worship.

Two final notes: One is the fact that the first mention of creating man refers to the creation of man as male and female. What does this teach us about the "battle of the sexes"? Two, God created man only after He created everything that man would need to survive. What does that teach us about God's loving provision? (See Matthew 6:25-34)

- B.S.

READ

Genesis 2

REFLECT

God gave the first man and woman freedom, responsibility, authority and His blessings.

Genesis Two seems to start all over again from a different point of view, this time focusing on the role we are to play in God's creation. We see that man is given life through the breath of God. The word for breath in Greek and Hebrew is the same word we translate as spirit when referring to the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of creation we receive life from the breath of God, and we receive life anew through the Holy Spirit of God breathing new life in us. Without the Spirit we do not have life. What does this say about our need to take time each day to let God breathe new life in us?

In this chapter Adam is given the job of naming the animals. In Hebrew thought, to name something is to have a certain amount of knowledge of and power over the thing named. This chapter reinforces the position man has over the rest of creation. But this chapter also reinforces our need for community. In verse 1:26 we saw the plural God (the "us" of the Trinity) create man in His own image, the image of community creating male and female. Here this is underlined as God seeks to find a helper, a partner for Adam. It is stressed that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. They not only had nothing to hide, they were free to be completely open with each other. This is not only God's goal for marriage, but His goal for His church: that we would be free enough to be open and vulnerable with each other. Strong

marriages are marked by a man and woman taking responsibility for each other's welfare and by the two becoming one flesh in intimacy and commitment.

Have you started to hide in your marriage? Do you have a strong community with whom you can be vulnerable? Our own insecurities and sin cause us to hide; how does Jesus and the cross free us to be vulnerable and open with others? How might you work at giving a higher priority to community than the individualism our society seems to place such a high priority on?

One striking point about the creation stories is that Adam and Eve were given jobs to do. We often think of heaven as being a time of complete leisure. In our society, a high value is placed on leisure. But God actually created us for productive, fulfilling work. How might having this understanding of God's intended purposes change your priorities?

By the way, the Hebrew for man (adam) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for ground (adaman) and the Hebrew for woman sounds like the Hebrew for man. Often when Adam is used in Scripture the word could just as easily be translated man. Eve means living and is the name given to the woman after the fall. In a sense it is a prophecy that points to the goodness of God to provide a future even after the fall.

- B.S.

READ

Genesis 3

REFLECT

Genesis specifically names two trees in the Garden of Eden. One, the Tree of Life, we were allowed to eat of; the other, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we were not. Why do you think this is so? In the New Testament we are told that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. We are also told that He found “food” (subsistence, provision) in doing the “will of the Father.” What might this teach us about why we can eat of one tree and not the other? Why would Satan want us to eat of the Tree of Knowledge? How can many of the battles we face be traced back to our needing to “know” rather than being “trustingly obedient”; needing to be in control and independent, rather than in a loving dependent relationship with Father God? God places a limit on Adam; we rebel against limits, and yet learning to live within the proper limits is a good thing. What limits are you trying to supersede?

Eve was created out of the side of Adam. The word rib is actually misleading because the emphasis of scripture is on the partnership and oneness they had before the fall. It is here in chapter 3, after the fall, that we see Adam as being set up to in a sense “lord” over Eve. How does the forgiveness that Jesus offers and His example of incarnate living (becoming a servant, giving up heaven to come to die for us on earth) change our understanding of sexuality and how we are to relate to others?

Satan tempted through getting Eve to question God’s goodness. He tempted through sensual pleasures, and through getting Eve to desire

that which she didn't have, desiring to be more powerful than she was. He helped her shift her focus from one of praise to one of discontent. He tempted Adam by having him go along with the crowd so to speak. How does Satan still tempt you in these ways? Can you site some specific examples? After the fall neither were willing to take responsibility for their own actions and yet it is only after we take responsibility that God can begin to work to redeem us (here He provides clothing, in the cross He provides forgiveness). Where have you tried to avoid taking responsibility for your actions? How might confession, though painful, actually bring freedom?

The good news in this chapter is that God seeks Adam and Eve out, even as they sought to hide from Him. He punishes them for their own protection (kicking them out of the garden so they would not eat of the Tree of Life and thus live eternally in sin), promises a future redeemer (Jesus) in verse 15, and provides covering for them in the meantime. God continues to seek us out, He continues to seek to protect us and provide for us. Satan, though defeated, is still at work seeking to deter us from the way of God. Satan's ways are subtle, God's require our coming out of hiding and allowing Him to fulfill His purposes in His ways, and in His timing. Are you more susceptible to the ways of Satan, or the ways of God? In what ways or areas of your life are you trying to hide?

- B.S.

READ

Genesis 4

REFLECT

In many ways this passage is hard to understand. This first sibling conflict seems to come out of nowhere. Where does it say that one should even make an offering to God, let alone an offering of meat (or blood) rather than fruit? It almost seems unfair. In some ways we need to read between the lines, realizing that these chapters were actually written during the time of Moses. The reader would naturally fill in the blanks. But in another sense two important truths are presented.

First, God often chooses the second before the first. We will see him choosing Jacob over Esau, David over his older brothers, Solomon over his older brothers, and sinners and foreigners are listed in the genealogy of Jesus. God's ways are not our ways. We must always come to Him in humility and gratitude rather than with any sense of our own accomplishments or worthiness.

Secondly we must also come to Him on His terms. Sin is always seeking to take control of us. It is only by keeping our eyes on God rather than each other that we will ever be able to master it. The NIV Study Bible puts it this way:

Doubt – Makes you question God's Word and His goodness.

Discouragement – Makes you look at your problems rather than at God.

Diversion – Makes the wrong things seem attractive so that you will want them more than the right things.

Defeat – Makes you feel like a failure so that you don't even try.

Delay – Makes you put off doing something so that it never gets done.

Where have you allowed disappointment and anger to get in the way of your walk with God, and your relationship with others?

In this chapter we see the great value that God places on human beings. Abel will not be forgotten. God justifies. Often when others seem to get the best of us, we question God's goodness. But God calls us to let Him be our justifier. He calls us to trust His justice and His timing. Is there something that you are trying to take into your own hands rather than trusting in or waiting on God? Furthermore, in the New Testament Abel is listed in the "Hall of Faith" of Hebrews 11 because he offered God his best out of Faith. Are you offering your best to God, or just trying to get by?

This chapter ends with the birth of Seth and the statement that men began to call on the name of the Lord. Calling on God brings life, hope and a future. Why not take some time now and call on the name of the Lord – recommit yourself to being His, and living dependant on His grace, and following in His ways. By the way, Seth means "substitute." He was the substitute for Abel and it was out of his blood line that the substitute Jesus was born.

- B.S.

READ

Genesis 5

REFLECT

Adam's sin is the sin of all mankind. We all seek to put ourselves on the throne of our lives, seeking to be our own god, believing that we know what is best for ourselves. This large sin leads to other sins that grow and alienate us from ourselves, God, each other and the rest of creation. As sin entered the world and grew through Adam, it does the same through each of us. Jesus brings new life as we seek His Life and let it take hold in our own lives. Seeking to live as Jesus lives, through His Spirit at work in our lives brings life not death. In what ways are you increasingly becoming more alive to Jesus and to a life lived in His steps? Where have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in your life recently? If you haven't, why not ask God to show you?

In Conclusion

Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel are us. Created with unique purpose, value, and relationship, yet given over to the temptation to do what is pleasing to our own eyes. And when things don't go our way, we easily give in to the temptation to force the issue, even to the extent of destroying anything that gets in our way – even the innocent.

To be a Fully Devoted Follower of Jesus is to allow Him to clothe us with His blood covering. This requires coming out of hiding and naming our sin, taking responsibility rather than blaming others or our environment. It requires our trusting in His ways and by faith living obedient to what we know. It requires being in right relationship with

others. And it requires that we take responsibility to use the gifts God has given us to accomplish the work He has put before us.

I began this week stating that I have been on both sides of the fence with regard to how literally to take the first 11 chapters of Genesis. I will close with this thought. Recent genetic research seems to trace all mankind back to the same X and Y chromosome, the same man and the same woman (might we say Adam and Eve). I have now lived long enough to trust God's word even when I don't understand it, even when it doesn't seem to make sense. Where is God calling you to obediently trust Him and take Him at His word right now?

- Betsy Straeter

QUESTIONS

For Small Group discussion

Use one or more of these questions to guide your discussion. Try to be as specific as possible. Be sure to close with the final question.

1. What part of God's creation do you enjoy the most?
2. What have you learned this week about being a Fully Devoted Follower of Jesus?
3. What does it mean that you are created "good" in the "image and likeness" of God? What does this say about how we should view ourselves and others?
4. Where are you tempted to follow the temptations of the adversary or to let your disappointments and emotions take hold in your life?
5. How have you let God provide for you?
6. How do these chapters help you evaluate the beliefs and ways of our culture?
7. If paradise/heaven is a return to the Garden, what will it be like?
8. If Jesus is calling us to join Him in restoring that which was lost in the fall, what might this specifically mean for us?
9. This week how might your small group pray for you?