



*Lenten Devotional
2018*

Week 2

February 25-March 3

*What's Your Story?
A Call to Adventure*



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impossible with God. He changed their names to Abraham and Sarah, and the son they had the next year was named Isaac.

I had been curious to see where my ancestors came from. An aunt did a genealogy research into the paternal side of my family, but it didn't get into where we originated. My sister did the Ancestry.com but, I'd heard that even siblings could have different DNA and not the exact same ancestry. However, thanks to one of my daughter's Christmas presents, I found out where my "beginnings began". I was totally surprised by the results. But I shouldn't have been. I realized although the place of my ancestors' birth may designate where they were born, I already know who my true ancestors were beginning with Abraham and Sarah.

PRAYER: Our Heavenly Father, as we read all your stories in our Bible, let us remember our true ancestors, especially Jesus whom we know gave his life for our salvation and justification. May we strive to do our best and have the faith of Abraham to cling to in all of our days. **Amen**

Wanda Williams

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL WRITERS

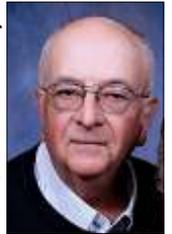
2018

Sunday—Rev. Brenda Wideman is our Associate Pastor of Congregational



Care She is a former teacher and IT administrator at the UofA and lives in Fayetteville. She received a calling to ministry in 2008 and has recently completed the ordination process,. She will be ordained as a deacon on June 19, 2018 at our Annual Conference in Hot Springs.

Monday—Alan Packard and his wife Judie moved to Bella Vista in 2007 from Wisconsin. They joined the church in September of that year. Alan has been a life-long Methodist having lived in many Midwest states from the time he was a young child. Most of the congregation knows him from his teaching the Disciple Bible Study classes and the Golden Links Sunday school class. He is past president of the United Methodist Men and currently serves as its secretary. He recently took on responsibility as Charter Organization Representative of the Boy Scouts, now that our church is a sponsor.



Tuesday—Amy Fulton (and Carole Boyd) moved to Bella Vista in December of 2002 and Amy currently works for Arvest Bank at Town Center. She's the church photographer and is rarely seen without her camera in hand. She truly enjoys capturing the life and service of FUMCBV... a place she has called home since joining Easter of 2012. She sings on the Praise Team and enjoys cooking, reading, traveling, fishing, singing and playing musical instruments (saxophone and guitar) when she's not busy taking pictures or involved with something having to do with photos. She has plenty of energy and has enjoyed writing since her early teens.



Wednesday—Lynn Prueitt moved to Bella Vista with husband Keith in October of 1995 from Des Moines, Iowa. They joined our church in January of 1996. In Des Moines she was a legal secretary for 29 years. After moving to Bella Vista she worked part-time for 9 years at the POA in the Membership Services Department. She sings in the choir, plays hand bells and is in the Bella Vista Women's Chorus. She likes to walk on the Bella Vista Lake trail and she does water aerobics at the Kingsdale pool in the summer. Lynn loves to read, cook, play Candy Crush, crochet, and visit their four children and grandchildren in Iowa, Oregon and Pittsburgh, PA.



Thursday—Austin Curtis is our Director of Youth Ministries. Austin is no stranger to youth and church ministry. He graduated from Elkins High School in northwest Arkansas, earned his Bachelors in Sports Ministry at Campbellsville University, and received his Masters of Divinity from Liberty University. Austin has served in various capacities as a youth pastor and YMCA Site Director from 2003-2012. Currently, Austin also serves as the Associate Pastor of Sulphur City Baptist Church and is the chaplain for C. I. Solutions. He is married to Amber, and they have an adorable 3 year old daughter named Elizabeth. Austin brings a passion for youth ministry and an infectious love of Jesus Christ to his commitment to our youth and to our church family.



Friday—Sonnie Andersen I was born on an Iowa farm where my roots seem to have been established in nature, justifying my being outside...even if it is "work". When less than five, our family moved to Muscatine, Iowa; and it was there I realized my love of singing...thus my involvement yet today. In spite of my BME degree at the U of Iowa, my position in the public schools was short-lived; while Dick was establishing his engineering career, my primary role was "keeping our home" and both of us raising our children. Directing church children's choirs became important; but I realized, I was happiest when I was a part in vocal singing, whatever form that took. Sometime later, I served in a number of positions in (what was then) Christian Women's Club, leading to a surge in my walk of faith. Realizing I wasn't really honoring Dick (scripture in mind), I took the risk of asking if we might go to a marriage enrichment program. Due to its lessons on Holy Matrimony and a gentle invitation to accept Christ not only into one's life but into our marriage, God worked in a mighty way by allowing us (through United Marriage Encounter) to share our lives with many...in the USA, England and many parts of Asia...something we never dreamed we would be doing for 26 years, until we permanently moved to Bella Vista ten years ago and FUMC became our home church.



Saturday—Wanda Williams was born and raised in Colorado but has lived in Montana, South Carolina and for the fourth time in Arkansas. She has been in Human Resources over twenty years and continues to work with the hopes of retiring before too long. She loves to read, do X-stitch, and has embroidered tea towels for the UMW bazaar every year she has been here. She also loves doing creative crafts, and her granddaughter Jenna can be found in her craft room joining her in alcohol ink and melted crayola projects. She is also the proud Grammy to Alec, and Craig who lives in New Jersey. Wanda attends the Well service with her daughter, Amy, and son-in-law, James, and Alec & Jenna.



In Genesis, we learn that God purposed through Abraham and his offspring....to work out the destiny of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike. It was implicit in the promise to Abraham that he and his descendents would inherit the earth. All those who are of the faith of Abraham, meaning from many nations, are to receive the blessings of God's kingdom. Note: The full realization of this awaits the consummation of the Messianic kingdom at Christ's return.

PRAYER: Our Gracious God and Father of us all, we bless You for the promise given to Abraham when he realized You are to be trusted (no matter what this life "throws" at us). When we sing, "Standing on the Promises (of God)", may our hearts also sing with praises of you and what Jesus has done for us. Encourage us Lord when our hope flags because of the trouble in this world...thank you for "being in charge" and caring for "little man". In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

Sonnie Andersen

Saturday, March 3, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Romans 4:23-25

The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. (NIV)

Talk about a story! This week's theme is A Call to Adventure. And adventure is what God gives us. The first part of our scripture this week might be confusing if you didn't know the rest of chapter four. The 'him' referenced is in regard to Abraham, who had quite the story of his life to tell. We all know that God told Abram that he and his wife, Sarai, would have descendants as many as the stars in the sky. When Abram and his wife Sarai were almost 100 years old, God told them they would have a son. As you can imagine, upon hearing this they both laughed. Imagine, someone their age having a child! Impossible! But, as we know, nothing is

Friday, March 2, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Romans 4:13-22

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Synopsis of this scripture: God's promise was received by Abraham on the basis of his faith, not on his keeping the law. Following, is the description of the nature of Abraham's faith.

Earlier in Romans (1:17) Paul explains how faith and righteousness are related, "For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is from first to last, just as it is written: the righteous will live by faith".

God gives us choices. We can either choose to believe His promise(s) or we can deny His plan for our lives. Faith matters; and while (like Abraham and Sarah) our faith can fluctuate a bit as we experience hills and valleys; never-the-less, we are to stand strong on the "seen and unseen" while in this world. Against all hope (for a child), Abraham did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God. Because Abraham choose to have perfect faith in God, he received righteousness, inheritance and prosperity.

What's Your Story?

A Call to Adventure

2nd Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 25, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 37:1-11 (CEB)

Jacob lived in the land of Canaan where his father was an immigrant. This is the account of Jacob's descendants. Joseph was 17 years old and tended the flock with his brothers. While he was helping the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, Joseph told their father unflattering things about them. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born when Jacob was old. Jacob had made for him a long robe. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him and couldn't even talk nicely to him.

Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, which made them hate him even more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had. When we were binding stalks of grain in the field, my stalk got up and stood upright, while your stalks gathered around it and bowed down to my stalk." His brothers said to him, "Will you really be our king and rule over us?" So they hated him even more because of the dreams he told them.

Then Joseph had another dream and described it to his brothers: "I've just dreamed again, and this time the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." When he described it to his father and brothers, his father scolded him and said to him, "What kind of dreams have you dreamed? Am I and your mother and your brothers supposed to come and bow down to the ground in front of you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father took careful note of the matter.

A Parent's Love Shapes Us

Today we begin looking at the story of Joseph. He was the eleventh of twelve sons. All had Jacob as their father, but they were from four different mothers, two sisters Leah and Rachel, and their handmaidens, Bilhah and Zilpah. To say that Joseph was born into a blended family is an understatement. It is no surprise that there was a great deal of sibling rivalry between the twelve brothers.

The story in this scripture begins when Joseph is 17 years old. The scripture says that Jacob "loved Joseph more than any of his other sons." This unequal love in the family caused jealousy and hatred as the other brothers sensed they were not loved as much as Joseph. Several references are made to Joseph's words which reflect the relationship between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's motives are not clear as scripture says he shares these "unflattering things" and the dreams he had experienced. It is possible he was authentic, truthful, and wise and that he spoke with no malice

intended; it is also possible he was a spoiled brat and was holding his favor in the eyes of his father over the heads of his eleven other brothers. It is left for the reader to decide. Biblical scholars have argued this both ways.

This portion of the story ends with the words, “His brothers were jealous of him, but his father took careful note of the matter.” These words portend of something brewing, of more story to come which could take some interesting twists of the plot. We will not go there today, but instead I leave you with this thought for reflection from today’s scripture...How does/did the love of your parents shape you? What twists of the plot of your story have occurred because of how you perceived the love of your parents for you? What twists of the plot of your story have occurred because of how you perceived the love of your parents for your siblings? There is no doubt that a parent’s love (or lack of it) shapes us, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad. But as God weaves God’s story in with ours, incredible adventures can happen, even when it seems that our stories are heading in the totally wrong direction. Stay tuned for more about Joseph’s story in the days ahead.

PRAYER: Loving God, you are both our father and our mother and as our parent your love affects our story in ways we can never imagine. Help us to stay close to you so that the adventures of our lives work toward your purpose; so that as the plot thickens in our story, you may spread your Kingdom to us and through us. **Amen.**

Rev. Brenda Wideman

Monday, February 26, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 37:12-29 (NKJ)

Then his brothers went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” So he said to him, “Here I am.”

Then he said to him, “Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.” So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.

Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, “What are you seeking?” So he said, “I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks.”

And the man said, “They have departed from here, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another,

Thursday, March 1, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 17:1-7;15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty;[a] walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,

“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah[a] shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

Abraham had a good relationship with God you could say. Abraham was also given many opportunities to realize just how mighty and faithful God was. The thing I like about this particular passage is that you see just how much control we do not have. This passage is all about God's timing and His promise.

Many of us can relate to Abraham’s dilemma being childless, and many of us can relate to the thought of wondering, "Ok God, you said you were going to come through, and you still have not." What God had to do with Abraham, and still does with us, is throw bits of grace and miracles our way to really open our eyes.

For Abraham, God made a promise, so God showed up when HE was ready and gave Abraham a son, which praise be to God the same blood runs through our veins today. God made a promise and followed through. Let that set in your heart and mind for a bit. GOD CAME THROUGH. God's promise was not just for Abraham, but for us as well. At the end of the day what we have in our control is the decision to FOLLOW HIM...So what's it going to be?

PRAYER: Holy and Gracious God, help us to hear your voice and know that you always come through.

**Be Blessed,
Austin Curtis**

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 22:23-31 (CEB)

All who worship the Lord, now praise him! You belong to Jacob's family and to the people of Israel, so fear and honor the Lord! The Lord doesn't hate or despise the helpless in all of their troubles. When I cried out, he listened and did not turn away. When your people meet, you will fill my heart with your praises, Lord, and everyone will see me keep my promises to you. The poor will eat and be full, and all who worship you will be thankful and live in hope. Everyone on this earth will remember you, Lord. People all over the world will turn and worship you, because you are in control, the ruler of all nations. All who are rich and have more than enough will bow down to you, Lord. Even those who are dying and almost in the grave will come and bow down. In the future, everyone will worship and learn about you, our Lord. People not yet born will be told, "The Lord has saved us!"

The NIV Study Bible suggests that "no psalm or prophecy contains a grander vision of the scope of the throng of worshipers who will join in the praise of God's saving acts." The verses in Psalm 22:23-31 are telling us that we are all part of Jacob's family and for that reason God deserves our praise and worship. The poor will be filled and the rich will bow down and bless the Lord. The dying will bow down and in the future everyone will worship the Lord.

Were it but true. Verse 27 says that people all over the world will turn and worship God because he is in control. If God is in control, where is the unity in the world? Where is the unity in our government? Where is the unity in our churches? Where is the unity in our lives?

God gave us free will right from the beginning and that free will has wreaked havoc on much of the world. We as Christians can do what we can to help the prophesy in the scripture to come true, but it is not going to happen unless all people of the world are willing to "join in the praise of God's saving acts." I am usually not a pessimist but I do not think this will ever happen, at least not in my lifetime and probably not until Christ comes again. I would love to be alive for that day.

PRAYER: Our Heavenly Father, we know that you are in control but sometimes we wonder why you don't step in and fix our broken world. Why are there bad things happening in our world; why is there evil in our world? I know that some day we will all know the answers and in the meantime, we need to do our part in proclaiming the good news to the world. We need to be your voice. **Amen**

Lynn Prueitt

"Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of manycolors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Joseph's Story Continues

Joseph is the eleventh son of Jacob and the first born to Leah, Jacob's favorite wife. He is favored by his father because of his mother. This favoritism, and Joseph's ability to interpret dreams, gets him into trouble with his older brothers. In the passage we are looking at today, we will see to what lengths his brothers will go to get rid of him.

The brothers are out in the fields tending the flocks of sheep and Joseph is sent by his father to check on his brothers and the sheep. The journey is several miles distant and as Joseph is nearing the field where his brothers have the sheep he is recognized and the brothers plot to kill him. He has, after all, recently interpreted a dream in which his ten brothers will bow down to him, the youngest (at the time), and they are angry.

Now the story gets very interesting as we have two different stories intertwined. This is a frequent occurrence in Genesis. Biblical scholars have determined that two or more sources are used in Genesis – one is a writer who uses the word Yahweh to refer to God and the other uses the word Elohim to refer to God. This comes out in the remainder of this part of Joseph's story.

In verses 21-24, Reuben, the eldest, convinces his brothers not to harm Joseph but capture him and throw him into a pit. Reuben, it seems, plans to rescue Joseph later and return him to their father.

In verses 25-28, the story changes - while eating a meal, the brothers see Ishmaelite traders traveling past. At the urging of Judah, brother number four, they get Joseph and sell him to the traders for 20 shekels of silver. In verse 25, the traders are referred to as Midianites, you can now see some of the confusion contributed to the story by having two blended stories.

Now Reuben returns and finds that Joseph is missing and it seems that the others don't tell him what they did. Reuben tears his clothing in mourning and understands that as the eldest, he will be blamed for their missing brother.

This is not the end of the story. The Joseph adventure is just beginning.

PRAYER: Grant, almighty God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation. **Amen**

Alan Packard

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:2-9 NKJV

Now after six days, Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And, Elijah appeared to them with Moses and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" – because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" Suddenly, when they looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept his word to themselves questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

I don't know about you, but it is hard to conceive of what it would have been like to be Peter, James or John at this moment in time. How could they even look at Jesus and not be blinded by His radiance? How afraid they must have been when they heard God's audible voice telling them (once again—the 1st being when Jesus had been baptized if they had been at the Jordan that day) that this was His Beloved Son and commanded them to listen to Him. Have you thought about what it would be like to be in the Presence of God in such a manner?

Scripture tells us they were afraid. How confused they must have felt also upon hearing and seeing what had just happened. And then, Jesus told them not to tell anyone! REALLY??? What would you do if you were in this situation? Could you keep such a secret? What other questions would be running through your mind? So much to process in a short period of time. They were coming down from a mountaintop experience and were descending back to the valley, to the people, to all the human needs of sickness, healing, the questions, the uncertainties of being in ministry, of leading the people, of trusting the Savior and these foreign concepts of being raised from the dead. This had to have been incredulous for them!

What about us? Have we ever had that mountaintop experience with God? Is that really possible? We're in the 2nd full week of Lent and hopefully many of us have had glimpses of God's glory and miracles in our lives. But, we can't stay on the mountain tops. We must come back, back to the realities of "everyday" living and the realization that we are where God has placed us. As we continue our Lenten preparation of hearing about the ministry of Jesus and ultimately the road that will lead us to Christ's death and resurrection, how are we allowing God to transform us? How is "your story" coming along? How are you being faithful to Christ's calling? Are you anticipating the great adventure that is still the continuance of your faith journey? I am and I pray that you can say "yes" too.

Prayer: Father, God, help us to continue to be faithful to follow Your example and Your ways in our earthly lives. When we fail, help us to look up to you to restore us and transform us. Help us feel Your presence and rest in the peace that You promise to be with us all the days of our lives. Let the adventure continue! **Amen.**

Amy O. Fulton