

From the Beginning: Grace

A new year can be invigorating as we put last year behind us and look forward to a fresh start with renewed commitments to prioritizing our lives. As we pause at the beginning of 2018, we may feel excited and perhaps a bit daunted to have taken on the challenge of reading through the Bible. May God bless your efforts to remain faithful to immersing yourself in scripture daily.

It is fitting to begin our journey through the Bible with the familiar stories found in the book of Genesis. As we read through each one, we may renew old biblical knowledge or discover new details. However, we also see a common thread of how quickly and how often the grace of God was tenderly bestowed on man—right from the beginning.

Starting in the garden when Adam and Eve hid from the LORD, he drew out their confession of disobedience with a gentle but direct line of questions. After outlining the consequences of their sins, God cares for them by making garments from skins. Although his next action appears harsh, it displays God's amazing grace. He drives Adam and Eve from the garden, banishes them, and guards the path to the Tree of Life. It was unbearable for God to think that man could eat from the Tree of Life and live forever in his sinful state. He had to intervene swiftly and decisively to protect the hearts of his children. His grace abounds.

The story of Cain and Abel is a sad display of sin and evil prevailing in the heart of Cain. Both offerings the brothers brought to the LORD were good with potential to please him. However, God's acceptance of Abel's offering and rejection of Cain's may be a reflection of Abel's righteous heart and Cain's prideful heart. This is evident in Cain's resentment toward Abel as well as his uncooperative responses to God. Even so, Cain benefits from God's grace in spite of his sinful heart. The conversation following the offerings reveals God teaching Cain and guiding him toward a righteous life. Unfortunately, Cain disregards God's suggestions and ends up murdering Abel, leaving God no choice but to discipline him. However, as soon as Cain cries out and fears for his life, God graciously places a mark of protection on him.

Grace continues to abound in the story of Noah. The LORD saw how evil man had become and wanted to wipe him from the face of the earth. However, Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD, so he told Noah his plan of destruction and salvation. The LORD gave clear instructions to Noah to prepare for the flood.

When the time came, it was the LORD who shut the door of the ark. This last act of grace before the flood kept Noah and his family safe.

God remembered Noah in the ark and made the waters subside. His faithfulness to Noah is evident throughout the entire story, but we are often reminded of his promise to sustain the earth when we see a beautiful rainbow.

What other examples of God's grace can you find in the remainder of Genesis? In what ways is God's grace being displayed in your life right now?

- Lori Voss

January 1st Readings

GENESIS 1:1-3:24

January 2nd Readings

GENESIS 4:1-5:32

1 CHRONICLES 1:1-4

GENESIS 6:1-22

January 3rd Readings

GENESIS 7:1-10:5

1 CHRONICLES 1:5-7

GENESIS 10:6-20

1 CHRONICLES 1:8-16

GENESIS 10:21-30

1 CHRONICLES 1:17-23

GENESIS 10:31-32

January 4th Readings

GENESIS 11:1-26

1 CHRONICLES 1:24-27

GENESIS 11:27-31

GENESIS 12:1-14:24

January 5th Readings

GENESIS 15:1-17:27

January 6th Readings

GENESIS 18:1-21:7