

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Bible Overview 2013
Weeks 1-5

Devotions Written By Pastor Frank Macchia

Week 1: Creation, Read Genesis 1:1-5, 2:7

There is no more basic idea in the Bible but that God is the origin of all things that constitute the realm of creation. He also sustains all things. He alone is Lord of the creation and only he can restore it to its original purpose. Specifically, the Spirit hovered over the deep and God “said” or spoke the creation into being. Humanity needs today this very same Spirit (Gen. 2:7) and this very same word in order to find fulfillment. Material things alone will never satisfy.

Week 2: The Fall, Read Genesis 3:1-7

Though humanity was created to imitate God (live after God’s image, Gen. 1:27), humanity chose a wayward path. God said that Adam and Eve were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or they would die (Gen. 2:17) but the serpent denied this (Gen. 3:4). God wanted to guide them to wisdom in his own way and timing but the serpent denied this too, implying that God kept them from the tree in order to keep knowledge all to himself (Gen. 3:5). Who were Adam and Eve to believe? The tragedy is that they believed the serpent over God. This distrust and disobedience separated them from God and made them subject to death (Gen. 3:19). We are now called upon to believe God, to rely on him for wisdom and obedience as the path to life everlasting.

Week 3, The Flood, Read Genesis 9:9-16

The flood is one of the most difficult texts to understand in the Bible. How could humanity grow so wicked that there is almost no virtue left on the earth? How could God be so pained by this evil (Gen. 6:6) that he destroys the earth so as to begin anew? How could people grow so stubborn in their self-destructive path as to ignore God’s offer of grace in the form of the ark? Genesis 6-9 does not answer these questions. It just presents us with this tragic story of the flood as a background to the real point of the story (given in 9:9-16), namely, that God creates new beginnings. There is always a dawn, even after the darkest night. God never ceases to be faithful to creation. In this new beginning, God makes a covenant with all of creation, not just humanity, but all living things. And as a continuous reminder of this covenant, God has placed a rainbow in the sky, and, by the way, at his very throne as well (see Rev. 4:1-3).

Week 4, Promise Given to Abraham, Read Genesis 22:15-18

Abraham is the next major character in the story of Genesis. In Genesis 22, God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, the very child that God promised him. Abraham takes steps to do this, trusting in God to provide a way. God stops the sacrifice, sparing Isaac, and promising Abraham that through his obedience all nations will be blessed. Israel, a nation that has not yet even begun, will possess the promised land in Palestine one day (hundreds of years after Abraham) but not just for Israel's sake. The land will be given to Israel so that through this nation's story and witness all nations will be blessed. The Old Testament is dominated by the story of Israel. But one must never forget that from its very beginning the story is directed to all peoples for their blessing and salvation. The God who spared Isaac will sacrifice HIS only Son to bring this promise to fulfillment.

Week 5, Jacob Wrestles with the Angel, Read Genesis 32:22-32

Jacob and his twin brother, Esau, were born to Isaac. Though Esau was born first and should, therefore, receive the inheritance that goes to the elder son, Jacob steals the blessing by tricking their father into giving it to him. Esau is angry at his brother for this deception and is on his way with an army to get revenge. Jacob waits for Esau late into the night, but he does so in a most peculiar way, namely, by seeking a blessing from God. Jacob knows that even his father's blessing will not get him through his darkest hour. He seeks a blessing from God, knowing that he will then have what he needs to fulfill God's purpose for him no matter what happens to him. An angel of the Lord comes to comfort Jacob but does not grant the anticipated blessing. Jacob does not give up but clings to the angel for the blessing. Even after the angel dislocates Jacob's hip, Jacob does not let go. Finally Jacob receives the blessing and has his name changed to Israel, because he strove so passionately with God for a blessing. When Esau arrives, all is well. Faith clings to God and does not let go. If we persevere, faith will occasion great spiritual rewards in our lives.