

Reading Schedule for January 2-8, 2017

You will be amazed how quickly things transpire in these first chapters of Genesis. We begin with the hopeful reality of creation and the wonder of human beings created for each other. But a couple of readings later we read about selfishness and sin that sends everything into a tailspin. But maybe their offspring would realize God's key role their lives and would honor him? But not so. Years would pass quickly and things would get worse. Next week you will be shocked by the flood and God judgment on the earth. These are very significant chapters for us to apply to our lives.

January 2 – Genesis 1:26-31: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (v.27) I picked this shorter reading because in the Life Application Study Bible it has long, reflective thoughts about these particular verses. There is much to glean from God's creation of a man and a woman. They were created in His image. It is the combination of both man and woman that reflect God's image, and they represent the pinnacle of God's creation. Neither gender is exalted or diminished in the presentation of these verses. God announces that it is very good. There is no doubt that God presents a cooperative relationship of oversight in this world between the man and the woman. What do you learn from this account about being human and being made in his image? How does this affect your response to other people made in God's image?

January 3 – Genesis 2:1-25: “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” (v.24) I almost focused on verse 18 because it was not good for man to be alone. This whole chapter elaborates on God's creation of Adam and Eve. We learned about the foundational principle of being made in God's image, and now we see how it is more specifically outlined in these verses. We see that God instituted marriage. He gave it as a gift to Adam and Eve. They were made for each other. God's work was not complete until he completed the woman. Marriage is sacred to God. By that, I mean special and with a very significant purpose in completing the progression that God had in mind for mankind. How do you respond to this chapter? What stands out to you?

January 4 – Genesis 3:1-7: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden?”’” (v.1) Just when things seemed so hopeful and positive, we have some outside influence. The crafty serpent is thought of as Satan himself. We learn from the Bible that Satan was a glorious angel. But in pride, he rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. He was a deceiver and very cunning in the way he operates. He succeeded in getting Eve to sin. That is his main goal for you as well. When you sin, you are defeated and become less effective. One of the ways that he tempted Eve was to get her to doubt God's goodness. How often have you heard people say that God is strict, stingy, and prone to hurt people? That false presentation about God is the influence of Satan in this world. There is much to understand about these first seven verses. What stirred your heart? How do you respond?

January 5 – Genesis 3:8-24: “He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’” (v.10) You can see their defensiveness in that

Adam uses the word “I” four times. Adam blamed Eve for his sin, then Eve blamed the serpent. It is so easy for us to excuse our sins by blaming someone else or the circumstances surrounding our choices. But God knows the truth and he holds each of us responsible for what we do, and what we say. I have found it so important to admit wrong attitudes and actions, and confess it to God. A sincere confession will be met with forgiveness from our merciful God. How do you respond to these heavy words about sin and the fall of mankind?

January 6 – Genesis 4:1-18: “And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering . . .” (v.4) The tension in their relationship is about Abel's selfless response to God, and Cain's selfish response to God. That is how I would summarize it. God evaluates both our motives and the quality of what we offer. Verse 7 has a key component as it outlines the way sin begins to get a foothold in our lives. Like Cain, we will be victims of sin if we do not master it. But we cannot master sin in our own strength. Instead, we must turn to God to receive faith for ourselves, and strength from other believers. The Holy Spirit is the only One who can help us master sin in our life. We must surrender to him and follow his direction 24/7. The Apostle Paul said, “If you walk by the Spirit you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.” That would have been true for Cain, and it is still true for you today. How do you respond to this disappointing chapter that introduces murder into the world?

January 7 – Genesis 4:19-26: “If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.” (v.24) We sense the vengeance of Lamech. Obviously violence is on the rise. There is a developing indifference to sin and evil. This shows us the inclination of man. People tend to get worse instead of better. A growing progression noticed through animal breeding, music and metalwork had little consequence to the moral decline so prevalent in these verses. Lamech is a boastful man, with the sin of pride being so evident. Only verse 26 could turn things around as people began to call on the name of the Lord. Those words are why I wanted to read this short section of disappointment, leading to dependence on God. May that still be true for us today. How do you respond to this short reading?

January 8 – Genesis 5:1-32: “This is the written account of Adam's family line. When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God.” (v.1) The introduction of this genealogy reminds us that God had high purposes for mankind – that men and women were created in his image and he wanted to bless them. Going back to Adam and Eve, all human beings are related. Mankind is a family that shares one flesh and blood. Each person is valuable and a unique creation of God. We read about the oldest man who ever lived. His name is Methuselah, and it is recorded that he lived 969 years. This long duration of life doesn't seem to be beneficial to mankind. In a few short chapters, men will live approximately 100 years or more as maximum. With too many years on this earth, we lose our sense of need and dependence on God. Do you agree? How do you respond to this interesting genealogy?

Prayers: Pray for New Harvest, 10 minutes every day during the month of January.