

FRACTURED

A LENTEN DEVOTIONAL
BY THE PEOPLE OF EASTBROOK CHURCH



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INTRODUCTION

You may have heard me mention that I participated in a memorable wrestling unit in physical education class during seventh grade. My teacher thought it would be meaningful for everyone if we began the unit with a bang by having me (someone with no wrestling experience) face off against Frank (a starter on the wrestling team). In less time than you could say “body slam,” Frank had picked me up and thrown me across the room where my body hit the mat with a thud, accompanied by a slight pop in my arm.

I immediately felt embarrassed but also a little sick. During my next class, the ache in my arm became more pronounced, so my teacher sent me to the nurse’s office. With a brief call to my Dad, I was excused to go home. After trying unsuccessfully to rest and recover at home, my parents later took me to urgent care where an X-ray revealed my elbow was fractured. With the underlying problem revealed, my pain suddenly made sense.

This year, our journey of Lent traces the fractures sin has caused in human experience from the disobedience of the first man and woman through their descendants to us. We all feel some underlying pain in our lives and unless we recognize its cause, that pain will nag us and pervade our lives. No matter what we turn to assuage the pain, until we address it, the fracturing power of sin will only get worse. We need outside help. That help comes to us in the form of Jesus the Messiah, fully God and fully man. The Apostle Paul describes it this way:

“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

The forty-day journey of Lent offers an opportunity for us to look honestly at the ways in which sin fractures our lives and world, while also exploring the sobering cost and gracious gift of the healing and restoration that can only come through Jesus. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and carrying forward to Easter Sunday, this year we will walk through the story of sin’s fractures found in Genesis 4-11. As we do that, we want to grow in awareness both of our need because of sin and God’s remedy through Jesus Christ. Lent is a focused journey that calls us to turn away from sin—to repent—and to turn toward God—to be transformed like Christ.

The devotional booklet you hold in your hands is a forty-day guide written by people within the Eastbrook Church family to help us draw near to Jesus Christ in Lent. I pray this journey together as a church draws us into a transforming encounter with Jesus—His life, His death, and His resurrection.

+ The peace of the Lord,



Matt Erickson
Senior Pastor, Eastbrook Church

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL:

Each week of this devotional begins with a page for you to take notes as you hear and process through Sunday's sermon in church. Each day Monday-Friday has a short devotional thought written by one of our Eastbrookers with questions at the end for deeper reflection.

On Saturdays, there is a page that will guide you through a different spiritual practice or discipline for the week. You will also find a QR code/website you can visit to watch one of our pastors or staff members leading you through this particular practice. Even as we guide you through these practices, remember that the spiritual disciplines in and of themselves are not the goal. Rather, they are tools we use on our journey of sanctification as we aim to become more like Jesus Christ.

Finally, you can also interact with the digital version of this devotional in a variety of ways: on the Eastbrook App, on Instagram, via daily emails, blog, or PDF. Find these options and links on our website at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

DUST TO DUST

READ GENESIS 3:14-19

*“By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”* (Genesis 3:19)

The journey of Lent begins with a sober reminder: we are dust and we will return to dust. Earlier, we're told in Genesis 2 that *“the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”* (2:17). The man (*adam*) was formed out of the dust (*adamah*), or mud, and filled with the breath of God before being placed in God's Garden in the land of delights (Eden). The earthiness of humanity in Genesis 2 feels freighted with purpose and beauty from God.

But in Genesis 3, after the man and woman assert their autonomy from God, a series of curses come upon humanity and the creation. Now, the man will work the soil with great trouble instead of the labor of delight. This sweaty toil will continue until the man (*adam*) returns to the dust (*adamah*). The idea of being made from dust now holds a heaviness for us with a dark destiny at its end.

Most of the time we avoid the dark destiny of our dust-formed lives. There are entire industries and vocations dedicated to distracting us from death. This may seem like a good thing until some unexpected diagnosis or fearful event brings us face-to-face with our mortality. Suddenly everything shifts. We must consider our end and are often unprepared for that reality.

The journey of Lent begins with an invaluable gift to counteract our escapist tendencies. The traditional beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday combines the application of ashes with the stark statement of Genesis 3:19, *“for dust you are and to dust you will return.”* It is a reminder that the fractures of sin touch our lives and we, too, are lost apart from the intervention of God. It is true, as Paul writes, that *“the wages of sin is death.”* It is good to remember that reality. It is good to see our sin and its weight. It is good to consider the seriousness of death that we might live in humility before God and others. Thank God for the remainder of that statement from Paul: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

So, friends, let us enter this journey of Lent in all humility and sober reflection. Let us pray with the psalmist, *“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom”* (Psalm 90:12).

OUR VIOLENT HEARTS

READ ISAIAH 59:1-8

Is this true? Would God hide His face from me, stop listening to my prayer, and withhold His saving power, all because of my sins? I thought God loved me unconditionally? Didn't the worship leader say "God is good, all the time?"

The truth is that for God to be good and love us unconditionally, He sometimes has to give us harsh medicine (Hebrews 12:6). It's the spiritual equivalent of chemotherapy, or sending an addict through detox. And because we so often fail to recognize the grip sin has on us, God gives us passages like today's reading to expose this uncomfortable truth.

Isaiah 59 gives emphasis to our sinful violence (vss. 3, 6-8). God consistently judges our violence. Violence triggered the flood, caused the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, disqualified David from building the temple, and as Isaiah recalls, contributed to the fall of Judah and the Babylonian exile. And then Jesus comes along and teaches that our angry thoughts as serious a sin as our violent actions (Matthew 5:21-22). That's sobering: Even my violent thoughts are a barrier to God hearing my prayer!

During grad school I worked for a church on Chicago's South Side. One afternoon, while waiting for the bus to go home, I was mugged by three men. Fortunately, I only got a broken nose and a couple black eyes out of the affair. But I also got acquainted with the violence in my own heart. In my private thoughts I not only wanted those men punished, but hurt, badly. It was years before I could desire God's salvation for them. Pastor Tim Keller points out that violence is present in every human heart, and given the right situation, all of us have the potential for violent actions. Even me.

But Isaiah 59:1 proclaims that God is able to save us from our violent hearts. Throughout Lent we remember how God did this. On the Cross Jesus took the full weight of human violence, and returned mercy. When we look to Him, and realize how much we've been loved, our hearts begin to change. We find the courage to confess all our inequities, and open our hearts to a fresh in-pouring of the Holy Spirit. That is the one power that can fill us with peace, make us peaceful, and send us out as peacemakers.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Which sinful thought or attitude is the largest barrier between you and God today?*

DEATH THROUGH ADAM, BUT...

READ ROMANS 5:12-15

Is there any one word in the English language with as much power as the word, “but”? I know it has impacted my life many times throughout the years. I remember an English teacher in high school telling me “but” essentially serves as an eraser of all that comes before it. . . .in bad ways and good ways.

Think about—someone gives you a great compliment, then follows it with a “but.” What do you take away from conversation? If you’re like me, usually not the compliment, just the correction or the criticism that follows it.

“Jim, that was a great play you made on that fading fly ball to right center field BUT why in the world did you swing at that pitch in the dirt in the 5th inning?”

“Jim, you’re a super nice guy, BUT let’s just be friends, okay?” (Ouch)

Fortunately, “but” can also be used in a positive way.

“I know you were frustrated when got tongue tied in your message, BUT, I really needed to hear the encouragement to memorize God’s promises, thank you!”

Romans 5 is a powerful example of the positive power of “but.” In verses 12-14, Paul makes a clear argument that sin and death entered and ruled the world from the time of Adam. He pulls no punches, *“in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. . . .”*

Left to itself, this statement would be a depressing reality. . . .death for all of us! Fortunately, Paul follows it up with that magical, powerful word. . . .“but!”

“BUT the gift is not like the trespass. . . .How much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!”

Our Lenten journey this year will walk us through many examples of the brokenness and consequences sin brings into our world. For 40 days, we will be reading and hearing about some classic examples from Genesis that demonstrate the fractured relationship we have in God because of our sin. But, as we see these tragic stories, we know our journey ends with the hope and grace of God coming to us all through the death, the burial and resurrection of Jesus.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *The Bible is full of verses that use “but” to provide hope and healing to us. Look up a few of them and think of the difference that one little word makes in our lives!*
- *Where do you need the “but” of God’s grace to most show up in your life today?*

PRACTICE: PRAYER WALKING

Each Saturday during Lent, we will take some time as a church family to practice a different spiritual discipline or spiritual practice together. Today, we are practicing prayer walking. You may want to begin by reading through the written form in this devotional, or by watching a video of Pastor Matt guiding you through this spiritual practice online at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

WHAT IS PRAYER WALKING?

A type of intercessory prayer in which we physically walk with Jesus through places that we are concerned about.

HOW TO PRACTICE PRAYER WALKING?

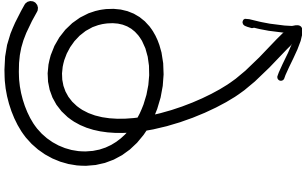
For this Lenten prayer walk, here are three areas of your spiritual life to consider, framed by three journey stories:

- **Repentance.** *Like the 40-year journey of the Israelites into the wilderness, Lent becomes a 40-day journey of repentance and refining. So, as we go on a prayer walk, we may want to take time to ask God: "Is there anything I need turn away from? Is there any sin You want to bring to my attention that I need to repent of?" Take time to consider that question and then talk to God about what He brings to your mind.*
- **New Beginnings.** *When the waters flooded the earth in Noah's day, his family and the animals were afloat in the ark on the waters for 40 days and 40 nights. This was a time of new beginnings, where certain things died and new life was around the corner. As we continue the prayer walk, bring to God the areas of your life that seem to be lifeless or dead. Perhaps it's a job situation or a relationship. Maybe it's a dream you've had or something you were pursuing. Ask God to bring new life to these areas in ways that will be best for you and bring God greatest glory. Let God know that only His power can do this. Let the ongoing rhythm of your steps remind you that God is not done with your life.*
- **Spiritual Warfare.** *Jesus' temptation after 40 days in the desert was a frontal assault on Jesus by the devil. It came immediately after the Father declared His love for Jesus at His baptism by John at the Jordan River. Jesus resisted the devil's temptation and assault with the Word of God. As you continue your prayer walk, pray God's Word against the work of the evil one in your life, your family and friends, our city, and world. Let each footfall be a declaration that God is the victorious king over all things.*
- **Close your prayer walk by saying the Lord's Prayer.**

SCAN THIS QR
CODE WITH YOUR
PHONE'S CAMERA
TO WATCH
PASTOR MATT
GUIDE YOU
THROUGH THIS
PRACTICE.



MY SERMON NOTES



WHO'S SPEAKING?

SERMON TITLE:

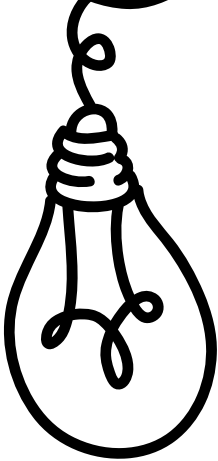
WHERE IN THE BIBLE?

REFERENCE:

WHO IS IN THE PASSAGE?



THE BIG IDEA!

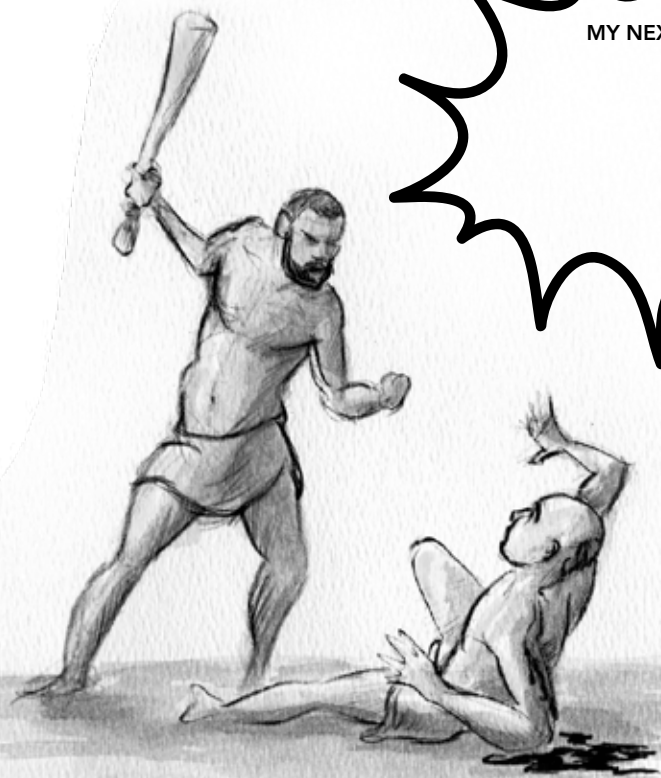


I LEARNED:

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:



DRAW
SOMETHING:



MY NEXT STEP:

BEST AND WORST

READ GENESIS 4:1-7

I have been known to share with people one of my favorite things about God: He sees through all of the bull. While this may not be the most tender way of stating the truth, it is not only real, but just and beautiful. Today we read of the offerings honored and not honored by God. Why did God accept one, but not the other? Perhaps it had nothing to do with offerings themselves, but instead to do with the intentions, emotions or heart behind them.

Although it does take action to grow produce, it is not nearly as demanding as raising livestock. Look at it this way: if a garden isn't weeded, watered, or maintained, some plants will still produce. On the other hand, if a newborn creature isn't nurtured or protected, they will die. Possibly, God identified these very distinctions between the offerings and that is why one was received and not the other.

I can imagine (and have experienced), that it would be offensive to be rejected for something you worked hard on. In this case, even though Cain's offering was rejected, God still loved him and forewarned him in Genesis 4:7 of the consequences of the thoughts he might encounter. I believe this is precisely why Mathew (and other disciples) recorded Jesus' words in Matthew 16:24 about ruling over desires and temptations, especially when things don't go our way. The offerings of Cain and Abel may not at all be about what was offered, but actually be about the quality, meaning, and sincerity behind the offerings. God sees through our empty words and actions, yet chooses to love us (Matthew 9:12-13).

Jesus loves integrity. He loves His children not only cheerfully rendering over the good things, but genuinely offering over their hurts, hang ups, and habits to Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

FOR REFLECTION:

- *What have you offered to God, but felt like it was rejected and why do you think it was?*
- *When have you "gone through the motions" of obedience to God but without being fully invested in what you were doing? How can you avoid this moving forward in your life with God?*

GOD'S LOVE NEVER FAILS

READ GENESIS 4:8-16

Many of us have known of or experienced sinful anger and how it brings destruction to relationships and lives. We have hurt others with our anger and sin. In Genesis Chapter 4 we find Cain in his anger committing sin with devastating consequences. Cain has anger toward God and Abel. He rejects God, deliberately choosing sin after God disciplined and warned him about its dangers! Why is sinful anger so powerfully destructive?

As I look at my life and learn about how others see their lives, I believe struggles with contempt and anger begin in the heart relationship we have with God. We are created to be indwelt by God, and filled with the Holy Spirit. We need God to help us make sense of the fallen world, sin, suffering and His great love for humankind. Apart from God, knowing truth and receiving help in dealing with anger and sin is not possible. We simply cannot compartmentalize our lives or try to live with evil on its terms. In love and faithfulness God calls us to fully surrender to Him. He desires us to receive His gift of freedom to live with, worship and enjoy Him. In His righteousness, mercy and grace it is Jesus who is our only hope and salvation.

Cain was on a downward spiral into sin and death. He had withheld his best from God and did not give true worship or gratitude. He harbored jealousy toward his brother, rejected God and His help, gave himself over to anger and sin, deceived, planned and committed the murder of his brother, lied to God, showed no remorse for his sin, and was most concerned for himself and his consequences.

But we have this hope over sin and death. God saves us with His highest, most supreme love in Jesus Christ as His Cross and resurrection overcomes them both. The Apostle Paul's words encouraged the church in Corinth and may they encourage us today: *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails..."* (1 Corinthians 13:1-8).

FOR REFLECTION:

- *How can we trust and obey God to help us with anger and sin in our relationships?*

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

READ MATTHEW 5:21-22

Jesus often described His earthly ministry in Israel with the proclamation that the "kingdom of heaven" was at hand. To His 1st-century Jewish audience that conjured up images of a literal, physical kingdom in which the Messiah rules as King, inaugurating righteousness and justice. All of these are true (and we believe will be completely fulfilled one day). Yet Jesus was not as much concerned about overthrowing an unjust empire as transforming His disciples—citizens of His new kingdom—from the inside out. Underpinning His teachings is the earth-shattering idea that bringing His kingdom requires His disciples living radically differently, addressing evil and sin on the root level: the human heart.

Jesus is extending (or perhaps applying) the Torah from the realm of external behavior into one's heart attitude. Yet it is also implied that not all sin is equal. There is clear progression in severity of punishment. Anger risks the judgment of the local synagogue; an insult risks the council of the Sanhedrin; and saying "you fool" risks the fire of hell. All these incur judgment, but in varying degrees.

The Greek used here for fool is *mōros*, from which we get the word "moron." Some scholars suggest it is actually the transliteration of the Hebrew *more*, which can connote worthless or apostate. So one interpretation is that anyone who tells his brother they are doomed to hell is in danger of being doomed to hell themselves(!).

Jesus understands that anger and all its causes—such as jealousy, as seen with Cain—is endemic to the human condition. No one is "safe" from the potential of a heart poisoned by anger and the destruction it brings. God is concerned not merely with one's actions but the attitude underlying it. Jesus is claiming that we can be judged by God for not just our actions, but by our attitudes towards each other.

Along with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to cultivate an inner life of peace, contentment, and self-control. For life in the kingdom consists of "*righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17).

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Reflect on a few times you've been angry. What caused you to be angry—was it more of a righteous anger or a "selfish" anger? How did you deal with the anger? Were there any underlying emotions, such as jealousy, bitterness, or arrogance?*

RIGHTEOUS ANGER

READ EPHESIANS 4:25-27

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." (Ephesians 4:25-27)

Today's culture is so full of anger and pain. It is evident in politics, in the news, and on social media. People are hurting, and as the saying goes, "hurt people hurt people." As a result, divides have erected in our nation, with no clear signs of reconciliation. Unfortunately, the church is not exempt from this. We too are guilty of using our anger as an excuse to sin.

It is important to note that Paul does not tell the church in Ephesus not to be angry. Anger can be justified, but Paul states, *"In your anger, do not sin."* On several occasions, scripture tells us that Jesus felt anger. He was angered by the stubbornness of the Pharisees (Mark 3:5), the desecration of the temple (Matthew 12:12; Mark 1:15), and even by the behavior of His disciples (Mark 10:14). However, even in anger, Jesus did not sin. He did not use any of these situations as license to hurt others. Christ models righteous anger, showing that indignation can be an appropriate response, particularly when the actions of others contradict the will of God.

However, problems arise when we allow our anger to control us and act out in a way that is not honoring to the Lord. Paul goes on to warn believers, *"do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."* Unresolved anger allows for feelings of hate and bitterness to fester. The enemy loves nothing more than when we allow our flesh to cloud our judgment. These negative emotions are what cause relationships to fracture and divides to form. We cannot preach unity and love to a world filled with hatred when we ourselves are divided in anger. The verses preceding this passage remind us that we have been called to a higher standard that reflects the righteousness and holiness of God (Ephesians 4:23-24). *"We are all members of one body,"* the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:25). As such, we have a duty to one another, to choose love even in anger. We must *"be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave [us]"* (Ephesians 4:32).

FOR REFLECTION:

- *What do you think is the key to not letting our anger lead to sin? Ask God for the Holy Spirit to bring self-control into your life!*

PLANTED IN OUR HEARTS

READ JAMES 1:19-21

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." (James 1:19-21)

This passage asks us to be slow to get angry. I am still trying to live God's Word in my everyday life, especially regarding how I relate with my brother. Although we love each other, we fight too. When there is a disagreement or someone is hurt by another person's actions towards them, my mom, brother, and I discuss the situation on our way to school in the morning. We take turns listening and sharing our side of the story. We then apologize to each other for what we did, either knowingly or unknowingly. This practice helps us not to hold grudges or have a bad day because we are angry at each other.

James is also saying that we should humbly accept the Word planted in our hearts, which can save us. For a couple of years, I have started my morning by having quiet time. This practice helps me focus on God from the start of the day. On the way to school, my mom, brother, and I discuss the devotional we read and look for ways to show what we learned during the day. We need God to live out James 1:19-21. I pray God helps you and me to obey Him always. Amen.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *What routines or practices can you establish to ensure that you do not hold grudges or hang on to anger throughout your day? How do you think God's Word "planted in you" can impact your ability to become slow to anger?*

PRACTICE: CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

Each Saturday during Lent, we will take some time as a church family to practice a different spiritual discipline or spiritual practice together. Today, we are practicing confession & forgiveness. You may want to use the guide printed on this page, or by watching a video of Student Ministry Pastor Nic Fridenmaker guiding you through this spiritual practice online at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

WHAT IS CONFESSION?

Confession involves us naming wrong as wrong, sin as sin, and encountering the forgiveness and healing of God through Christ. Confession frees us from the shackles of shame and guilt, and it can even bring healing in our relationships with each other.

HOW TO PRACTICE CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

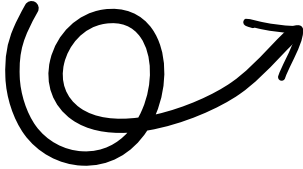
There are many ways to confess, but for this practice, we want to bring in a tangible element. Begin by finding a paper, pen/pencil, and a way to make a fire. Please practice caution around the fire.

- 1. Awareness**— God already knows those areas in our lives that we need to confess to Him, but there is power in naming aloud what is true. Reflect on the thoughts, people, and regrets that come to mind. Pray for God to show you areas of unconfessed sins. Name them and write them out on your paper.
- 2. Talk to God and Take Action**—Take your list to God in prayer, confess everything, and ask for forgiveness.
- 3. Experience Grace in a Tangible Way**— You may want to mark this practice of confession and forgiveness in a tangible way. If so, we invite you to burn the paper that you wrote on earlier as a reminder that just as the paper vanishes in the fire, your sins are gone in the sight of the Lord. Like Psalm 103:12 says, “... as far as the east is from the west, so far he has removed our transgressions from us...”

SCAN THIS QR CODE
WITH YOUR PHONE'S
CAMERA TO WATCH
PASTOR NIC GUIDE
YOU THROUGH THIS
PRACTICE.



MY SERMON NOTES



WHO'S SPEAKING?

SERMON TITLE:

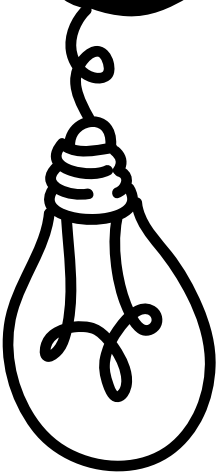
WHERE IN THE BIBLE?

REFERENCE:

WHO IS IN THE PASSAGE?



THE BIG IDEA!



I LEARNED:

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:

DRAW
SOMETHING:

MY NEXT STEP:



GENERATION AFTER GENERATION

READ GENESIS 4:17-24

How often do we take God's promises to us and contort them into a shape that fits our lives, instead of allowing them to configure us into something that furthers kingdom work? Today's passage shows us that this sinful tendency is nothing new.

Last week we looked at the story of Cain and Abel. Cain murdered his brother Abel in an attempt to reconcile with God, resulting in offending the one he wanted to please. But God, in His compassion, offered Cain a second promise (Genesis 4:15) that He would punish sevenfold anyone who killed Cain and then put a mark on him, sparing Cain's life and giving him the opportunity to repent and reconcile through future offspring.

Fast-forward to today's passage and you see that from Cain's descendants comes Lamech, who took two wives (the first time polygamy is mentioned in the Bible) and from his relationships with them, come generations who continued to sin against God.

When Lamech speaks in vs. 23 and 24, two things are clear. First, God's promise to punish sevenfold anyone who killed Cain had been re-told from generation to generation. Second, this promise had been twisted and distorted to fit the sinful desires of people. Lamech actually arrogantly boasts that he will be protected *tenfold* what God had promised Cain! This angered God as He continued to see generational evil and sin spread throughout His creation.

Like Cain and Lamech, we each have the promise of reconciliation with God. We also each have a choice; to continue in sin (sometimes this is generational sin) or submit and humble ourselves before God.

Our family fostered in Milwaukee County for five years. During that time, we met and formed relationships with people from a variety of backgrounds. We saw, firsthand, the harm that can be done when, generation after generation, sinful hearts refuse to reconcile with God. Thankfully, we also saw and are still experiencing, the immense beauty that comes when a sinful heart humbles itself to the voice of the Holy Spirit. What powerful change and redemption can then occur!

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Prayerfully consider the decisions you are making in your life. Are they decisions that echo the desires God's promises hold for you? Or are they separating you further from God's heart?*
- *Is there any area of your family's legacy that you want to transform and create a new legacy that honors God and will bring the next generation even closer to Him?*

WITHOUT EXCUSE

READ ROMANS 1:18-23

I was raised in a small Southern town in Mississippi. I remember my mother taking me and my brother to church and Sunday school. She was my first Sunday school teacher. Grandmother would sit in her rocking chair and read from that big black Bible in her lap.

They reminded me of Timothy's mother Eunice and grandmother Lois in the Bible. Their faithfulness to God's Word planted seeds in my brother and me (Proverbs 22:6).

Once a year we met in church for a week of "revival meetings." We kids would have to sit on the "mourners bench" while they would pray and tarry for the Holy Spirit to come down and save us "sinners." It wasn't the "Four Spiritual Laws" method but effective.

Our pastor only had the Bible (no seminary or theological degree), faith, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit for the Word to do God's saving.

In Romans 1:18-23 Paul preached and taught a doctrine of salvation based on righteousness of God, His love, and wrath. This was a dualism of God's nature and divine attribute: God's displeasure of evil but love for the world. Read Psalms 103:8-12, 30:4-5 & John 3:16—His love endures forever.

We are without excuse, for God has revealed Himself in our hearts and the natural order of creation. We are created to worship and glorify God. To not believe leaves one with no direction or sense of purpose. As John McArthur states, "man's search for meaning and purpose will produce only vain, meaningless conclusions."

God, through His son Jesus the Christ, loved us and proved it by His birth, death, resurrection, and ascension. We need no idols to fill the empty space sin placed in our souls.

Pray, seek, receive the gift of salvation for righteousness sake and a heavenly home in the arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Can you think of any reason why you would not believe in God? Who could you talk to about this?*
- *How did you come to saving faith to receive salvation? Please share this gift with someone today...everyday.*

THE WEIGHT OF SIN

READ GENESIS 6:1-8

It makes me uncomfortable to think of God being grieved by my sin. It feels far too personal to acknowledge that my choices make God's own heart feel pain. To "grieve" according to Merriam Webster's dictionary is to "cause great distress to (someone)." The idea that my actions and thoughts make the Creator of the stars feel sorrow is something that, quite frankly, I don't think enough about. I take my sins too lightly, comfortable as they are. I don't grieve them, but this passage tells us that God Himself feels pain over them.

These verses speak to mankind as a collective, but there is a reminder here for each of us too. We must be aware of how sin affects our relationship with God. The evil in the world can be easy to pick out: human trafficking, theft, murder, greed, violence, etc. I am grieved when I see the news about yet another shooting, robbery or senseless car accident. While it can be easy to pick out the evils of the world, the sin in my heart often flies under the radar.

Though the idea of my sin making God's heart "fill with pain" makes me squirm, I am awe-struck by the idea of just how personal He is; that rather than an impersonal Judge, He is an invested Father who is sorry when His child makes a poor choice. As a parent, I often watch my children make mistakes. I cheer when they choose well—to be kind, generous or respectful—and I am grieved when they choose instead to be selfish, petty or hard-hearted.

Yet, just as in my relationship with my children there must be a "righting of the wrongs" to restore the relationship; so too in my relationship with my Heavenly Father, I must acknowledge my sin and repent to Him. It is an ongoing process of making myself right with God, for my humanness is steeped in sin. It is deeply personal to have to have to admit our wrongdoing, so may we pray boldly and regularly with David, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

FOR REFLECTION:

- *How does it impact you to hear that "your sin grieves God?" Pray David's prayer today and confess the sins of your heart to God so that your relationship with Him could be free and open!*

PLAYING FAVORITES

READ ROMANS 2:5-11

Have you ever felt like someone favored your sibling, friend, or coworker more than you? I'm sure you have and it doesn't feel good. Has your brother, sister, or friend ever gotten on your nerves? You might be angry at them or hold a grudge against them.

My siblings and I get into fights a lot and it's hard to forgive. When I was nine, my sister and I got into a huge fight about who had to clean up which part of the room we shared. We would throw things from "our side" over to "our sister's side." Finally, our mom intervened and we got in trouble and had to separate ourselves. When we finally calmed down, we ignored each other in favor of our brother for the rest of the day.

When we disobey or argue with God He doesn't suddenly love us any less, and He doesn't show favoritism the way we do as humans. He loves everyone the same, even though we sin against Him over and over again.

In Romans 2:5-11 God says He will judge each of us on judgment day and He *"will repay each person for what they have done"* (Romans 2:6). For someone who seeks God and accepts what God gives, they will get eternal life. For someone who rejects God and continues walking in human ways, God will give them wrath and anger.

God is not showing favoritism, He is being a just God who is giving people what they sought in their life. He loves us all and He is always trying to pull us into His love. So why don't we accept His love and run into His loving arms?

FOR REFLECTION:

- *When you read that God will "repay each person for what they have done" what does that do to your heart? Does it bring fear or joy?*
- *Now remind yourself of the promise of God shared just a few verses later: "all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Praise God that His love and grace overcomes our sinfulness!*

GOD'S LOVE & WRATH

READ PSALM 34:15-22

For those who may not know, I am a percussionist. While I primarily play the drum set, I also play other percussion instruments both here at Eastbrook and at school, particularly timpani. A part of being a percussionist is to take care of the instruments I use, and I can get angry at those who fail to respect the instruments. Back in the fall, I went to campus for a concert, and walked in to find out that people from a concert the previous night had stacked our timpani on top of each other. I was furious, not just because the instruments I enjoyed playing had potentially been damaged, but also because I felt that I, the percussion section, and the entire band had been disrespected.

When David wrote Psalm 34, a myriad of emotions must have been going through his mind. Having fled the wrath of a jealous Saul, he was now forced to fake insanity to avoid the vengeance of the Philistines among whom he temporarily sought refuge. Both Saul and the Philistines in their own ways stood opposed to God and in the process harmed the people of Israel. As the Lord's anointed, David became a target for both.

Psalm 34 is primarily a song of thankfulness for God's power to deliver, but as uncomfortable as it might make us, there is also praise for God's acts of justice: *"but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth... Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned"* (Psalm 34:15, 21). For David, God's deliverance in this moment meant confronting those who disrespected God, went after him as the Lord's anointed, and whether through malice or negligence, harmed Israel.

In this season of Lent, even as we remember and celebrate God's love, we must also remember and grapple with His wrath. Going back to my situation, one of the performers from the night before is a good friend, so when I sent an email to resolve the situation, both justified anger and love for my friend guided my actions. Likewise, when God sent His Son for us, it was both out of righteous anger at our sin and His love for us, so we could be reconciled to Him. Considering His justice and mercy, *"Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together"* (Psalm 34:3).

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Have you ever had to balance justified anger and love when dealing with a friend, family member or coworker? How did you manage the situation? How does this help you understand God's heart towards us as His people?*

PRACTICE: FASTING

Each Saturday during Lent, we will take some time as a church family to practice a different spiritual discipline or spiritual practice together. Today, we are practicing fasting. You may want to use the guide printed on this page, or by watching a video of Worship & Prayer Pastor Femi Ibitoye guiding you through this spiritual practice online at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is woven into the season of Lent, which in and of itself is a time for withholding as we prepare for the abundance of Easter. In a culture of abundance and one-click buying, we don't have a lot of practice in saying "no" to ourselves. Fasting is one way to learn to say "no" to ourselves so we can say "yes" to God.

For the sake of this practice, think about fasting not as withholding food or drink, but as the practice of giving up something good (anything good!) in order to practice the spiritual discipline of self-control.

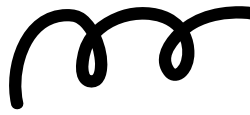
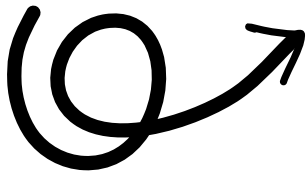
WHY SHOULD WE FAST?

1. **Fasting helps us develop spiritual "fruit."** *It develops our willpower and brings governance. Just like when an athlete develops muscles through practice and training so they can call on strength and muscle memory for game time, so, too, we are preparing to face the challenges of temptation when we say "no" to something small.*
2. **Fasting also makes room for God.** *Fasting is a spiritual discipline of abstinence that makes space for other spiritual disciplines of engagement. Oftentimes, we will find that someone gives up TV or their phone, or a game, or something trivial for Lent, and in doing so they are fasting from something that is time-consuming in order to redirect their time towards God. Fasting from our phones, or from an activity that may be "good" but isn't "God" allows us to spend more time with our Creator.*

SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE'S CAMERA TO WATCH PASTOR FEMI GUIDE YOU THROUGH THIS PRACTICE.



MY SERMON NOTES



WHO'S SPEAKING?

SERMON TITLE:

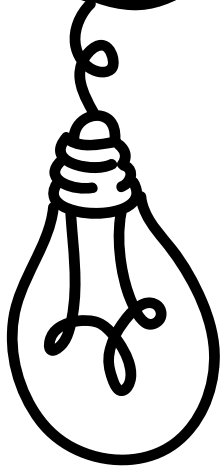
WHERE IN THE BIBLE?

REFERENCE:

WHO IS IN THE PASSAGE?



THE BIG IDEA!



I LEARNED:

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:

DRAW
SOMETHING:

MY NEXT STEP:



WALKING FAITHFULLY WITH GOD

READ GENESIS 6:9-13

Each of us has had to remind ourselves—or it may be better to say we have been reminded through our failures—that it is futile to live a life of faith without God’s help. Perhaps this struggle assists us as we consider the immense task of building an ark as Noah had been assigned by God.

If you were like I was when I first heard this story as a boy, you may have had a hard time wrapping your mind around it. Build an ark big enough to carry your family to safety along with two of all living creatures? I was a Cub Scout near that time, which meant I had to take a block of wood and some plastic wheels to construct a race car. Big failure! Mine didn’t even roll halfway down the ramp. So Noah must have superhuman carpentry skills, right?

No, that is not how the Scripture introduces us to Noah. Instead we learn of his character rather than his skill sets. While only Jesus is perfect, Noah is righteous, *“blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.”* Noah lived in contrast to the rest of the human race, and yet with God walking beside him, even closing the door behind him, he was able to accomplish the work to which he had been called, surrounded by cynics.

We should remember this, that God works through faithful people to change the course of history through so many lives. It is not our doing alone, but an invitation to receive a calling and carry it out by walking daily in fellowship with God.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *When have you lived “in contrast” to those around you in a way that honored God? How did it feel to take that stand for Him? What was the result?*

DESTRUCTION...OF THE WICKED?

READ 2 PETER 2:4-10

I recently heard a quote by a Christian sister that says, "We don't want to scream where Scripture whispers."

All of us have seen or experienced teachers, preachers, friends, and family die on theological hills before. It often leads to division, and the crazy thing about it is, often the theological mystery in question will not be revealed in full on this side of eternity. Full disclaimer, I am NOT a theologian...but as I dove into this passage I was perplexed as to why Peter decided to cite the three examples he did. But don't worry, no screaming from me today!

What is clear is that Peter, in classic Peter form (powerful, precise, bold), is making the strong distinction between the pattern throughout world history that the people of God will be rescued and the wicked destroyed. Destruction...of the wicked? Not very appealing language in our post-modern world, but the truth packed in Peter's statement here is none the less true now as it was when first penned. Sadly, we have moved beyond the worldview of Biblical justice today. Maybe that explains why as a society we walk around angry and confused at the injustice and violence we see around us. The phenomena of wickedness and violence are not unique to our time but were very familiar to the ancients of the faith at the time of the flood (and shortly thereafter). Peter kindly hands us understanding in his letter that shows us a helpful glimpse of what the God of the Bible offers to those who are in Christ and those who are outside. He upholds, sustains, and rescues the godly. He destroys the wicked.

Frankly, I struggle with understanding the truth and grace of God and how God exists in perfect relation to both. As we reflect as a church body, let us thank, as well as marvel at, our Heavenly Father's disposition towards us. We, the church, are the modern-day Lot and Noah. Being rescued daily while also waiting for the "final rescue," Christ's return. Grace. And let us also be thankful we know with assurance the evil of this world will pass away and evil-doers be brought to justice. Truth.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *In what ways does this passage bring you peace knowing that God rescues the Godly? In what ways does this passage challenge you as you think about the wicked (or the wickedness of the world of today)?*

TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

READ ROMANS 3:21-26

"There is no one righteous, not even one." (Romans 3:10, quoting Psalm 14:3)

As the verse before today's reading reminds us, no one will be declared righteous by the works of the law, rather it is through the law that we become conscious of our sin (Romans 3:20). No one can keep the law perfectly. By comparing our lives to the law, we see how short we fall of perfection. ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (vs. 23).

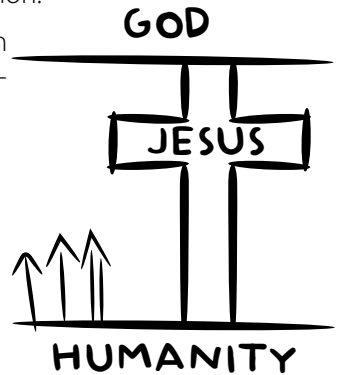
Righteousness means being morally correct, or declared right by God. In the Old Testament, believers focused on keeping the law in order to be righteous. But even with Abraham, we see that true righteousness comes through faith.

In the account of Noah's time, all were wicked and God had basically had enough of the evil and wanted to wipe it out. Noah and his family were spared because they were right with God.

Verse 22 shows that in the New Testament, righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ. ALL are justified freely by His grace through Jesus Christ (vs. 24).

We like to think our sins aren't that bad: "There are worse people than me....I'm a good person," but sin is sin. Sin means missing the mark, and we all miss the mark of God's holiness and perfection.

I was involved in Cru in college and this illustration helped me understand. The arrows on the left represent our efforts to reach God on our own—by being a good person, giving, serving, etc. I am not good enough. I can never reach God on my own efforts. But Jesus can. While He lived fully as man, He never sinned. He never gave in to temptation. He lived a truly holy life. Only He can bridge the gap between me and God.



Thank God for justifying you through your faith in Jesus. It is actually a relief to know we don't earn our salvation! Ask Him to show you any areas that you need to confess as sin.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *What do you think happens when we try to "earn" our salvation? How can you release this tendency to try harder and simply live in thankfulness for God's gift?*

FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE

READ EZEKIEL 36:22-28

The Israelites were exiled to the nations for their disobedience and idolatry. They were exiled but not forsaken. The Sovereign LORD sends a message through Ezekiel that the exile will end and they will be returned home. But He is clear about a few things. It is not for the sake of the Israelites that He will act but for the sake of His Holy name. The Israelites had profaned His name and were profaning His name. He did not wait for them to get their act together but He would cleanse them and would replace their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. They would once again be His people. What a promise!

This passage sunk into my heart and I knew it was for me. When I was young, I knew about God and Jesus, but something was missing. In my early teens I felt I had “outgrown” Jesus. I had diminished His name. I was lost. He knew where I was, just like God knew where the Israelites were. He pursued me until I found Him. For His name’s sake, He revealed that the “what” I was looking for was a Who—the very Jesus I had diminished. He replaced my heart of stone with a heart of flesh. His Spirit showed me who Jesus was and why I had not outgrown him.

He continues to reveal Himself as I discover more facets of His nature. For His name’s sake, *“He demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Paul writes in Romans 12, that we should not be conformed to the pattern of this world. The Israelites were conforming to the patterns of their world in exile, thus profaning His name. Paul continues to say that we should be transformed by the renewing of our mind, to have our hearts and minds changed by the work of the Holy Spirit. God would do that with the Israelites when He returned them, by cleansing them and giving them a heart of flesh. The Spirit does the same for us as He cleanses us and renews our minds by the work of the Holy Spirit.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Have I diminished Jesus or is He King of my life?*
- *Am I still conforming to this world or am I being transformed by God’s Spirit?*

NAMING SIN AS SIN

READ 1 JOHN 1:8-2:2

When I was young I truly believed I was without sin. How could I be categorized with those who murdered, robbed, and committed adultery? After all I never cheated on a test but only showed my test to my friends to help them out...and I merely stole the unwanted coins from the top of the dresser without asking...and I only gossiped about people who were not nice! I had a rather lengthy list justifying why I should have a ticket to heaven as I attended Sunday school regularly, sang in the choir, participated in service projects through the church, and was never shy to pray out loud when presented with an opportunity. The day the Holy Spirit confronted me and revealed a glimpse of my wicked heart and reminded me that it is only by faith that I was saved, the self-righteous image I had about myself shattered. I realized that even I, in all my "goodness," needed a savior and would perish without the mercy and blood of Jesus Christ.

I contended with the verse in 1 John 1:8, *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* How can a young child be called sinful? God revealed that to me when I became a mother. I realized that children do not need to be taught how to disobey, or how to throw a tantrum to get what they want and even newborn babies know how to scream at the top of their lungs until they get milk or a new diaper! A child's goals or desires are never to put the need of the parents or others first but satisfy oneself.

To recognize the sin in us, we really need to understand the person of Jesus, who gave of Himself as an atoning sacrifice so that the whole world can be saved (1 John 2:2). In verse 9 in 1 John 1, He gives us the freedom to confess and promises us *"purification from all unrighteousness."* Oh, to feel cleansed and released from all the bondages of sin, that is living out the faith of His Word in us as we are reminded in verse 10. So let's draw near to Jesus this Lenten season and intimately confess our sins and be filled with the word of God.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *When did you first come to realize your true sinfulness? How did you respond? How has the truth of 1 John 1:8 and the promise of 1 John 1:9 impacted your relationship with God?*

PRACTICE: VISIO DIVINA

Each Saturday during Lent, we will take some time as a church family to practice a different spiritual discipline or spiritual practice together. Today, we are practicing *visio divina*. You may want to use the guide printed on this page, or by watching a video of Communication & Creative Director Liz Carver guiding you through this spiritual practice online at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

WHAT IS VISIO DIVINA?

Visio divina means “divine viewing.” It is a way of using art, nature, or another visual to awaken our interpretation of Scripture and to hear from God in a new way. *Visio divina* shares roots with the ancient practice of *lectio divina*. Just like *lectio divina* calls for a slow, careful interaction with Scripture through meditation and prayer, allowing God to speak through a word or phrase, *visio divina* invites us to encounter the divine through images.

HOW TO PRACTICE VISIO DIVINA:

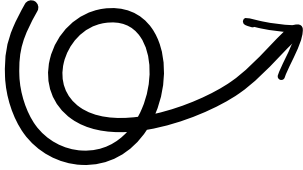
Before we begin, choose an image or a painting. You may also choose to go outside and be in nature. Otherwise, find some suggested works of art featuring depictions of Noah's Ark on the webpage for today's practice at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

1. **Prayer**—*Dear Lord, as we begin this time of visio divina, please open the eyes of our hearts to listen to You. We ask You to speak through this image and to show us more of Yourself, more of Your heart for the world, more of Your plan for our lives. Amen.*
2. **Big Picture**—*First, let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of the image. See it all. Reflect on the image for a minute or so.*
3. **Zoom In**—*Next, look at the image and let your eyes stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye. Try to keep your eyes from wandering to other parts of the picture. Gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so.*
4. **Consider the following questions:**
 - *What emotions does this image evoke in you?*
 - *What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you?*
 - *Does this image lead you into an attitude of prayer? If so, let these prayers take form in you. Write them down.*
 - *Now, offer your prayers to God in a final time of silence.*

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CODE WITH
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GUIDE YOU
THROUGH THIS
PRACTICE.



MY SERMON NOTES



WHO'S SPEAKING?

SERMON TITLE:

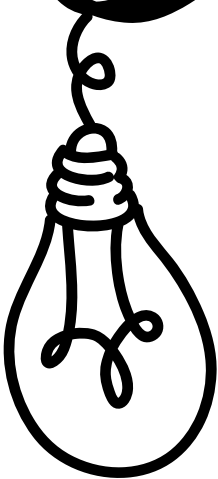
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THE BIG IDEA!



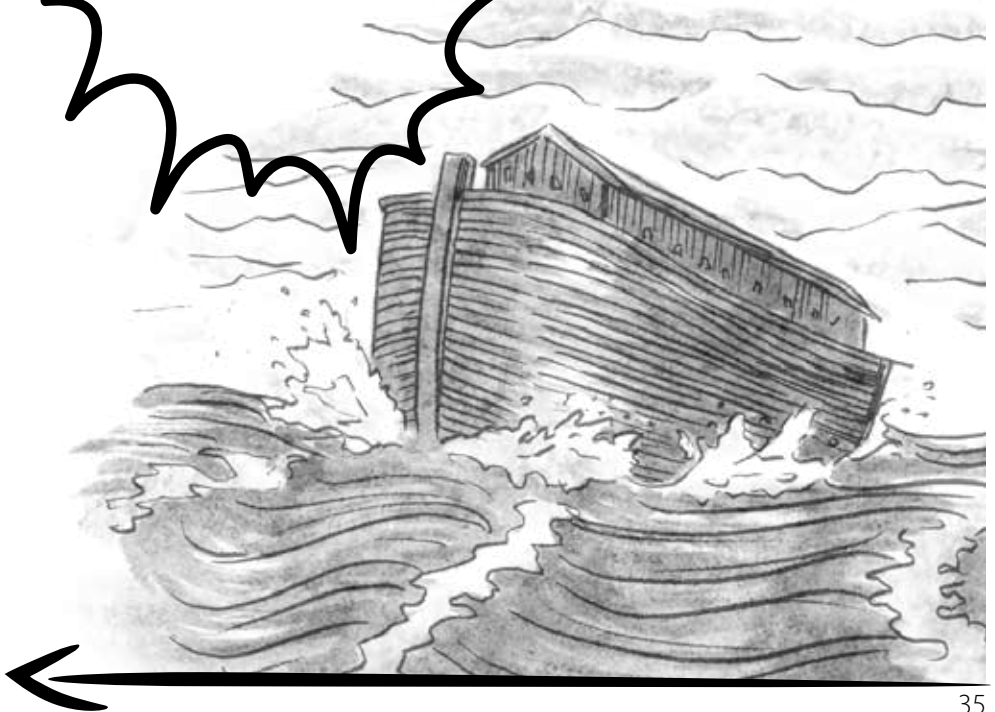
I LEARNED:

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:



DRAW
SOMETHING:

MY NEXT STEP:



THE STORY AFTER THE END

READ GENESIS 8:13-22

Springtime is an odd season. We feel the warmth of the air on our faces. We see the budding plants in the ground. Our grass gradually turns green under the diminishing piles of snow.

Then it rains for a few days and we feel betrayed, alone and lost. We look through water-soaked windows at gray skies and there is nothing to renew us. Suddenly the rain stops, the skies start to clear and the sun is the most wonderful thing we have ever seen.

Imagine the feeling Noah and his family had when they walked out of the ark after 40 days of rain and countless days waiting for the waters to subside. They were so grateful that they built an altar, thanked God and worshipped Him. God saw that even though Noah was just a man, he was a good man. The depression of the weeks of rain did nothing to deter him from his faithfulness to God. God knew that from that time, He wouldn't have to destroy the whole earth again. God saw that mankind, with all its failings and flaws, could remain faithful in even the darkest times. God has promised that we will have change of seasons. There will still be snow and rain; cold and heat. There will always be tornadoes and hurricanes. But we trust that there will be day after night. We need to be patient and faithful and we will be blessed.

The band Disturbed has a song, "The Light," and the chorus goes:

When you think all is forsaken listen to me now.
You need never feel broken again.
Sometimes darkness can show you the light.²

Like Noah and his family, we will triumph over anything that could defeat us, because we know that God is with us. In the end, we will see that it is not the hard times that define us, but the grace and faith we maintain while we get through those times.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *What is the darkest time you have had, and how did you find the light after?*
- *If you shared that darkness with others, did they fare as well? Did you have to show them the light?*
- *Preparing for the Resurrection, do you feel the darkness closing in, waiting for the One True Light to overcome?*

A PROMISE IN THE SKY

READ GENESIS 9:8-17

TUESDAY, MARCH 21

The rainbow is a beautiful promise of the covenant God made with Noah, his sons, their descendants, and all the living creatures that He would not flood to earth again. We, as Noah's descendants, are heirs of this promise as well.

In the Hebrew, rainbow is the word "bow." When we hear the word bow, we may think of a bow and arrow, which is a weapon that causes destruction. But this bow in the sky is just the opposite. This bow is God's sign, His way of saying that destruction of the whole earth through a flood would never happen again. God made this promise through a covenant.

A covenant formally binds two parties together in a relationship, on the basis of mutual personal commitments, with consequences for keeping or breaking the commitment. A covenant is a promise not to be broken.

The vow of marriage is an example of the pledge of a covenant. It is a lifelong commitment that a husband and wife enter knowing it will take work to fulfill. It is not something to be entered lightly. What is unique about the covenant in Genesis 9, is that there is nothing for Noah and his descendants to do to fulfill their end of the agreement. It is a promise of what the Lord will do. This covenant is free of work on man's behalf, but up to God to fulfill.

Growing up, I always remember my parents being very excited whenever there was a rainbow. When the sun started to come out after a storm was coming to an end, we would often head outside to look for a rainbow. I asked my mom before writing this devotional what was so special for her about rainbows and she said "for us, something good always happens after a rainbow. It's a sign of hope." As I reflect on that statement, I realize that a rainbow doesn't mean that things will get better or our situation will change, but it is a promise of God's faithfulness. He has been good all along. Through the storms our life, we have a Savior who is with us through it all. May the rainbow be a sign to remember God's faithfulness.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *How has God been faithful to you? Have you thanked Him for bringing you through the "storms of life"? Do so today by specifically naming the latest "storm" He carried (or is carrying) you through!*

THE GOSPEL PROCLAIMED

READ 1 PETER 3:18-22

Our small group has been going through Peter's first letter. Addressed to sojourners and exiles in Asia Minor, the recipients were believers who were suffering for their faith. As he writes, Peter often shares core elements of the Gospel. As a close witness of Jesus' entire ministry, he knew which facts were important for people to hear. Peter opens today's passage with Jesus' suffering and death, mentions His resurrection and concludes with Jesus ruling in heaven at the right hand of the Father.

Nestled in the center of this passage are some new details about the flood story. Peter shares that *"God waited patiently"* while Noah was building the ark. In Peter's second letter, he identifies Noah as a preacher of righteousness. Noah was the first missionary, warning the world of God's coming righteous judgment. Peter notes the ark brought Noah and those with him through the same water which drowned the rest of the world. Jesus, represented by the ark, saved Noah, his family and all the creatures on board.

Peter says the flood story symbolizes or prefigures the baptism *"which now saves you."* He tells us the water is not for removal of dirt from the body, but is an appeal or pledge to God of a good conscience. What does this mean? Noah's faith caused him to obey God's command to build and enter the ark. The ark saved them. At baptism, a person's proclamation of faith in the Lord Jesus is what saves them. Entering through the waters and emerging from them reenacts Jesus' death and resurrection.

When Jesus died on the Cross, His body entered the grave. But we learn from Peter that in His spirit, Jesus went to the fallen angels imprisoned from the time of Noah. They had exceeded the boundaries God had assigned to them and they worked to sow violence and depravity into Noah's world. Jesus went to these spirits to announce His total victory over them, the other fallen angels, sin and death. Their sentence would continue and their coming judgment was assured. Jesus then led the captives, the believing Old Testament saints, to heaven according to Ephesians 4.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Why is it important for us to know Jesus had the final victory over the devil and his angels?*
- *Only Noah and seven others were saved. Jesus said "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." How should these words guide our lives?*

MADE ANEW

READ ROMANS 6:1-10

What does it mean to be made anew?

Romans 6:4 says, *“We were buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”* What does it mean to be baptized into death? I ask myself earnestly and wonder the possibilities in interpretation.

In a spiritual baptism we experience a death and resurrection figuratively that Jesus experienced literally. To be resurrected, one must die first. If we are united in Christ within death we are also united through the resurrection. A death through Christ is letting go of our earthly ambitions and letting Jesus take the wheel.

Most times it is probable that we try to juggle two relationships—between our earthly aspirations and our relationship with God. *“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”* (Romans 6:6). There is no serving one thing while being loyal to another.

It is explained that we were crucified with Him and our bodies will not be bound to sin. It sounds amazing right? Maybe even easy? To give it all to Him and be wiped clean of sin. It’s all we want, right? It is difficult to give up all your control and habits from your life. Even when doing so, maybe you feel as though you don’t deserve to have God enter your heart where so much darkness found refuge. This death requires sacrifice and most times it almost seems impossible to let go. As the floods destroyed all that the earth had become, the sacrifice was to make way for the bigger picture of new life.

Romans 6:1-2 says, *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”*

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Does your life show a pattern of perpetual sin? Is there one particular area which tempts you regularly?*
- *Do you consider yourself dead to sin? Do you realize that you are free of the compulsory power of temptation? How will this knowledge help you endure the next time you are tempted to sin?*

GOD'S UNENDING COMPASSION

READ ISAIAH 54:7-10

Nothing causes me to feel my own humanity, my smallness, than standing on the edge of a large body of water or gazing up at a high mountain peak. In such grandeur, the perceived infiniteness highlights my own finite being. Gazing into the ocean, I cannot help but contemplate God's eternal nature. Whatever He has been, He will ever be, total and complete.

In Isaiah 54:7-10, God speaks openly of two emotions He feels. It is great comfort to me to know that God experiences the same emotions I experience. As I feel sadness, joy, astonishment, and, yes, anger, God feels these things too. He states that He has felt anger with His people. This is not my selfish anger when a situation at work doesn't go the way I want, when I am stuck in traffic that is causing me to fall behind my set schedule. God experienced anger with His people for their ongoing propensity to turn away from Him, to worship something else.

Even in His anger, He cannot help but proclaim His incredible, everlasting kindness and compassion. When my children disobey the rules that I have in place to protect them and grow them, I do become, correctly, angry with them. Yet their disobedience never cancels my continual love for them. So, it is with God. Twice in this passage (verses 9 and 10), God mentions His past oaths and covenants to not show anger and to bring peace. And we know that God keeps His promises.

As Christians who live after Jesus' death and resurrection, we live in these promises. I Thessalonians 5:9 states, *"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."* I do not believe it is an accident that God identifies Himself in Isaiah 54:8 as, *"The Lord, your Redeemer."* Jesus suffered God's wrath in His death, so that we could receive salvation! He redeemed us through His blood, purchasing our salvation. There is no clearer picture of God's everlasting kindness, deep compassion, unfailing love than the Cross.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *How have you experienced God's great compassion today? How can you pass that compassion to others today?*

PRACTICE: PRAISE & THANKSGIVING

Each Saturday during Lent, we will take some time as a church family to practice a different spiritual discipline or spiritual practice together. Today, we are practicing praise & thanksgiving through making an Ebenezer. You may want to use the guide printed on this page, or by watching a video of longtime staffer Jean Ewing guiding you through this spiritual practice online at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

WHAT IS AN EBENEZER?

In 1 Samuel 7:12, we read, *"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the LORD has helped us.'"* This week we will build an Ebenezer, which more literally translates to a "stone of help." There is nothing particularly spiritual or special about making an Ebenezer, but as human beings, we often need tangible reminders of divine truths.

HOW TO MAKE AN EBENEZER:

There are many ways to create a memorial of praise, an Ebenezer, but each one serves to remind us of a time in which God has been faithful and where God has helped us. As we revisit our Ebenezers, we are reminded that God is who He says He is; that God is faithful; that God is FOR us; that God will show up. Here are two ways to make an Ebenezer:

1. *Find a number of smooth stones and simply write on each stone what God has done in your life. You can keep these stones in a jar or a bowl somewhere where you can revisit them... maybe even somewhere where visitors to your home can also experience them.*
2. *Another way is to download the PDF we have available for you on the webpage above and to hang this on your wall and to add to it as God helps you, so that each time you pass this place of your home, you will be reminded of God's faithfulness to you.*

Here are some things to ask yourself as you work on your Ebenezer:

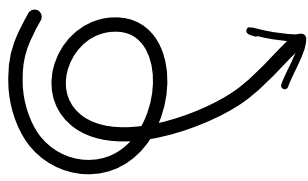
- *How has God helped you thus far in your life? Be specific!*
- *How has the Lord fought for you?*
- *When have you experienced the help of God?*
- *When has God been "For" you?*



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MY SERMON NOTES



WHO'S SPEAKING?

SERMON TITLE:

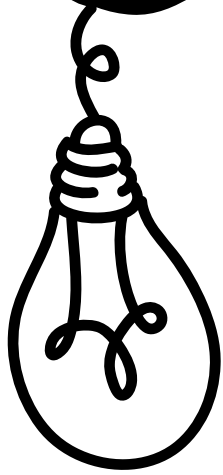
WHERE IN THE BIBLE?

REFERENCE:

WHO IS IN THE PASSAGE?



THE BIG IDEA!



I LEARNED:

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:

DRAW SOMETHING:



MY NEXT STEP:



NOAH ON SELF DISCIPLINE & SHAME

READ GENESIS 9:18-27

Awkward!! Of the over two thousand sermons I've potentially heard since 1987, one I remember is about Noah's lapse. The key point of the speaker was ending our lives well. Some people in the Bible had good beginnings but bad endings and vice versa. Lots of people tell the story of Noah and the ark. How many people tell the story of a drunk Noah? Or how many people tell the story of a disrespectful son who did not do the right thing? It is my prayer that all of us will end our lives well.

It was certainly not Ham's fault that he came upon his uncovered dad. However, his response was problematic. Instead of covering his father's shame, he compounds it by telling others. Shame. We all feel it. And sometimes we spread it. As if it is not enough that something that should not have happened has occurred, we gleefully share another's dirty laundry.

What was the response of Ham's brothers? Self-discipline. They didn't go and see so they could point fingers or chortle and tell others the news. No! Instead, they backed up and covered Noah making sure they didn't look on him. When they had the chance to gloat over their father and show him in the wrong, they rejected that option and chose rather to honor and care for him. And for that they were blessed.

At this time, Noah had spent hundreds of years walking with the Lord. At no time can we be complacent. We must stick close to our Savior. It is too easy to miss the path or get lost if we are not constantly looking to Him. Sometimes a good idea is not so good. Sometimes we convince ourselves that something is okay to satisfy our fleshly desires. Self-discipline. When we don't exercise it, we often end up feeling ashamed.

Shame. We all like sheep have gone astray. There is none righteous, no, not one. The Lenten journey points us to the Cross where the sinless One bore all our shame. It also sets us on a journey where we can exercise self-discipline. God gives us the opportunity to choose. We can give up something to discover something better. In a world that caters to the flesh, to what feels good, and to "You do you!", are we willing to do what God wants?

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Despite our human frailty, God loves us. Despite our selfishness, sin and shame, Jesus died for us. How can this motivate us to follow Him more closely?*
- *Self-discipline often requires what we don't want to give (up). Reflect on ways we can be more disciplined in our dealings with others. Did you give up anything meaningful for Lent?*

HONOR YOUR FATHER & MOTHER

READ MATTHEW 15:3-6

Noah, a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5) had come off of a mountaintop experience. He had warned a generation or more of people about God’s impending judgment. He has built and then entered an ark with his family and at least two of every creature on earth. After landing on a mountaintop, he planted a vineyard, made wine and got drunk. His son Ham found his father passed out and uncovered. He made a choice to dishonor his father by looking at his father’s unclothed body and then pointed out the situation to his two brothers. Even though what Noah did was wrong, Ham had to decide how to respond to the situation. He chose to dishonor his father. This story in Genesis illustrates the importance of honoring our parents whether or not they make good choices.

The Pharisees told themselves that they could choose not to support their parents with finances by saying the needed money was devoted to God. After all, God was more important than their parents. Jesus points out that by choosing not to help their parents, they are breaking the Fifth Commandment to honor their father and mother.

Years ago, I had my first full-time job. I felt rich because I could finally buy a vacuum. But I was still in training and had a small salary. My mother had started calling and writing to ask for help with finances. She was divorced and still had eight children in her household. Although my father sent child support, it was not enough. The issue was that the amount she was requesting was more than I could afford. Also, I was a brand-new believer in my first church and excited about following God and tithing. Then I read this passage in Matthew. I also read I Timothy 5:8 which states that “*anyone who does not provide for their relatives and especially for those of their own household has denied the faith and is worse than a nonbeliever.*” Ouch!

My church helped me to reconcile the situation. I met with one of the deacons who helped me set up my first budget. We figured out an amount I could send my mother, give to the church and cover basic expenses. We also discussed sticking to this budget. This would allow me to honor my mother while meeting other obligations.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Why do you think the choices we make to honor others, especially family members, matter to God? How is it possible to show honor to them, even if we disagree or struggle with their choices?*

YOU WERE RIGHT!

READ EPHESIANS 6:1-4

I don't think anyone would have classified me as a "rebellious" teenager, but like many other young people, I craved independence, and at times it caused me to butt heads with my parents. Sometimes, when we talked things through, my mother would smile at me: "One day when you have kids of your own, you'll come to me and say, 'Mom, you were so right!'"

At the time, I probably rolled my eyes. Now, even early on in my own journey of parenthood, this phrase crosses my mind—and my lips—on a fairly regular basis. I didn't see the heart or intent behind the limits my parents set back then. Time and a new perspective have grown the respect and admiration I have for them.

The apostle Paul reminds us in this passage that God set up the family to operate in a way that honors Him—and a way that mirrors our relationship with Him.

As children, our parents have the life experience to lead us "so that it may go well," and in return, we are to listen to, trust, and ultimately respect them. Similarly, as children of God, He is the one with the plan; in return, we are to listen to His word, trust His direction, and respect His timing.

As parents, we want to do everything we can to help our children thrive and "turn out well," but ultimately, we don't have control over the choices they make or how they behave. God is the one in control. The best we can do is to set a good example by obeying Him.

It's easy to focus inward and think we are in control. Human nature causes us to tighten our grip on the things in our lives and build up a "kingdom of me," attempting to live as sovereign over every detail of our lives. No matter how hard we try, the plans we set for ourselves will never live up to His blueprint, and it's in the moments those plans fail when our sinfulness rises to the surface. God calls us to redeem ourselves by serving our families in a way that points them toward the greater good of His eternal kingdom—to "let go and let God."

In the midst of a trial, we might stomp our feet like an indignant child or feel as helpless as a frustrated caregiver, but ultimately when we follow His lead, we'll look back and say, "God, you were so right!"

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Can you think of a time when, in hindsight, you were grateful to have "let go and let God"? How has being obedient to God, even when you didn't want to, helped you avoid trouble in this life?*

TRUE LOVE

READ ROMANS 12:9-16

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” I am thankful Paul gives both as examples of how we are to love others in Romans 12:15 (ESV). We all have moments or seasons of rejoicing, as well as seasons of mourning and weeping.

When I reflect on times I have felt loved, some of the most profound moments are when others cry with me. One example of my family loving me in the way described in Romans 12:15 was the night my husband and I shared our struggle with infertility. I remember sitting in the living room, the glowing embers from the fireplace providing the only light, and my family weeping with us. They showed love by sitting in sadness with us, not jumping automatically to platitudes or attempting to “fix” things, but weeping with those who weep. Love in action.

Even as I have experienced beautiful examples of love in my life that reflect what Paul outlines here in Romans 12, I realize how often I fall short when loving others. This passage sets a high standard. Practicing patience in affliction? So hard! Blessing those who persecute you... can feel impossible. Not being conceited? Clinging only to what is good? Honestly, the more I read these verses the more I realize I could never live up to this standard of love on my own. I need God.

I have experienced the incredible love of God through others, and I know the only way I can truly love others is through God, as well. Our world has both beauty and rottenness, goodness and sin. It is hard, as flawed people, to choose love, to choose good, every time. Just look around at this world, and inside ourselves; our need for God is apparent.

When I am loved by others, I can offer thanks to God, when I find myself not loving others well, I can confess my need for God. We want to be known as people who are joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. This comes with humility in realizing we need God to be able to have true joy, patience, faithfulness, and love. Thank God He is our source and we don't need to muster up the strength to love well on our own. We need God. And God is here with us.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Can you think of an example when you were loved well? Give thanks to God for that love.*
- *Ask God to help you love those you encounter in daily life – especially when it's a challenge.*

MOUNTAIN TOP PERSPECTIVE

READ GENESIS 12:1-3 & MATTHEW 28:18-20

In 28:16, Matthew did not need to name the mountain where Jesus told the disciples to meet Him after the resurrection. It would have been obvious to his audience—Mt. Arbel, the most prominent point overlooking the Sea of Galilee. While you can take a tour bus to the top, in 2015 our study group took the path Jesus took, hiking three hours up the steep, rugged trail. When you have to sweat for your lesson, you remember the teaching, a tactic Jesus also used often.

Up top, the view was breathtaking. Our teacher explained that Jesus had a reason for saying these words in this location. From this vantage point the disciples see a majority of the locations where Jesus' teachings and miracles took place, all at the same time! As they scanned the horizon, they saw the places where they learned *"all that I have commanded you."*

Looking Northeast, Matthew could see where his toll booth was, at the border between Herod Antipas' and Herod Philip's territories. They could also see the two main international roads which pass through Galilee, which intersected on the plain below. At that busy crossroads, people from all nations were traveling, North, South, East, West. With people from those many nations in eye-sight, Jesus commissions the disciples: *"Go! Make disciples of them, baptize them into a new life with God, teach them to obey all that you have learned from me."*

With these words, God's promise to Abraham, that *"all peoples on earth would be blessed through you,"* would finally be fulfilled. After more than a millennium of waiting, these words would come true through the Gospel ministry of the disciples. Now 2000 years later, disciples of Christ are still commissioned to bring blessing all peoples, as we share with a needful world Jesus' teaching, forgiveness, healing, redemption, the infilling of the Holy Spirit and baptism into a New Creation.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Take time today to bring a word of blessing (call, write, text, visit) to a someone from a different people group than your own, or to a field worker serving among the nations.*

PRACTICE: LECTIO DIVINA

Each Saturday during Lent, we will take some time as a church family to practice a different spiritual discipline or spiritual practice together. Today, we are practicing *lectio divina*. You may want to use the guide printed on this page, or by watching a video of former Eastbrook Missions Pastor Paul Sinclair guiding you through this spiritual practice online at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

WHAT IS LECTIO DIVINA?

Lectio divina means “divine reading” or “sacred reading.” With *lectio divina*, we bring our whole self to God as we slowly read through a passage of Scripture four times, allowing the text to come alive for us in new ways.

HOW TO PRACTICE LECTIO DIVINA:

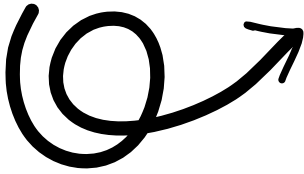
Read through Luke 23:32-43 four times. Each time, consider a different aspect of the passage. Trust that God will graciously speak to you through this passage as you listen to His Word.

- 1. *Lectio (Read)***—As you read this passage the first time, listen for a particular word or phrase that speaks to you. Trust that the Holy Spirit will illuminate this passage and will bring a word or phrase to your mind. Hold that word or phrase in your mind. Don't force anything, but wait patiently for God's guidance.
- 2. *Meditatio (Reflect)***—As you read this passage for the second time, ask God to show you more about the word or phrase that caught your attention the first time through. Savor that word or phrase with all of your senses, and enter into this passage with your whole self. Where are you in the story? What are you seeing? Smelling? Tasting? Feeling? Experiencing? This time through, listen for what images, feelings, and memories are stirring in your soul and welcome them in as you experience this passage in a real way.
- 3. *Oratio (Prayer)***—As you read the text a third time, listen for an invitation from God rising up from your experience of prayerful reading thus far. In light of the word or phrase that stood out to you and what it evoked for you in memory, image, or feeling, what is the invitation that God has for you? This invitation may be a summons toward a new awareness or action.
- 4. *Contemplatio (Contemplation)***—Read the passage one more time. As you read, rest in the presence of God and allow yourself simply to be. You may want to reposition your body so that your hands are facing upwards, as a physical sign that you are open to hearing from God in this final reading.

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GUIDE YOU
THROUGH THIS
PRACTICE.



MY SERMON NOTES



WHO'S SPEAKING?

SERMON TITLE:

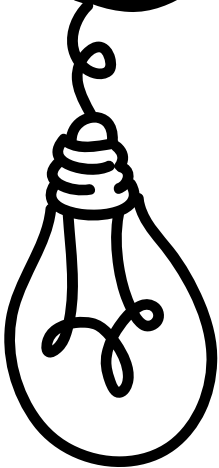
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THE BIG IDEA!



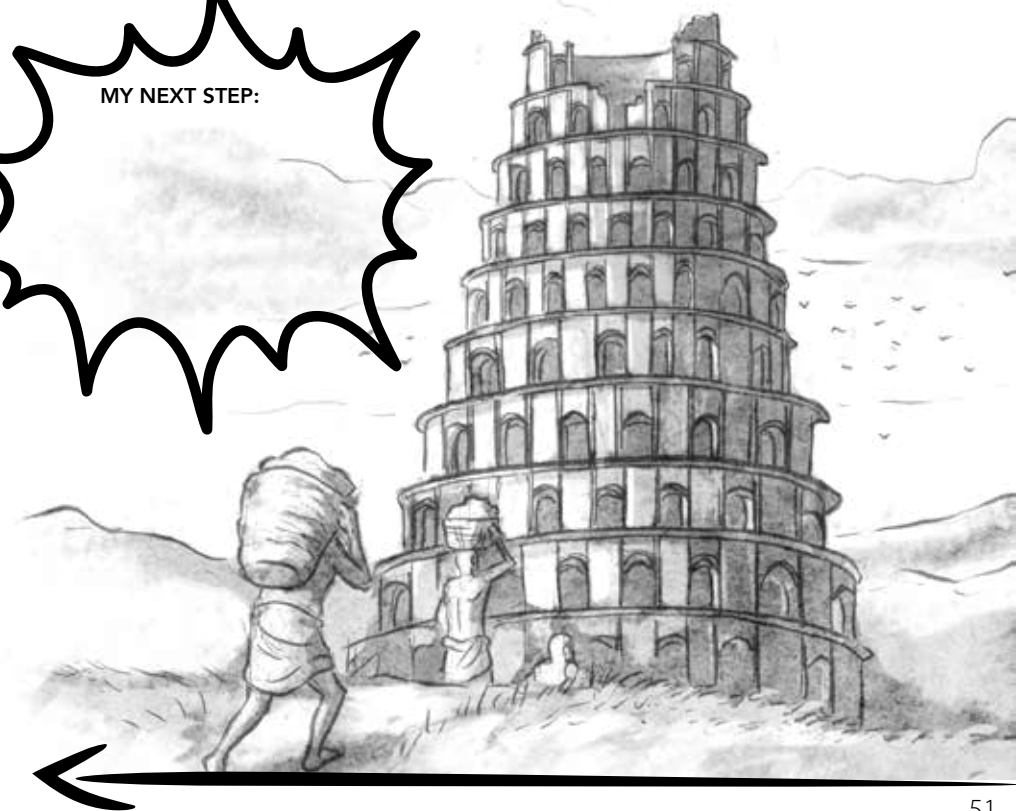
I LEARNED:

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:



DRAW SOMETHING:

MY NEXT STEP:



ONLY JESUS

READ GENESIS 11:1-9

"Make it count, leave a mark, build a name for yourself. Dream your dreams, chase your heart above all else. Make a name the world remembers." (from "Only Jesus" by Casting Crowns)

One of the first things I had to do before opening a cafe was to decide on a name. A few friends suggested I name it after myself since, after all, most of the recipes were mine and it had always been my dream to do this. I never really cared for that idea because I didn't want the spotlight on me. I knew God had answered my prayers by providing the money, the location and everything else including my love of hospitality and cooking. I wanted to honor Him for giving me this opportunity. Speed ahead 3 years and we were making a profit, we had great food and a good reputation in the community.

I remember one day when a dish was sent back to the kitchen that I had personally prepared. I wasn't happy about it and let the kitchen staff know by complaining that the customer didn't know what they were talking about. As I was remaking the dish, I heard a voice in my head say "I thought you opened this cafe wanting to honor me?"

Wow! That message hit hard. I personally delivered the meal to the customer and apologized telling them the meal was on me. I then apologized to my kitchen staff for my wrong attitude. Later that day I told God how sorry I was for allowing a blessing from Him to become a thing of pride for me.

The men of Babylon had forgotten about God's goodness and blessing on their lives and wanted to build a tower to their own greatness for the world to see. God has made us in His image having the talent and desire to create, build and develop, but when the created thing becomes the source of our identity and self-worth, it has replaced God.

The ending lines to Only Jesus are...

"But all an empty world can sell is empty dreams. I got lost in the light when it was up to me to make a name the world remembers. But Jesus is the only name to remember."

FOR REFLECTION:

- *What towers are you building to your own name in your life? How can you be sure to turn the spotlight to God in those areas rather than yourself?*

GOD'S GLOBAL FAMILY

READ ACTS 2:1-13

TUESDAY, APRIL 4

Can you imagine what it was like at Pentecost when the believers were gathered and the Holy Spirit fell on all of them? Suddenly they started to talk in so many different languages that people in Jerusalem at that time, from all over the world, heard them in their own language. These believers were praising God in front of God-fearing Jews from every nation. Their worship quickly turned into a great gathering asking 'how can these Galileans speak our language'?

In Genesis 11, the story of the Tower of Babel, God confused the people's language so that they would not understand each other, but at Pentecost, it was the opposite. The Holy Spirit came and made clear the wonders of God in the listeners' own native languages gathering them together.

The words the believers spoke were God's words—the Holy Spirit gave them the words to say. God knows every language in the whole world and He knows the language of every person, even yours. He knows your heart language, the language that really touches you intimately and He can use it to speak to you. Oh that we would listen!

The populace in the world today is scattered and diverse. It's difficult to communicate with people from other countries and cultures. Not only are the words so different, the sounds are different and there are unwritten codes for each culture. As God's children we are called to unity and the love of Christ binds us together. How amazing it is to find believers from other parts of the world and we all share the same Holy Spirit. We are brothers and sisters because of what Jesus did for us by dying on the Cross for our sins.

I was born, raised, and educated in Sweden so I have much in common with fellow Swedes who have the same background. We ate the same foods, went to very similar schools and have the same traditions and songs. It's a wonderful connection. I have found, though, that when meeting people of faith in the Lord Jesus from around the world, that connection is even stronger. They are brothers and sisters in the truest sense. The pouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost made it possible for us to be one. Praise God!

FOR REFLECTION:

- *When have you experienced the incredible reality of being part of God's vast and diverse family? Have you experienced hospitality, encouragement or assistance from other believers that you did not know or are very different from? How did this make you feel?*

THE EYES OF THE LORD FIND THEIR MAN

READ GENESIS 11:27-32

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

(2 Chronicles 16:9 NKJV)

Genesis 11:27-32 are the final verses of what many refer to as "the introduction of the Bible." They center around a man named Terah, who was the father of Abram. Terah was born many generations after the tower of Babel incident. Mentioning this genealogy signals that "the stage is set" for God's main story to begin.

As the LORD had done with Noah, He chose Abram out of all those living on the earth. At the time, it must have seemed like an odd choice for two reasons. First, Terah was still the leader of the family. Second, Sarai was barren and had little to no prospects of producing children to fulfill God's promises to Abram at the beginning of Genesis 12. Why would the LORD choose someone who wasn't the leader of even his own family and who would soon "*be cut off from the land of the living*" since he had no children?

The answer, of course, is Abram's faith. Instead of going directly to do God's will by taking Abram and the family to Canaan, Terah moved the family near the source of the Euphrates River at Harran. Even after Abram moved on to Canaan, Terah remained in Harran for another 60 years until his death. By contrast, Abram did not abandon God's call, but trusted it. Later in Genesis 15:4-6, Abram believed the LORD when God promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars "*and it was credited to him as righteousness*" (see Romans 4:4). Again, in Genesis 22:3, when God gave him the ultimate test of faith, he (Abraham at this point) "*got up early the next morning*" to hurry to obey.

The LORD searched the entire earth and waited five generations after the tower of Babel to begin His intricate plan to restore all nations to Himself through Christ, beginning with a promise to one ordinary, faithful man. As we prepare for the sorrow of the Cross and the joy of the empty tomb this weekend, let us reflect on how this plan began more than 2,000 years before Christ with a highly selective process of one man with simple faith and obedience.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *How is God calling you to be completely and simply devoted to Him?*

A NEW MANDATE

READ LUKE 22:24-27

I remember attending my first Maundy Thursday service eight years ago. Two things stand out in my memory: the smell of feet, and how uncomfortable it was to wash the feet of a stranger!

Today is Maundy Thursday, a name that comes from the Latin *“mandatum novum do vobis,”* words Jesus spoke to His apostles as they celebrated the Last Supper: *“A new command [mandate] I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another”* (John 13:34). This “new mandate” comes immediately after Jesus washed the feet of His apostles.

As uncomfortable as my first Maundy Thursday foot-washing experience was, it was nothing compared to what I experienced last summer as a friend and I walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain. Three days into the journey, I found myself in the common room of our hostel, doing my best to take care of my already-blistered-and-bloody feet and trying not to cry as I lost my first toenail. I looked over and saw a fellow pilgrim from South Korea break down completely from her own battered feet. Within moments, our Spanish host had grabbed his first aid kit, and was expertly and tenderly sewing up her blisters and bandaging her wounds.

This became our rhythm every day. Every morning, we would prepare our feet for the day with Vaseline, toe socks, blister bandages, and special boot-lacing techniques. Yet every night, our feet looked like they had been through war: blood, blisters, open sores, dirt, sand, you name it. Our feet were disgusting and each night we helped each other care for them.

I’ll never read a passage about foot-washing the same way after that experience. Jesus and His disciples wore sandals and walked everywhere. Their feet were more like our filthy Camino feet than the feet I washed at the Maundy Thursday service—no wonder this was a task reserved for servants. And yet, Jesus washed their feet, maybe even tending to blisters and wounds like our kind Spanish hosts! This is our new mandate... to love each other and care for each other even when it’s messy, uncomfortable, smelly, or difficult. *“Who is greater? The one at the table, or the one who serves?”*

FOR REFLECTION:

- *Participate in tonight’s Maundy Thursday foot washing service at Eastbrook, or practice foot-washing at home with your family tonight.*
- *View artist @saltandgoldcollection’s foot-washing series on Instagram in light of this passage from Luke.*

TRUE INJUSTICE

READ 1 PETER 2:22-25

I remember a situation during my freshman year of high school. In a study hall with a rather inexperienced student teacher, one of my classmates became unruly and disrespectful. After several attempts to get him to stop and be quiet, the teacher called the school office and asked for the assistant principal to come to the classroom to intervene. He seemed to arrive immediately and approached my desk and asked if I thought I was being funny. The next thing I remember was being slapped several times, all while the perpetrator sat in the back of the room laughing. I was stunned and embarrassed and felt like a victim. As I remember it, I had done nothing wrong. I was innocent and I wanted justice! Now, as I look back on the situation, I probably wasn't totally innocent. I may have thought that some of the things the unruly student was doing were kind of funny. Although what happened to me that day may seem unfair, there is a stark contrast between the injustice I felt and the true injustice Jesus experienced when He suffered on the Cross prior to His crucifixion.

Unlike you and me, who get infinitely more grace than we deserve in relation to God, Jesus was perfectly innocent in conduct and speech. Jesus was hit, beaten, scourged and whipped, forced to carry His Cross and then nailed to it. Sinless Jesus would have been fully justified to defend Himself or to call down a legion of angels in His defense. He didn't. He remained silent. He suffered and was slandered but He did not retaliate or threaten. Jesus knew His role in God's plan to redeem mankind, and He trusted God to work through the painful circumstances.

When we sincerely think about the Crucifixion, it should make us pause and recognize the magnitude of the humility of Jesus and the love He has for us. On the Cross, true injustice was used to justify you and me, and left us with a blueprint for handling injustice in our own lives. Now, when we feel injustice, we can lay it at the feet of the One who understands. Let's take time on this Good Friday to thank and honor our Lord and Savior.

FOR REFLECTION:

- *How have you experienced injustice? How did you handle it? Have you given it to Jesus? How does His example inspire you to trust God even in the face of injustice?*

PRACTICE: EXAMEN

Each Saturday during Lent, we will take some time as a church family to practice a different spiritual discipline or spiritual practice together. Today, we are the Examen. You may want to use the guide printed on this page, or by watching a video of Senior Pastor Matt Erickson guiding you through this spiritual practice online at eastbrook.org/fractureddevo.

WHAT IS THE EXAMEN?

The Examen is usually a daily practice of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern His direction for us. For the sake of this devotional, we are going to practice a Lenten Examen, where we will prayerfully reflect on the past 6 weeks in order to see where God has been at work in each of our lives during Lent, and to discern what He is calling us to this Easter season.

HOW TO PRACTICE THE EXAMEN:

Reflect on these questions in light of the past 6 weeks of Lent:

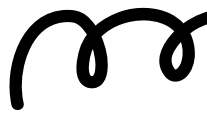
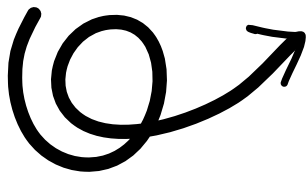
1. *As you think back through this season of Lent, what has been happening to you personally during this season?*
2. *In the past 6 weeks, where have you experienced the greatest sense of consolation (peace, contentment, shalom, beauty, etc.)?*
3. *Call to mind 2 or 3 things from this Lenten season that you are grateful for. Write them down and thank God for them.*
4. *In the past 6 weeks, where have you experienced the most desolation (preoccupation, depression, anxiety, etc.)?*
5. *Where have you most experienced the presence of God during Lent? Where did you notice God? In what people, places, and events did you encounter God? Take your time and just "notice."*
6. *How has your image of God changed, matured, or been challenged during Lent?*
7. *Finish by naming the three most important spiritual take-a-ways from this Lent that you never want to forget.*



SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE'S CAMERA TO WATCH PASTOR MATT GUIDE YOU THROUGH THIS PRACTICE.



MY SERMON NOTES



WHO'S SPEAKING?

SERMON TITLE:

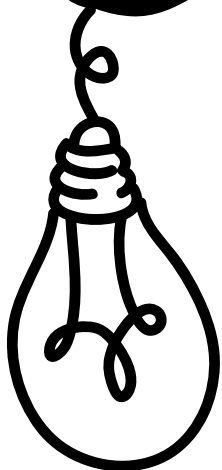
WHERE IN THE BIBLE?

REFERENCE:

WHO IS IN THE PASSAGE?



THE BIG IDEA!

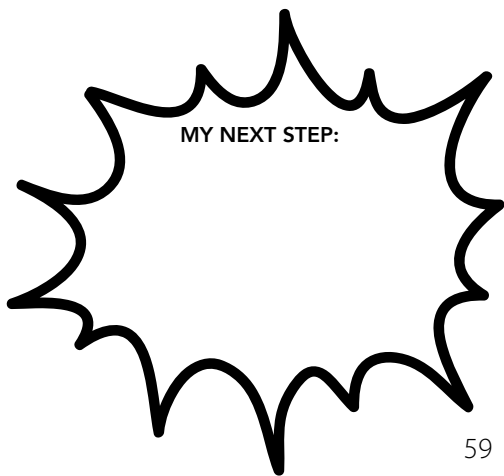


I LEARNED:

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:



**DRAW
SOMETHING:**



SPECIAL THANKS

EDITING TEAM

Matt Erickson
Jim Caler
Liz Carver

PROOFREADING

Maritza Diaz

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Liz Carver

ILLUSTRATIONS

Christian Wall

LETTERING

Darryl McDuffie

DIGITAL EDITOR

Rachel Shuster

INQUIRIES

Eastbrook Church

5385 N. Green Bay Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53209

414.228.5220 · info@eastbrook.org

eastbrook.org

WORKS CITED

1. All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted. *The Holy Bible*, New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan House, 2011.
2. Song, "The Light" by Disturbed. Writers Dan Donegan, David Draiman, Kevin Churko and Mike Wengren.