

## READ

---

Genesis 5

## REFLECT

---

A list of descendants isn't exactly the most invigorating read but it's important because family is important. For the family of Adam, which only includes the lineage through his son Seth, one of the most notable things is the length of the lives. Everyone listed, with only two exceptions, lived over 800 years, incredible numbers that are many times the longest lifespans we see today. Everyone listed also had children very late in life – can you imagine becoming a parent at 162 like Jared? Despite those long lives, everyone also eventually faced death - minus Enoch, who simply disappeared at 365 years old.

There's more happening in this simple list of names and ages than meets the eye. One detail modern readers don't often catch is the meaning of the ages. Numbers were deeply significant to ancient peoples. Throughout the Bible there are repetitions of many numbers – 3, 7, 12, etc., each with its own importance and meaning. Some look to the ages as numerically significant rather than historically accurate, and there are patterns in the numbers which seem to support that argument. Why that might have been important is a little less clear and not very relevant to our lives today. But what is more telling, and more relevant to both the longer view of scripture and our own understanding of who God is, is that this entire lineage, which takes us from Adam to Noah, begins with the *youngest* son of Adam. Historically, elder children were more important and the youngest were ignored. This is the first of many times that God upset what is generally understood to be the natural order of things. And it's telling because we see from the very beginning that God has never been particularly interested in how we order the world. God doesn't care about the arbitrary, like order of birth, God cares about who we are, what we do, and how we relate to one another. We'll continue to encounter stories of younger children of families receiving honors traditionally reserved for the oldest, a sign that God will not be constrained by our systems. It's a sign of hope, because if God isn't constrained by how the world operates, then we can trust that our brokenness can be resolved, simply by reordering our worldview to match that of God.

## REACT

---

- If you have multiple children, have you had different expectations for them because of their order of birth? What about expectations based on gender? When have you been surprised by your children not living into your expectations and/or living far beyond them?
- Do you think differently about people who come from so called “good” families and those that do not? Have there been times when those expectations haven’t been lived out?
- What other ways have we created arbitrary metrics to order our society?
- How can God’s focus on the individual and who they are, rather than arbitrary metrics, transform our own society?

## RESPOND

---

*Prayer: Creator God – your way is often not our way. We privilege the well-connected and wealthy, you privilege the righteous. We look to title and prestige, you look to the heart. We build preconceived notions based on arbitrary metrics, you only care for what is real. Help us to turn away from systems that can only to oppression. May we have the courage to eschew norms that divide and separate, opting instead for new sets of norms that unite us into one family – the family you have made us into through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*