

Devotions - August 21-27, 2005
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This week's devotions are designed for the whole family. We are called to be faith-filled families and to share in God's Word as a family. Print this week's devotions and each day sit with your family as you read the Bible, discover what God has to say to you this week, and share the faith-insights you gain. Parents, be sure to look ahead as some devotions may require slight preparation for the devotion activity. Feel free to adapt the daily devotion activity as necessary for the children in your family of differing ages. The theme for this week is "Creation."

Sunday, August 21

Devotion Text: Genesis 1:1-2:4a (see devotion reading for how to read this story)

Memory Verse: Genesis 1:1 (For each day's memory verse, go ahead – underline it, circle it, use a highlighter, mark this verse in your Bible in some way that any time you want to find it you can easily do so.)

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

New Living Translation

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . .”

New Revised Standard Version

Devotion Reading: How do we begin to understand God's role as creator? This question led the ancient people of Israel to write the story we have in Genesis 1:1-2:4a. This is commonly referred to as the first creation story. A second creation story follows in Genesis 2:4b-3:24 and tells of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. As a family, read the first creation story together. Share in the reading by asking a different member of the family to read each “day” of creation. The new “days” begin in chapter 1 verses 1, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, and chapter 2 verse 1.

This story is filled with wonderful and beautiful poetic language. Now, no one really knows how God created the world, after all no one was around yet to see how God did it. But this story, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, represents the faith-filled Hebrew people's attempt at understanding how our magnificent God could create such a wonderful and beautiful place as this earth.

This story is also filled with God's love and goodness. Each day, as God reflects on what has been created, God calls it, “Good.” This is a blessing which everything created still carries to this day.

Devotion Activity: You have just read how the ancient Hebrew people used poetry as they attempted to explain the great mystery of God's creative actions. Now it is your turn. Using what you have read from the Bible, what you know from your own education, and what you experience each day around you, how do you understand God's creative actions?

Write a poem or a short story that reflects on God's loving, creative actions. You can write one as a whole family, or have each person write their own and then share with everyone. When you are finished, keep your creation poem or story in your Bible as something to reflect on regularly.

Praying Together: O loving creator, we give you thanks for everything you have made is good and each person displays your image. Help us, Lord, to take better care of this place you have made for us, that the beauty we experience may be shared for the generations to come. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Monday, August 22

Devotion Text: Psalm 33

Memory Verse: Psalm 33:6

“The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.”

New Living Translation

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth.”

New Revised Standard Version

Devotion Reading: For as long as anyone can remember humanity has wrestled with how was the universe created. The ancient Hebrew people were surrounded by ethnic groups and nations with rival deity systems each explaining in their own way how the world was created. Today, with the advancements in scientific research and archaeology, new understandings have helped many to understand the great lengths of detail which are in the creation around us.

Our faith teaches us that God is the central figure in creation. God has done it. God’s ability to create comes from his awesome and magnificent power. God only needs to speak and the creation appears. God only needs to breathe and the creature has life. This is an amazing truth. We don’t always understand just how great this truth is especially when confronted with people of different belief systems.

The consistent message of our scriptures is that God has been and will remain the central figure in all of creation, having brought forth creation and life through his word and breath. When I read of new scientific discoveries or archaeological digs which show more about ancient life, I am ever more fascinated by God whose power is so great that it is only our God who could create such an intricate place as this universe.

Devotion Activity: This evening, after it is dark, lay down in your backyard and look up at the sky. Count the stars, if you can. Watch for shooting stars, human-made satellites, and other celestial wonders. If you have a star chart, use it and identify different stars and constellations. It is awesome to think that God not only made this beautiful earth for our living, God also set each star in its place. Talk about how just watching the stars makes you more aware of God’s awesome power.

Praying Together: *Awesome God, you light up the night sky with lights great and small. You fill the earth with bright colors. The faces of those who we walk passed display your likeness. Help us always to see you as the one true creator of this world. May we always*

honor you in the way we care for the earth around us and the people who fill it. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Tuesday, August 23

Devotion Text: Genesis 6:1-9:29

The entire Noah story is found in Genesis 6:1-9:29. Today's devotion reading focuses on the end of this story after Noah and his family and all the animals have left the ark, and God is talking with Noah about how things will be from this point forward. This is the story which gives us the etiology of the rainbow. An 'etiology' is a story which explains the reason why something is the way it is. In this story, we are told the rainbow exists as a reminder to God for the covenant God has made with all living creatures.

Memory Verses: Genesis 9:14-15

“When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds, and I will remember my covenant with you and everything that lives. Never again will there be a flood that will destroy all life.”
New Living Translation

“When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.”
New Revised Standard Version

Devotion Reading: God was very angry with the people of this earth. Their sin was so great, God decided to destroy everything and start over again. One righteous man lived in all the earth and his name was Noah. God chose to save Noah and his family and representatives of each animal species on a special boat called an ark. God's hope was that after all the sin was washed away and all the bad people were destroyed, the people to come would live better and walk closer with God, just as Noah lived.

This story is an image of baptism. Noah and his family were safe, even as the flood destroyed everything around them. In our own baptism God saves us from sin and death which surrounds us and destroys everything around us.

The powerful image that reminds God of his promise is the rainbow. This is remarkable. The rainbow is not a sign for us, but a sign to help God! When God sees the rainbow, God remembers the covenant he made with us. God has promised to never destroy us by a flood, and through our baptism, God promises that we are his chosen children who will always be forgiven and always have a home in heaven. When you see the rainbow, know that God is remembering you and the covenant God has made with all his children.

Devotion activity: Making a rainbow with your garden hose is a lot of fun. Spray a fine mist in the sunlight to capture the sun beams just right and create a rainbow. When you see the rainbow, know God sees it too and remembers his covenant with you.

Praying Together: Beautiful Savior, King of Creation, you promised to always love us, not for what we do but for what you have done. When we see the rainbow, may we remember your love and strive to live better because of it. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Wednesday, August 24

Devotion Text: Psalm 19

Memory Verse: Psalm 19:1

“The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship.” *New Living Translation*

“The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.”
New Revised Standard Version

Devotion Reading: Today is a great day to reflect on God’s fingerprints and where they are. A favorite camp song of mine is the Hippopotamus Song. If you know it, sing it with your kids.

“In the beginning, God made the sea and the forests full of trees. God made the mountains up so high. Above it all he placed the sky. His fingerprints are everywhere just to show how much he cares. And in between he had lots of fun. He made a hippo that weighed a ton. Hip – Hip –Hip –po –patumus. Hip, hip hooray, God made all of us. Hip – Hip –Hip –po –patumus. Hip, hip hooray, God made all of us.”

I don’t know who wrote this song, but I thank him or her for it. It reflects on what we read today in Psalm 19. God made everything. And everything we see is visual proof that God has made it all. It is like we are all God’s fingerprints.

A fingerprint is a unique part of our identity. Everyone has different fingerprints. No one has exactly the same. Our fingerprints even vary from finger to finger. So when we think about how everything carries God’s fingerprint, we begin to truly see the vast creative power of our God. And we learn from this that we have to treat everybody and everything as if it were God. For in everybody and in everything is God. So we love our neighbors, because God is in our neighbor. We love the earth, and treat it well, because God is in the earth.

Devotion activity: Tonight go on a nature walk with your family. There are two purposes for your walk. First, just observe everything and talk about how you see God in the flowers, trees, leaves, plants, animals – everything. How does the amazing beauty of the nature that surrounds you help you to see God better? And second, take a garbage bag with you. Not everyone cares for the earth as God would like. Some leave their garbage behind. When we pick up that garbage, we are saying “Thank You” to God for creating a beautiful earth, and we are sharing in the responsibility to care for this earth.

Praying Together: *Glorious God, mark on us again your fingerprint today, that we may be reminded of your presence with us. Help us to see in everything we do your hands reaching through our hands, your words speaking through our words, and your love beating in our hearts. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

Thursday, August 25

Devotion Text: Luke 12:22-34

Memory Verses: Luke 12:24 and 27

“²⁴Look at the ravens. They don’t need to plant or harvest or put food in barns because God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds!”

New Living Translation

“²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.”

New Revised Standard Version

Devotion Reading: Not only does nature teach us about God’s creative actions in this world, nature also has a valuable lesson for us. Trust God always. It may not be easy for us to trust God always; after all there are many worries in this world which get in our way of trusting God always.

Jesus uses two illustrations from nature to help us to learn to trust God always. Ravens, which are predatory birds, don’t plant gardens. Nor do they take from roadkill and place it in barns to save for later. They simply fly as they do and they are provided for by God. Likewise, the beautiful lily, as with all flowers, all it does is grow when watered. It can’t go shopping for better clothes; it merely displays what it has been given.

We are much more important to God than flowers or birds. Jesus assures us that we are very much loved by God in a way which is far different from how God loves the rest of his creation. And because of this special relationship we have with God, we can know that God will always provide for us.

Yet sometimes our worries get in our way. That we are worried is not a problem unless we bundle that worry up inside ourselves and never share it with anyone. Learning to trust God always means we learn to let go of our worries, to give them over to God and to know God will provide for us. It is not easy, but when we realize the birds and the flowers have no choice but to trust God, and they are well provided for, we can begin to gain confidence in our own trusting God.

Devotion Activity: Today’s devotion opens the door for important family discussion about worries that everyone faces. Our children see the world with different eyes than we do, and we need ways to let them express the worries and fears they have about the world. Parents need a chance to be honest with their children as well. After you have shared your worries, ask God to help you be less worried. Invite God to be with you in your worry and bring you peace and comfort knowing God always provides for you.

Praying Together: *Generous God, you have given us more than we need, yet we still are worried we haven’t enough. Hear our worries, grant us the peace we need to always trust in you. Receive our worries and give us calm hearts. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

Friday, August 26

Devotion Text: Colossians 1:15-23

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:16a

“Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth.”
New Living Translation

“for in him [Christ] all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible,”
New Revised Standard Version

Devotion Reading: The centerpiece of creation is Jesus Christ, God’s only Son. Jesus is the center of the Good News, the Gospel which proclaims our forgiveness and our restoration to God despite our sin. Jesus is the center of the church, the reason we gather on Sundays to proclaim his word and celebrate his deeds through our worship and our actions.

Everything God has done and continues to do is because of Jesus Christ. We cannot begin to understand God’s creative actions in this world without understanding that God spoke and it was made, and how does God speak but by the Word which became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. The Word that Jesus of Nazareth proclaims is a word of love – ultimate and self-less giving love demonstrated most fully in Jesus dying on a cross to save us from sin.

God pours himself out in the creation that surrounds us. God pours himself into us, his chosen and loved children. God does this not because the earth gives him pleasure, or because we live perfectly. God does this because of Jesus Christ in who is the beginning and the ending of the entire created realm. We begin in God’s love and we will end in God’s love. This is the fullest nature of God.

As we read the scriptures, we discover a God whose endless love is not only revealed around us in creation, but revealed through the living word of Jesus Christ, who died and rose again that we may have life and have it abundantly. Now we can be inspired to live this same love for others.

Devotional Activity: Create a table centerpiece. Collect flowers from your garden, or wildflowers from nearby nature paths. Arrange them in a vase and place a symbol of faith in the center. This symbol could be a cross, a fish, a dove, or countless other symbols. Do a web search for more ideas on how to make table centerpieces with Christian symbols.

Praying Together: *Almighty God, you shower upon us each day love beyond all knowing. Let this love shape our lives. Let this love be our guide and our every desire. Teach us the impact this love can have on our lives as we share it with others. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

Saturday, August 27

Devotion Text: 2nd Corinthians 5:16-20

Memory Verse: 2nd Corinthians 5:17

“What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!”

New Living Translation

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”

New Revised Standard Version

Devotion Reading: As this week of reflecting on God’s creative actions comes to a close, we end by realizing God isn’t finished yet. God continues his creative work through Jesus Christ. For this world which God has made so wonderfully is a world constantly filled with renewal.

We have experienced renewal through Christ whose love and forgiveness gives us the hope that we will be with God in heaven when this life ends. We have experienced renewal through our baptism when water poured over our heads and we were saved from sin. We have experienced renewal when we have stretched out our hands and received the bread and wine of communion. There are so many ways we have experienced God’s renewal in our lives.

We will continue to be renewed each day. As God works through Christ to renew us, we can work with God to renew the beauty of this earth and to renew the relationships we have with our family, friends and enemies. Paul writes that we have the ministry of reconciliation. This means we have a ministry of renewing the relationships that are broken by sin. As we are daily renewed by God’s word, we can daily renew the relationships we have, so that the love of God may forever be proclaimed by our words and deeds. For through Christ all things have already been made new and will always be made new until the day when Christ returns and we all reside in the heavenly kingdom God has prepared for us.

Devotion Activity: One way we can help renew the earth is to encourage recycling. Find out if your community has a recycling program and how you can get involved. Encourage your church to recycle paper, printer cartridges, and other reusable resources. God’s renewing work can happen through us, it takes time and a little effort.

Praying Together: *Blessed Jesus, the gifts of creation have taught us to see God in everything, to trust God, and to know you are the centerpiece of it all. May this week of reflecting on our heavenly Father’s creation remain with us always and may we ever find new ways of seeing our great God in the universe around us. We pray in your precious name. Amen*