

A local fitness gym up in Portland recently had an advertising campaign that was called "The Year of You."

[The New Year] is right around the corner and you're either going to own the year OR the year is going to own you. It's 100% your choice. It's in your hands. That's the first thing. Simply by taking all of the responsibility and putting it on your shoulders you become empowered.

Next, you take that feeling of empowerment. Of invincibility. The feeling you can run through a wall ... and you take action. You take action like you've never taken action before. You become prolific. You become consistent. And you let no obstacle stand in your way ... no matter what. No more pity parties. No more whining about anything.

YOU are in control. YOU.

We are not and cannot be in complete control of our lives. There is only One who is truly in control – the very God Who made you and I.

When I was in college... (I have to admit)... that my primary focus was not on my studies. ... No... it wasn't sports... or a job to pay for school... nor was my primary focus on trying to find a girlfriend. ... (Although two of those matters... did have *some* of my attention.) No... a student-led campus organization was the priority of my time.

During the summer between my high school graduation... and the start of my freshman year of college... my sister (who was entering her Senior year of college) got me involved in Campus Crusade for Christ (which is – today - more simply called “CRU.”) I was among dedicated followers of Christ... and we spent large quantities of time in Bible studies... leadership development... and out on the college campus... sharing a little booklet called “the Four Spiritual Laws”... We would walk up to people and ask if

we could share a little booklet with them called “The Four Spiritual Laws” and have them give their feedback to it. If they said “yes,” we would sit down and read the short booklet. It begins with: “Just as there are physical laws which govern the universe, so there are spiritual laws which govern your relationship with God. Law one states that: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life...”

Now... it has been years... since I have shared “The Four Spiritual Laws” with anyone... but this morning... I would like to focus on the truth of Law #1 in this booklet. “God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.” There is only One Who is truly in control of your life... and He happens to be the very Creator of the Universe!

But don’t we wonder... sometimes... even as Christ-followers... if God really does have a wonderful plan for my life...? I mean... just look around. There is so much evil... everywhere! ...And evil seems to win every time against our efforts to do what is right... or to stop it.

We live in a giant cesspool of immorality... that is showcased as getting darker and more rank... with every celebrity award show... whether it is music... movies... or television programs. ... Politicians all seem to have lost all sense of civility. (Is there any integrity to be found in Washington?)

... News sources (unashamedly) push their own agendas... rather than simply deliver the news. Criminals find new ways steal your identity and property... and commit violent crimes With such proliferation of evil... God does not seem to be in control... much less have a wonderful plan for my life. ... (And speaking of a wonderful life)... all I have to do is look on facebook... and I see so many people whose lives seem far more

wonderful than mine... and they are not Christ-followers - at all. Is God really in control... and does He have a wonderful plan for me...?

We are going to look for such answers in Genesis chapter five this morning... as we continue our study through the Book of Genesis.

First let's do a little review of how we have come to the events of chapter 5. Genesis chapter four provides us with a record of degeneration. We saw it with Cain's cold-blooded murder of his younger brother... Abel. Cain showed no remorse... just fear and self-pity... even when God showed mercy to him. Cain turned away from God and left His presence... unbowed... to restlessly wander the earth.

The degeneration continued through the descendants of Cain... who also turned away from God. They were godless... even though they were the developers of culture with technology... music... agribusiness... and metallurgy (making farm tools and weapons.) ... After only seven generations (or shall I say de-generations)... Lamech's "Sword Song" was a chest-thumping reveling of boasting... personal revenge... and extreme violence. And so it has been with this successive ungodly line... (descendants of Cain.) It is a history of de-generations... where people and nations answer their being slighted and offended with swords... spears... machine guns... and missiles.

Ironically... civilization... with its abundance... and arts... and technologies... moves further and further away from the utopia that it seeks to develop. (And that is still true today!)

But in the final verses of Genesis chapter four... we saw a glimmer of hope in this dark picture of what mankind was becoming. ... In contrast to the

Cainite line of godless descendants... a new line of descendants was raised up. It was Seth's line of descendants. Adam and Eve (you see)... had another son – Seth. ... Then Seth had a son... and his name was Enosh. At that time... they began to call upon the Lord in public worship. Cain's descendants developed a culture of technology and invention. Seth's line developed a culture of worship. They declared the wonders of God. They sang of His excellencies.

So... as we open chapter five this morning... the distinctive godly line (descendants of Seth) has been established. And as we will see in chapter five's opening verses... it will be clear that Seth's line will pass down the promise... hope... and lineage of the Messiah (that was prophesied back in Genesis 3:15.) This line would produce salvation for all mankind. God's plan will come about – despite the many who turn away from Him. Good and evil will continue to exist side-by-side... but God's plan to restore Eden will eventually prevail.

God is sovereign in all things and His plans aren't frustrated by the foolish and sinful ways of mankind.

Now... the reader of Genesis 5 is confronted with a series of statements that appear as mere reciting of genealogical tables. ... (You know)... when reading a genealogy passage like what today's verses are... the tendency is to think it is unimportant... and to pass over the people mentioned as unimportant.

However... we start to gain a sense that there is some importance here... when we compare Seth's genealogy with the genealogy of Cain. Notice how Cain's lineage is treated... (Here is an example)...

Genesis 4:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ *To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.*

In Cain's genealogical record... the details of an important person's life are left out. ... (There is no mention of length of life... no mention of extended families '...so-n-so begat sons and daughters...' and no mention of the time of their death.) Here in Genesis 4:18... and all through Cain's genealogy... very few details are given to us. (Brief notes are made about the few inventors... and the proud boasting of Lamech.)

But now take a look at a sampling of what we will consistently see for every generation of Seth's genealogy. It is quite different.

Genesis 5:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ *When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh.*

⁷ *Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters.*

⁸ *Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.*

Many details are mentioned. ... And we will see this same format repeated through ten generations... with only two exceptions... (Enoch and Noah.)

Scripture treats Seth's line... as more important to the Bible's message than Cain's line. Each individual named in the Seth line is treated as significant. ... His importance rests in his family. ... The people who are listed have the responsibility to carry the religious history... and carry the teaching of God... and the understanding of God as Father... to the next generation.

Genesis 5:1-2

Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden... and Cain's degenerating lineage has not obliterated the image of God in mankind... and neither had it eliminated God's blessing on man.

Thus Seth's genealogy shows the patriarchs living out God's blessing—and multiplying and spreading the image of God in humanity—especially as many had begun "*to call upon the name of the Lord*" (4:26).

So the descendants of Adam and Seth had substantial reasons for optimism. They fathered thousands of offspring to whom they passed on the *Imago Dei* (the image of God)... There was still a people (who despite the fall and their sinfulness)... could hear God's word... could rule and subdue the earth... and could live in relationship to God. ... Some did... and some did not. ... Yet... as they multiplied... the possibilities were immense. ... God's plan continued.

However... all of this optimism because of the line of Seth... was always clouded... because the genealogy continually repeats the depressing phrase, "*and he died.*" Adam lived some 930 years, "*and he died.*" His dear son Seth lived 912 years, "*and he died.*" It was 905 years for Enosh, "*and he died.*" Methuselah came to within thirty-one years of a millennium, "*and he died.*" The Hebrew for these three words is a resounding single word. Thus the Sethites lived under the double-edged sword of human experience. "Life produces hope... only to see it dashed... by the-all-too-real finality... of death."

J Vernon McGee writes:

In one sense, chapter 5 is one of the most discouraging and despondent chapters in the Bible. The reason is simply that it is like walking through a cemetery. God said to Adam, "...For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17), and they all died who were the sons of Adam. Paul says, "For as in Adam all die..." (1Cor. 15:22).

This genealogy in genesis chapter five... may begin with the reminder of the **blessing** of God... but it quickly proceeds to show how everyone died as a result of sin — with one notable exception - Enoch. ... The rest of the chapter constantly repeats the depressing refrain “*and he died.*”

Indeed... Genesis chapter five answers a question... that may have been stirred by Genesis chapter four. And it is this: *So... with all of this progress seen in chapter four... (civilization... technology... art... and prosperity in the world)... what happened to the Curse?* ... The answer is clear: People die! This single word in the Hebrew text (*wayyāmōt*) at the close of each patriarch's career becomes a resounding testimony to the inevitable human end. It is literally the last word of each refrain.

Genesis 5:3-18

Enoch was a prophet... who towered above all of his contemporaries. The days when Enoch lived on the earth were flagrantly wicked... as the Epistle of Jude plainly shows. He seems to have stood quite alone in his fearless denunciation of the ungodly and in his faithful testimony for God.

Enoch's name means **dedication** and that is the way he lived. ... Facing enormous pressures... Enoch endured... and was true to the Lord.

He was the first prophet ever to appear on earth. ... Enoch boldly gives the first key prophecies of the second coming of Christ. ... His prophecy was of judgment to come. Notice these Scriptures.

Jude 1:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ *It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones,* ¹⁵ *to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

Genesis 5:19-21

Enoch embedded one of his prophecies in the name of his son. The name “Methuselah” means “*man of the weapon... or javelin... or of the spear*” – according to several Bible scholars. However... a significant number of other reliable experts say that “Methuselah” most closely means: “*when he is gone, it will come*”... or “*when he is dead, it will come...*” ... “*when he dies, there will be a sending forth...*”

As see what the Scripture presents with regard to both Enoch and Methuselah... I think that it is clear... Enoch is making a prophecy through the naming of his son. Enoch was a bold preacher and a prophet... as Jude says. He sternly warned the people. ... And when we compile all the dates that Genesis chapter five gives us... we see that Methuselah died in the year 1656. ... Do you know what year the flood of Noah happened...? According to the dates that are given to us here... 1656 was also the year that God flooded the earth... saving Noah and his family.

Methuselah (whose name means “when he is dead, it will come”)... died **and that very year** God flooded the earth. Coincidence...? ... Or Biblical

prophecy accurately fulfilled...? (I'll bet on the latter.) ... Methuselah's very name stood as a testimony to the people of his day and time: "*When he dies, it—the judgment of God—will come upon earth.*" And it did.

It is also very telling... as we realize that Methuselah lived longer on earth... than any other human being has ever lived... 969 years! (If you are ever asked a Bible trivia question: who is the longest living person on earth... here is your answer.) ... **God kept him here... just to let mankind know that He is patient... and merciful.** Every time Methuselah said his name... he testified of God's coming judgment. ... He was part of his dad (Enoch's) bold ministry of prophesy.

Genesis 5:22-24

Even though death reigns over the whole human race because of sin... humans are still the image of God... and the blessing is still available... if they walk with God in obedience and devotion. ... Death is not the final authority... because God can overrule it instantly. ... God provided a beacon of hope for anyone who would follow Him. And God did it again with another prophet (Elijah)... and He will do it once more... at the rapture of the church... just before Christ's return.

This phrase "walked with God" is only applied to Enoch and Noah (which we will see next week in chapter six). There is a difference between just living with God... and walking with God. Walking with God describes the closest personal communion with God—as if walking at the side of God.

Amos 3:3 (ESV)

³ “*Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?*

Amos points out that walking side-by-side declares an agreement... and a harmony of wills... together in the same direction.

To walk with God implies a *surrendered will*. ... God does not force His company upon any. "*Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?*"

The word "walk" suggests a lack of haste. ... Enoch did not take a lap or two with God and then leave His company... but he walked with God for **hundreds** of years. What an impressive walk! ... A walk of at least three hundred years! It was not a run... a leap... a spurt... but a steady walk."

Walking implies progress... and that in a *forward* direction. ... Enoch's life must have been advancing. ... At the close of three hundred years of communion with God... Enoch could not be morally and spiritually where he was at the beginning. ... He would have a deeper abhorrence of sin and a humbler estimate of himself. ... He would be more conscious of his own helplessness... and would feel more and more his need of absolute dependency on God. ... There would be a larger capacity to enjoy God. There would be a going on from strength to strength... and from glory to glory.

There would also be a *growth in the knowledge of the Lord*. It is one thing to talk about God... to reason and speculate about Him... to hear and read about Him... it is quite another to *know* Him.

For any person who desires a relationship with God... there is wonder and curiosity to be found in these words - 'Enoch walked with God....'

Enoch is looked upon as an example... but how are we to emulate him? ... The phrase 'walked with God' does not carry any detail. ... We only wish that it did. ... How did Enoch conduct his day? ... What did he say? ... What were the actions and activities that denote walking with God? ... What did he read? ... How did he formulate his thinking? ... When we read... 'walked with God,' ... there are many gaps that need to be filled... but the writer of Genesis leaves those gaps in place.

But in this... there is to be found a great lesson. ... What if we found great detail about Enoch's life? ... We discovered that Enoch began each prayer with a particular phrase... and we knew that he went for a walk in the field at a certain time every day? ... What if the writer had told us that he said a certain ritual prayer each day at mealtime... and fasted on the third day of each week. ... How would we respond? ... Would we not want to do the same thing? ... Each activity of Enoch would become a necessity. ... In fact...there would be rules laid out requiring a true walk with God to rigidly follow the same pattern that Enoch followed. ... Ultimately... God would be unimportant. ... The only thing that mattered would be '*keeping the rules*.'

It is a good thing that the Bible tells us nothing about Enoch's pattern. However... by not giving details... Scripture does state one thing very clearly: A walk with God is not about knowing the rules.

Every time human beings try to define God in terms of rules... we become trivial and cruel. ... When the nation of Israel tried to equate the keeping of their set of laws... as the earmark of having a walk with God... the result was seen in the scribes and Pharisees. ... Jesus said of them:

Matthew 23:13 (ESV)

¹³ *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in."*

The rules actually become a stumbling block to a walk with God.

Remembering that Enoch walked with God prior to the 'set of laws'... we can infer that Enoch sought to be God's friend in a loving relationship. The cultivation of friendship only requires one law – love!

Jesus said the greatest commandment is: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...*" This is a good place to begin learning what a walk with God is like. ... We should pray that God would teach us all the nuances of love... and how to apply them when it comes to our love for Him.

One of the most puzzling pieces of Scripture lies in the account of Enoch's life. '*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him*' (5:24). The sobering phrase we kept seeing ("and he died")... isn't used of Enoch, because Enoch is one of two men in Scripture who never died. Both Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven alive (2 Kings 2:1-11).

In the King James and other versions... it says that Enoch was "translated." Wow! That perhaps says it better than "God took him..." What does "translated" mean? ... Think of it in terms of a foreign language. Translation is the taking of a word from one language and putting it into another language – *without changing its meaning*. ... Enoch was taken from one environment and put into something entirely different... without changing his meaning. He had to get rid of the old body... yet he was the

same individual. ... And the Bible says that everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ will also one day be translated. We will be given heavenly bodies... but we will be the same persons.

Hebrews 11:5 (ESV)

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.

His walk rested on great faith; he believed in God with all his heart. And he believed that God would judge and reward all who live. So he preached the righteousness of God. This describes not the high point of his life but his entire life for three hundred years—three centuries! It describes three hundred years of a progressively closer walk with God.

It was "by faith" that Enoch was taken to heaven. He believed God... walked with God... and went to be with God... which is an example for all of us to follow.

Imagine how difficult it must have been to walk with God during those years before the Flood... when vice and violence were prevalent and only a remnant of people believed God. ... But Enoch's life of faith wasn't a private thing... He boldly announced that God would come to judge the world's sins... (we saw in Jude 14-15).

Enoch's life and witness remind us that it's possible to be faithful to God in the midst of "*a crooked and perverse generation*" (Phil. 2:15). No matter how dark the day or how bad the news... we have the promise of our Lord's return to encourage us and motivate us to be godly. ... One day sin

will be judged... and God's people will be rewarded for their faithfulness... so we have every reason to be encouraged as we walk with God.

Genesis 5:25-29

Lamech... (who seems to have been a godly man)... had a son named Noah. ... God revealed to Lamech that Noah would be a comfort to man concerning his work and toil in the world. ... Noah's name means "rest". He would be like a breath of fresh air to a doomed race... and that is what he was. Unfortunately... men did not listen to his message of judgment and hope.

Over in the New Testament... 1 Peter 3:20 tells us that Noah preached repentance for 120 years - with no converts except his family! ... Yet... God had his man for a sinful generation. ... The Pre-Flood world had a choice to obey Noah or reject his message.

We live in desperate times today and God is looking for men who will faithfully proclaim His message. He is looking for men and women to call others to repentance and to be a comfort to the heavy hearted. ... Yes we live in a similar age to Noah... where evil abounds. It seems to be winning. ... But it won't !

God is still working His plan on this earth... Just as He was during the godless-looking days of Enoch... Noah... Moses... Elijah... Daniel... Paul... and many others who accepted God's plan for them. ... Will you be a voice for the Lord?

Genesis 5:30-32

Noah... who walked with God... and was used of God to save the human race... continued the messianic promise. God's plan still moved forward.

I like the perspective that Lyle Arakaki from Hawaii wrote about.

In Hawaii, because of the time difference with the continental U.S., the NFL Monday Night Football game is played in mid-afternoon, so the local TV station delays its telecast until 6:30 in the evening. When my favorite team plays, I'm too excited to wait for television, so I'll listen to the game on the radio, which broadcasts it live. Then, because they're my favorite team, I'll watch the game on television, too.

If I know my team has won the game, it influences how I watch it on television. If my team fumbles the ball or throws an interception, it's not a problem. I think, That's bad, but it's okay. In the end, we'll win!

"In this world you will have trouble," said Jesus. "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

When going through trouble, knowing the final outcome makes all the difference.

You and I know the final outcome. God's plan moves forward. And you can rest assured that God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. ... Will you accept it... even if it means holding forth His truth to a sin-soaked world... where sin right now seems to be winning...?