



Bible Studies

Genesis 4-12

“Taking the next step of faith”

Acts 9-28

“Taking the next step in mission”

NextStep>

FAITH AND MISSION

NextStep>

GENESIS:
NEXT STEP IN FAITH

Genesis 4-12 studies

Study 1

Genesis 4:1-26

Cain and Abel

Introduction

1. What is your true motivation for giving? (Maybe you have more than 1?)

Questions

READ Genesis 4:1-26

2. What possible reasons could God have had for accepting Abel's offering but not Cain's?
3. Was God "angry" with Cain? Had Cain actually done anything wrong by giving the fruit he gave?
4. Why was Cain angry? And where was that anger directed?
5. What is the pain of being a restless wanderer?

6. How does God show grace and mercy towards Cain in this chapter?
7. What do you think such detail of Cain's family are shared with us?
8. What does Lamech's actions tell us about the human story?
9. Why did people start to call on the name of the Lord? (verse 26)

Application

10. In what ways are you like Cain? What steps can you take right now to be more like Abel in his faith?

Study 2

Genesis 5:1-6:4

Adam to Noah

Introduction

1. If you could ask your great, great, great, great grandfather or mother one questions about your family line, what would it be?

Questions

READ Genesis 5:1-32

2. Did you actually read **all** the names and details? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think we get a very brief recap of chapters 1 and 2 in 5:1-2?
4. Why give such detail about everyone's ages in this chapter? In fact, why even bother with all the names?
5. What do you think is the significance of Adam's son being "in his own likeness, in his own image"? What is significant about using this phrasing?
6. Are there any other interesting names or facts or numbers in chapter 5 that you notice?

READ Genesis 6:1-4

7. “the sons of God” is an interesting phrase. There are 3 main schools of thought on who they were:
- non-human angels/demons/spirits
 - “superior” men – rulers and kings
 - “godly men” – the descendants of Seth – as opposed to the descendants of Cain.

The first option is the most widely accepted. However many people today have a problem imagining heavenly beings have earthly relationships with humans. What do you think? (Note: In Job 1:6, the word “angels” is actually the same phrase = “sons of God”)

What is happening is wrong. There were unacceptable relationships happening between humans and heavenly beings. In essence, this was not what God intended for his creation. Something is very wrong.

8. How does verse 3 compare with Genesis 3:22? Do you see this new age limit as a curse from God, or as an offering of protection from ourselves?

9. Many commentators believe the Nephilim to be the giant offspring of the human/angel unions. What we have is a picture of creation gone wrong, perhaps even “weird”. What do you think God must be thinking as he looks on his creation now?

Application

10. Some images and ideas in the Bible can be hard to understand, like Nephilim and “sons of god”. What is a helpful first step in dealing with such passages?

Study 3

Genesis 6:5-7:1, 7:17-8:5, 8:18-22

Flood to mercy

Introduction

1. Have you ever completely destroyed something? Why or why not?

Questions

READ Genesis 6:5-7:1, 7:17-8:5, 8:18-22. (You can read the whole passage if you have time from 6:5-8:22)

2. Looking at 6:6, 11 – As we read why God wanted to flood the earth, why do you think he hates corruption?

3. What do you think of God having “regret” in 6:6?

4. Why do you think the details of the building of the ark given to Noah are so detailed?

5. How was it, do you think, that Noah managed to be a righteous man (6:9) while the rest of the earth was corrupt?

6. What do you find most interesting about the process and details of the actual flood?

7. In 8:21, does this again sound like “regret” from God? Or is it different? What does this verse tell us about humans?

8. Read and compare Matthew 24:36-41. What are the similarities?

9. One of the best known other accounts of the flood is from Mesopotamia, known as the Gilgamesh Epic. In this account, the human hero is Utnapishtim. The flood comes because there are many gods were arguing with each other about humans. They decide to flood the earth, but one dissenting god decides to help one human, Utnapishtim, escape. When the flood happens, the gods are scared of what they have done, and are found “cowering like dogs against the wall”. One god, Enlil, is surprised when he learns of Utnapishtim surviving the flood: “Has some living soul escaped? No man was supposed to survive the destruction!” It is an account that portrays the gods as uncertain, afraid, and in disarray, with no united purpose, and no ultimate control over the events. How does the character of God in the Genesis account differ?

Application

10. Genesis 6-8 teaches us a lot about human character and God’s character. What is the most significant aspect of these chapters for you in terms of the character of humans and God?

Study 4

Genesis 9:1-17, 11:1-9

Covenant to Babel

Introduction

1. Have you ever had, or wanted, a fresh start? What would that look like for you? What would be your first step if you had a fresh start?

Questions

READ 9:1-17

2. Looking at 9:1-3 – How do these verses compare to Genesis 1:29-30?
3. The image of God features again in this passage (9:6), almost perhaps like a refreshing of the Genesis 1-2 account. Why do you think is this idea of “image” important to the opening book of the Bible?
4. God’s covenant is not only with humans, but their descendants AND the animals (9:10). Why are the animals included in God’s new covenant?

5. 9:11 – Why does God promise not to flood the earth again? And why does he give Noah a sign?

READ 11:1-9

6. What do you think it would have been like to live in a world with just one language?

7. Why was the Tower of Babel built? Is there anything wrong with this reason?

8. Why was God so against humans working together?!

9. What might have happened if God did not do anything in this case?

Application

10. What do you think when you see a rainbow in the sky, or in a picture, or on TV?

Study 5

Genesis 12:1-20

Covenant to Egypt

Introduction

1. What are, or were, your plans for your life? How are they working out? What is your next step in faith?

Questions

READ Genesis 12:1-9

2. This is one of the most significant events in Biblical history. Why is it so important?
3. In verses 2-3, what promises does God make to Abram, and how do we see these promises come to fulfillment over time?
4. The idea of blessing is a strong one. The word bless means to be 'approved' by God. For Abram, what is God's approval going to look like?
5. Like Noah, Abram went "as God had told him" and did what was asked. Was Abram being bravely faithful, or was he just blindly following God's direction? In other words, do you think he really understood what was going on?

6. In verse 5, what do you think of the phrase “the people they had acquired in Harran”?

READ Genesis 12:10-20

7. Following on from such an important passage, here we see something surprising. Is Abram being clever by not telling Pharaoh Sarah was his wife? Or was he simply lacking trust in God by lying?

8. Do you think it’s unfair that Pharaoh and his household are punished for doing something they didn’t know was wrong?

9. What was the end result of this encounter?

Application

10. How difficult do you find it to rely upon God’s promises? What in particular do you find difficult in taking the next step in your walk of faith?

NextStep>

ACTS:
NEXT STEP IN MISSION

Acts 9-28 studies

Study 6

Acts 9:1-31

Saul's Conversion

Introduction

1. Can you share a short version of your conversion story? How did you take your first step of faith? (Imagine you have 30 seconds!)

Questions

READ Acts 9:1-31

2. After being central to the stoning of Stephen, Saul is still actively seeking to persecute Christians. WHY would God want Saul to be his disciple?!
3. A key aspect of the Apostle's credentials was that they were all witnesses to Jesus directly. How important does that make this personal appearance of Jesus to Saul for him to later become called an Apostle? (The word apostle means "sent one")
4. Jesus says to Saul in verse 4 "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" and again in verse 5 "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting". What does Jesus mean by saying that Saul is persecuting HIM directly? Isn't Saul persecuting Jesus' followers, and not Jesus himself?

5. What is the significance of the event of Saul's blindness?

6. In verse 15, the Lord calls Saul his "instrument". What is the implication of the use of this word to describe Saul's calling?

7. In verse 20 we are told that "at once he began to preach in the synagogues". How is that possible, having only JUST been converted?

8. How did the Jews and the Christians perceive Saul at this time?
Where did that leave him?

9. What do you think of as you read verse 31?

Application

10. What steps in God's mission did Saul take that you might be afraid to take yourself?

Study 7

Acts 10:1-48

Cornelius' vision

Introduction

1. Have you ever had God speak to you in a direct or indirect way that has significantly influenced your life? If so, in what ways did that encourage you in your next steps as a Christian?

Questions

READ Acts 10:1-48

2. Verse 1-8. Why do you think God sends an angel to Cornelius? Isn't there a more "normal" way for him to have reached him?
3. Verses 9-23. Why does God use such a supernatural means to talk to Peter as well?
4. Verses 24-48. How does Cornelius greet Peter when he arrives? Why?

5. What was the vision to Peter showing him about God's mission to the Gentiles?

6. Why do you think it is important that it was Peter who had the first mission journey to the Gentiles?

7. What steps in God's mission are being accomplished in this chapter?

8. In verses 38-43 what are the key points of Peters' gospel presentation?

9. When the Holy Spirit arrives in verse 44, and comes upon all who heard the message, what actions and signs follow His arrival?

Application

10. Peter's first mission trip to the Gentiles was unexpected in every way and by every one. What unexpected steps have you taken under God in mission? What unexpected steps may be ahead for you or for us as a church?

Study 8

Acts 12:1-13:3

Peter's escape

Introduction

1. How many steps in your life are guided by prayerfulness?

Questions

READ 12:1-13:3

2. In verses 4, why do you think Peter was guarded so carefully by Herod's men?
3. Why do you think there are so many angelic appearances in the life of the early church?
4. Verse 15: "It must be his angel." What does that mean?! They preferred to think it was Peter's "guardian" angel who had taken on his appearance, rather than believe it was Peter himself. What does this say of what they thought would happen to Peter? They obviously never expected him to knock at the door!

5. What does verse 19 tell us of the times that of the early church and the Roman rulers?

6. Does God rescue people in such supernatural ways today?

7. Why do you think later on that God did not release the apostle Paul from prison with an angel like he released Peter?

8. What does the nature and reasoning of Herod's death say about God's sovereignty over these times?

9. Verse 24 – What do you imagine this looked like at the time?

Application

10. The steps we take in sharing the gospel can often be difficult and challenging. What ways can we support one another in our church in taking further steps in mission? Are we thinking too small in terms of our next steps?

Study 9

Acts 16:16-40

Paul and Silas in prison

Introduction

1. Are there times when you have stepped out in faith that people have really turned against you because of it?

Questions

READ Acts 16:16-40

2. What do you think happened to the female slave after these events?
3. Verse 21: What unlawful customs do you think they are referring to?
4. Verse 22: Why do you think that the initial punishment was so severe?
5. Verse 27 – Why was the jailer about to kill himself?

6. From verses 30 – 34, what are the steps in the jailer's life that occur?

7. Verse 35 – why do you think the magistrates decided to release them?

8. What significance does Paul's and Silas' Roman citizenship have in all this?

9. Who is Lydia?

Application

10. Paul and Silas found themselves in an unusual situation. But through this, a jailer and his family were brought to faith. Are there people around you who you may be able to help take the next step in faith or the next step in mission? Who? How?

Study 10

Acts 19:1-41

Paul in Ephesus

Introduction

1. Make up your own introduction question!

Questions

READ Acts 19:1-22

2. Why do you think baptism was such a regular first step in these situations?
3. What did Paul do when those in the synagogue maligned the Way? Do you think what he did was a helpful course of action? (Consider the result)
4. Verse 11-12 – Could it be a concern that people might have been putting their faith in Paul instead of Jesus?
5. Verse 4 – what mistake did the seven sons of Sceva make? What was the result of people hearing what happened to them?

READ Acts 19:23-41

6. Yet again, the gospel is threatening economic sabotage!
Anticipating losses to their statue sales, the whole city turns against Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus. Why was it so easy for Demetrius to get this riot happening?

7. In what ways do we see society turning, nearly rioting, against Christians today?

8. How was the riot avoided? What can we learn from this today?

9. What does this passage tell you about the way different cultures were perceiving the onset of Christianity in society?

Application

10. What steps are we, as a church, taking in mission to different cultures? Apart from overseas, how can we challenge each other now, here, to engage in the next step of mission with the people of our own society?

Take the NextStep>

Just as you received Christ Jesus
as Lord, continue to live in him.

Colossians 2:6