

WEEK

1

Sept. 14-20,
2026

Daily Bible readings

Genesis 1:1 - 13:18

In the beginning Monday, Sept. 14 Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

There's no better place to start than the beginning, and Genesis starts with the beginning on a grand scale.

One of the first things we notice about Genesis is that the creation story is told twice, in two different ways. This first account is big, with a cosmic sweep, while the one we'll read tomorrow feels more personal and intimate. Today's verses recount the six-day creation followed by the first Sabbath day; tomorrow's recount the story of Adam and Eve.

A lot of effort can be spent trying to blend the two accounts, but it's significant that the Bible doesn't do that. It just tells the stories and leaves each to carry its own message.

For today, that message is God's greatness and power; his omnipotence and glory. God can create something where before there was nothing. God can, by his will, bring order into chaos.

Sometimes these are the things we need most to remember about God. God is infinitely greater, wiser and more powerful than we are.

But as we go through scripture, it's good to remember that the Bible doesn't shy away

from our complex understanding of how we relate to God. Sometimes God feels nearby, like a parent or a friend; other times God feels distant and unapproachable.

Both of those perceptions are true to our own experience.

Another key takeaway from today's reading is that even from the beginning, community is central to God's design.

It will be much later in the Bible that we see the idea of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - develop, but already in 1:26-27 we read "Let us make mankind in our image," indicating that God is in community within himself.

We then read, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Humans were also, from the very first, meant to live in community, needing each other to be truly whole.

As we continue reading through the weeks and months to come, reflect on how your perception of God changes depending on your circumstances, and how the Biblical picture of God also changes depending on the circumstances of each writer, and remember that only as we take these many different perceptions into account can we begin to see the real, living God who is behind them all.

Daily reflections by Rev. Mark Fleming

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Monday meditation

Proverbs 1:1-7

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prayer focus

Grant us wisdom, that through reading and thinking upon the words of scripture, you may shape your mind and soul, O Lord.

Evil enters the story

Tuesday, Sept. 15

Genesis 2:4 – 3:24

This account of creation is more personal and intimate than the one we read yesterday. It is also more tragic in the full literary sense of the word – the same intelligence and curiosity that allow the man and woman to be companions for one another and for God also lead them to want to know more, and to suffer for that desire.

The reading begins in paradise. There is a lush garden, watered by a river provided from God himself. Among all of the plants and trees in the garden, two stand out: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We'll meet the tree of life again in scripture; it is the very gift of life God has given Adam and Eve.

It's the other tree, though, that is at the center of today's story and sets the stage for the rest of the Bible; really, for all of the human story.

As adults we sometimes look enviously at the innocence of children. Children – at least those with the good fortune to be born

into a good environment – trust that they will have food, shelter and love. They don't really understand how good that is, though, since they know nothing else. They haven't yet learned about evil and all it brings.

But they are born with the curiosity to want to know more, and with the desire to shape their world, not just live in it. They can't stay children, at least not if they are going to experience all that life has to offer.

Whether Adam and Eve could have resisted the temptation to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and what would have happened as a result, are questions we can only speculate on. But they did eat of the tree. Ever since, we have been learning what good and evil are all about; sometimes joyfully, often painfully.

We often skip over one of the significant aspects of today's reading with slight amusement or even embarrassment. Verse 2:25 reads, "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

It was only after they begin to gain knowledge of evil that they began to perceive threats and feel the need to hide, from one another and from God. We still use clothing to hide who we are and build a picture of who we want to be seen as, out of fear of what would happen if people or God saw us as we really are. (This goes far beyond clothing; we put a lot of effort into building an image to hide behind.)

God didn't create us to be ruled by shame and fear. As we continue reading the Bible story, watch for the ways that God seeks to free us from shame and fear.

Tuesday meditation

Proverbs 1:8-9

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.

Prayer focus

In this world we are surrounded by good and evil. God, give us the discernment to know one from the other, and to always choose good over evil.

Brother vs. brother

Wednesday, Sept. 16

Genesis 4:1 – 5:28

With Chapter 4 of Genesis, life starts to look kind of familiar. People marry, have children, and work.

We also see the first example here of people's understanding of God, which ought to be a unifying force, instead leading to division.

The Bible doesn't tell us why God preferred one offering over the other, just that he looked with favor on Abel's offering and not on Cain's. Cain became angry at this.

As in yesterday's reading, we again see evil personified as a force trying to trip people up: "But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

The readings from Proverbs that we are using in the daily meditations often reflect the same theme of the human being torn between two opposing forces, with one calling us to faithfulness and one to sin. Jesus will speak of the same thing, even incorporating it into the Lord's Prayer with, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Paul will also address the struggle. As we get to the end of our journey through the Bible we will read Revelation, which is the culmination of the battle between good and evil that begins here in Genesis.

We're only three days into reading the Bible, and the conflicts we'll see all the way through are already taking place. This struggle between good and evil—between God and Satan—is also lived out in our lives.

Wednesday meditation

Proverbs 1:10-19

My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them.

If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for innocent blood, let's ambush some harmless soul; let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plun-

der; cast lots with us; we will all share the loot"—my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into evil, they are swift to shed blood.

How useless to spread a net where every bird can see it!

These men lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush only themselves!

Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the life of those who get it.

Prayer focus

Lord, show me where temptation lies closest, and give me the ability to resist. Wrap in your strength all those who face overwhelming temptation.

The crisis of sin

Thursday, Sept. 17

Genesis 5:29 – 7:24

Hundreds of years go by with barely any detail.

The human race multiplies and spreads over the earth, and sin along with it.

In 6:5 we read, "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."

When we contemplate the frequent question of why is there evil in the world, one of our first thoughts is often, Why doesn't God just get rid of the bad people?"

The story of Noah answers that question.

In a world full of violence and corruption, Noah stands out. "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God."

If the way to remove sin from the world is to get rid of the bad people, Noah is a promising candidate for leading a fresh start. So God tells Noah to build a large boat, an ark, to save himself, his family, and the animal species from the coming flood that's going to cleanse the world from sin.

As would be expected of a godly man, Noah follows God's direction, builds the ark

and gathers the animals into it, along with his own family.

The great flood comes and cleanses the earth. If getting rid of sin were as simple as getting rid of the people we classify as “bad,” this should have been the end of sin in the world. Unfortunately, we’ll see that it wasn’t.

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In many of the Bible stories, especially in the Old Testament, it’s easy to get distracted by the question, “Did this really happen, or is it a story intended to tell us something about God?”

Personally, I’ve decided to leave that question unanswered in my own mind and faith. We only have to look at the ministry of Jesus to see that God is perfectly capable of bending the rules of nature as we understand them to teach a lesson—and is perfectly able to use parables to teach lessons.

I’m not always sure I can rightly discern between the two, but I am sure that it’s the lesson that’s important.

Thursday meditation

Proverbs 1:20-27

Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech: “How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?”

Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings.

But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

Prayer focus

God, open my heart and mind to gain wisdom wherever it may be found; take away the temptation to assume that others have

nothing to teach because of their age, education or position in life.

Rainbow of the covenant

Friday, Sept. 18

Genesis 8:1 – 9:17

Forty days and forty nights of rain bring flooding to the whole world, covering its surface for months.

But finally the water recedes and the inhabitants of the ark are able to return to dry land with instructions to be fruitful and repopulate the world.

Noah built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed burnt offering on it, making a promising start for a world cleansed of sin and strife.

God promises to never again destroy the earth by flood, and even expands the bounty available to people by allowing humans to eat meat as well as plants.

People are cautioned, though, not to eat meat that still has its lifeblood in it. And, in a darker note, God also warns against the shedding of human blood.

God names the rainbow as a seal of his promise. “Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

We now understand the science of the rainbow, as the water droplets in the sky create a prism to separate light into its component colors. If anything, this enhances the symbolism Genesis gives to it; the same storm that brings potential destruction from water also brings beauty and clarity. The storms of nature allow us to see the colors that make up the clarity of light. The storms of life also allow us to see behind the image into the many parts that make up a person.

The flood brought some changes, and it brought new insight. But it didn’t end sin.

Even with the cleansing of the flood, God understands that sin still lurks, saying, “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.”

Friday meditation

Proverbs 1:28-33

“Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord.

Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.”

Prayer focus

Protect us, Lord, from the call of foolishness and evil.

The persistence of sin

Saturday, Sept. 19

Genesis 9:18 – 11:25

Sin, unfortunately, survived the flood along with the people.

The problem had never been that there were evil people in the world, but that there was evil in all people. Even Noah, who had lived a righteous life, was infected by the taint of sin.

This is far from the last story of the Bible to make clear that we can’t just separate the good people from the bad people. Even the best people carry in them the seeds of evil, and even the worst carry to potential for redemption.

Many, many years later, Jesus will tell the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30). In many ways, it explains why the flood failed as a means of eliminating sin: Sin is so intertwined with the world that it cannot ultimately be identified and destroyed until both the good and the bad have grown alongside each other and can be clearly identified.

Today’s reading also contains the story of Babel. The people of Babel, who all speak the same language, become prideful. They

decide, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

To counter their pridefulness, God scatters the people and leads them to speak different languages. In our fallen state we still become suspicious of people from other places or who speak another language (or even our own language, but with thoughts or accents we find unfamiliar and uncomfortable).

After Jesus comes to the earth, we’ll read another story in the second chapter of Acts that is almost the exact inverse of the story of Babel. In it the people are not scattered, but are “all together in one place.” While being people of many languages, they gain the ability to understand one another.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the disunity of Babel becomes the unity of Christianity.

Saturday meditation

Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Prayer focus

God, turn my desire for achievement and possessions into a desire for wisdom.

Called to bless

Sunday, Sept. 20

Genesis 11:26 – 13:16

If Adam and Eve showed us that even direct conversation with God doesn’t ensure faithfulness, and Noah showed us that simply getting rid of the bad guys isn’t effective, how is God ever going to get the people he created to follow him?

Today, we meet Abraham. (Actually Abram; his name will be changed to Abraham later, but it's the same person).

The call of Abram represents God's call to humanity; Abram and his people, later known as Israel, are being chosen, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing."

In the coming days we'll read several stories about Abram, including God's covenant with him.

As Christians, it's important to keep in mind that the call of Abram leads directly, though not quickly, to Jesus Christ; the promise to Abram is a promise not only to his biological descendants, but to his spiritual descendants: the followers of Jesus.

This is made explicit in Romans 4:16, "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."

The chosen people are chosen not for their own benefit, but they are chosen to be a blessing to all. As such, they serve as a witness and example of God's goodness and faithfulness even through the worst of times. They also lead to the coming of Jesus himself, who will be the ultimate blessing to all people.

As we come to the end of chapter 12 we have one of the difficult passages where we see Abraham passing off his wife, Sarai (Sarah), as his sister to protect himself. This is additional evidence that his righteousness comes not from being righteous in actions, but in being pure in faith—a lesson we should all draw hope from.

come knowledge and understanding.

He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.

For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Prayer focus

Lord, wrap me in your wisdom and to guide me along the path you want me to follow.

Sunday meditation

Proverbs 2:6-11

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth

China Methodist Church
China, Texas



Forest Park Methodist Church
Beaumont, Texas