

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

GOD WHO CREATES

THE SETTING OF GENESIS

Beginnings—of the world, humanity, sin, civilization, divine discipline, divine judgment, divine calling, an elect people, a love relationship with God, faith, and divine promises. The Bible's first book sets the stage for all others.

Genesis tells how God created a world out of nothing, formed a man and a woman, established a paradise for their home, gave them work to do, set limits, saw them sin, punished them for it, saw people multiply in the earth, witnessed greed and violence spread, destroyed civilization with a flood, started over through a covenant with Noah, called Abram to start a new people, made a covenant with him, renewed the covenant with Isaac, the miracle child, and then with deceitful Jacob.

Genesis ends with Joseph faithfully living out his relationship with God and saving civilization from famine while moving God's people into Egypt. Every major issue and theme in Scripture can be found in Genesis. Here we first encounter the heart of God for his wayward people.

ENCOUNTERING GOD IN GENESIS

- ✦ God has a purpose for everything he creates. What is his purpose for you?
- ✦ If God is Creator, what are you? Why did he make you the way he did?
- ✦ God knows our failings and limitations. So, why does he choose to use us?
- ✦ How and why does almighty God invite people to join in his work?

DECISIONS AWAITING YOU IN GENESIS

- ✦ Will you trust that your Creator knows what is best for you?
- ✦ Will you respond to God's invitation to join in his work?
- ✦ Will you seek God's purpose and calling for your life?
- ✦ Will you make the life adjustments God's invitation requires?

CRISES OF BELIEF FACING YOU IN GENESIS

- ✦ Creation calls you to worship the Creator or something created.
- ✦ Creation means you must obey the Creator or your own will.
- ✦ Creation means you must join the Creator's work or work for yourself.
- ✦ Creation means you must pursue the Creator's purposes or your dreams.

NOTICE


- ✦ Much of Genesis focuses on family and how God fashions it and works through it. Families are often far from perfect, yet God can begin a work in one generation that continues for many generations into the future.

- ➔ God Works
- ♥ Love Relationship
- ✈ Invitation
- 📖 God Speaks
- ⚠ Crisis of Belief
- 🔄 Life Adjustment
- 🔗 Obedience & Experience
- 👤 Depart from God
- ✖ Discipline




GENESIS 1

THE CREATION


1  In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.^A


² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

 ³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.


⁶ Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water."⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse "sky."^B Evening came and then morning: the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so. ¹² The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ Evening came and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons^C and for days and years. ¹⁵ They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so.  ¹⁶ God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars. ¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

 ²⁰ Then God said, "Let the water swarm with^D living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹ So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." ²³ Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man^E in^F our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl^G on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

1 – GOD'S PLAN**PREPARE TO MEET GOD**

1. What was the Spirit of God doing in the beginning (v. 2)? What is the Spirit currently working on in your life?
2. How powerful is a word from God (vv. 3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26)? How have you experienced the power of his word?
3. How did God evaluate his work (vv. 10,12,18,21,31)? How has God's work in your life been good?
4. How does God relate to the fearsome parts of the world like darkness, deep waters, and monstrous fish (vv. 2,4–5,10,14,21)? How does God view the fearful aspects of your life?
5. What does it mean to be created in the image of God (vv. 26–28)? How are you reflecting that image every day?

^A1:1 Or *created the universe* ^B1:8 Or "heavens." ^C1:14 Or *for the appointed times* ^D1:20 Lit *with swarms of* ^E1:26 Or *human beings*; Hb 'adam, also in v. 27 ^F1:26 Or *as* ^G1:26 Or *scurry*

☉²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”²⁹ God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you,³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given^A every green plant for food.” And it was so.³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed.² On the seventh^B day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested^C on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.³ God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

MAN AND WOMAN IN THE GARDEN

⁴ These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation.

At the time^D that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,⁵ no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land,^E and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.⁶ But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. ☉⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed.⁹ The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river went^F out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers.^G¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah,^H where there is gold.¹² Gold from that land is pure;^I bdellium^J and onyx^K are also there.¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush.¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, ☉¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.”

☉¹⁹ The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all the livestock,

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God has no beginning (v. 1). How is it clear that God was present in your beginning as well?
2. Creation involved separating things into God-ordained categories (vv. 4,6,9,14).
3. God created seasons into the fabric of creation (v. 14).
4. God created time and its divisions (vv. 5,14). Are you using your God-given time wisely?
5. God created both male and female in his image (v. 27).
6. God instructed people to subdue creation and exercise dominion over it (v. 28). How are you doing that?
7. God's original intent was to bless people (v. 28). How are you currently experiencing God's blessing?


2 - GOD'S PLAN

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What does it mean for God to rest (vv. 1-3)?
2. Where did God get his materials to make Adam and Eve (v. 7)?
3. How did God invite people to join him in his work (vv. 15,19)?
4. What did Adam and Eve have to believe if they were going to experience abundant life (vv. 16-17)?
5. How much freedom did God grant Adam and Eve (v. 16-17)?
6. What is God's plan for marriage (vv. 24-25)?

^A1:30 I have given added for clarity ^B2:2 Sam, LXX, Syr read sixth ^C2:2 Or ceased, also in v. 3 ^D2:4 Lit creation on the day ^E2:5 Or earth ^F2:10 Or goes ^G2:10 Lit became four heads ^H2:11 Or of the Havilah ^I2:12 Lit good ^J2:12 A yellowish, transparent gum resin ^K2:12 Identity of this precious stone uncertain

GENESIS 2-3

to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man^a no helper was found corresponding to him.²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place.²² Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ And the man said:



This one, at last, is bone
of my bone
and flesh of my flesh;
this one will be called “woman,”
for she was taken from man.

²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.²⁵ Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

THE TEMPTATION AND THE FALL


3 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’”

² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden.³ But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴ “No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman.⁵ “In fact, God knows that when^b you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ The woman

saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

SIN’S CONSEQUENCES

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,^c and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ And he said, “I heard you^d in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”

¹¹ Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹² The man replied, “The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God always finishes what he starts, no matter how large the undertaking (v. 1). What is there in your life that you have not yet finished?
2. God has always been a universal God, concerned for and controlling the future of all nations (vv. 11–14). How are you witnessing that today?
3. God designed meaningful work to be undertaken in a perfect world (v. 15). What work has God currently called you to?
4. God created humans with the freedom and necessity of choice, not as slaves automatically obeying his commands (v. 17). Are you making wise choices?
5. God designed people to be in relationship (v. 18). Have you fully embraced and nurtured the relationships God has granted you?
6. God designed marriage to experience a unique intimacy and union unlike any other relationship (v. 23–25). If you are married, are you experiencing all that God intends?

3 - SIN
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What is the process that leads to temptation and sin (vv. 1–6)? How have you been toying with temptation?
2. What was the ultimate prize the serpent offered Adam and Eve (vv. 4–6)? How are you being tempted to usurp God’s place in your life?
3. What are sin’s results (vv. 7–13, 22)? How have you experienced these?
4. How does God respond to sin and sinners (vv. 8–24)?
5. How does sin affect trust and relationships between people (vv. 11–13)? How is sin harming one of your relationships?
6. How did God discipline the first couple (vv. 16–19, 23)? How have you experienced these?
7. Which doors were closed to people due to sin? Which were opened (vv. 23–24; 4:12–17)?

^a2:20 Or for Adam ^b3:5 Lit on the day ^c3:8 Lit at the wind of the day ^d3:10 Lit the sound of you

¹³ So the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"
And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:
Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than any livestock
and more than any wild animal.
You will move on your belly
and eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.^A
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.

⊗ ¹⁶ He said to the woman:
I will intensify your labor pains;

^A3:15 Lit *your seed and her seed*

CHARACTER PROFILE

ADAM AND EVE

Adam, whose name means "mankind," was the culmination of God's creation. Having fashioned Adam out of the dust of the earth, God breathed life into Adam, and he became a living soul. God placed him in a garden and gave him responsibility to exercise dominion over it. God made Adam in his own image so he could uniquely enjoy fellowship with his Creator. Before sin entered the world, Adam enjoyed unimpeded fellowship with God.

Yet despite communion with God and harmony with creation, Adam lacked fellowship with one of his own kind. So God created the first woman, named Eve, meaning "life." God made her "corresponding" to Adam, so they matched each other perfectly. God's design was that they be naked, hiding nothing from each other and experiencing no shame. God also placed the tree of life in the middle of the garden so people could experience paradise with God forever. God gave them only one rule. They were not to eat from the tree of knowledge, for in the day they did, they would die.

God gave Adam and Eve the most abundant life possible. They enjoyed unrestricted loving fellowship with each other and with their Creator. They did not experience pain or want. They felt no shame, regret, fear, jealousy, or anger. They lived in paradise.

Then Satan, the sinister deceiver, came in the form of a serpent. He approached Eve, yet the text of Scripture indicates that Adam was present also. The serpent cast doubt into Eve's mind about God's word. "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden?'" he asked. Satan knew Scripture well and misused it to mislead Eve. Eve responded, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'" In answering Satan, Eve added to God's word. God had not told

them they would die if they *touched* the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Eve had inadvertently made God's rules more onerous than they really were. "No! You will certainly not die!" replied the serpent. Now Satan not only questioned God's word; he adamantly rejected it. God's word brings life. Satan sought to alienate people from God's word.

Satan then enticed Eve to believe that by eating the fruit, she would become like God, humanity's ultimate, ageless temptation. The longer Eve looked at the fruit, the more attractive it appeared. Amazingly, Satan made Eve dissatisfied with living in a paradise and resentful of God for giving them only one rule to follow. She ate from the fruit and then gave some to Adam, who ate as well. And the rest is history.

Immediately Adam and Eve felt the consequences of their sin. Rather than being made as wise as God, they became self-conscious and ashamed. They experienced alienation from God rather than fellowship. They would undergo spiritual as well as physical death. Pain would enter the world. Labor, which was intended to be an enjoyable aspect of their existence, became toilsome.

The first two children Eve gave birth to were Cain and Abel. Yet so horrendous was the consequence of that first sin that it tainted every one of their descendants. Cain, in a fit of anger, murdered his brother Abel. So devastating was sin on that formerly innocent couple that it took only one generation to descend to the nadir of premeditated murder.

Adam and Eve were given a wonderful life. Yet Satan, the father of lies, blinded them to what they had and left them with shame, guilt, alienation, and death. It would take one of their descendants, Jesus, to finally offer a cure for the terminal disease Satan introduced into humanity.

GENESIS 3-4

you will bear children with painful effort.
Your desire will be for your husband,
yet he will rule over you.

⊗¹⁷ And he said to the man, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’:

The ground is cursed because of you.
You will eat from it by means of painful labor^A
all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ You will eat bread^B by the sweat of your brow
until you return to the ground,
since you were taken from it.
For you are dust,
and you will return to dust.”

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve^C because she was the mother of all the living.

⊙²¹ The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

²² The LORD God said, “Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.”

⊗²³ So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.²⁴ He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

CAIN MURDERS ABEL

4 ⊙ The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the LORD’s help.”^{D 2} She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground.³ In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the LORD.⁴ And Abel also presented an offering — some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,⁵ but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent? ⊗⁷ If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Sin results from questioning God’s word (v. 1). Are you currently struggling with a word from God?
2. Shame and fear were not created by God but result from sin (vv. 7–10; see 2:25). Are you currently experiencing fear or shame?
3. God pursues sinful people (v. 9). How has God been pursuing you?
4. Sin brings death to relationships, opportunities, and blessing (vv. 16–24; see 1:22; 2:15). How has sin brought harm to you and those you love?
5. God ministers to sinful people (v. 21). How has God shown grace to you?
6. God makes no compromises with sin (vv. 14–19).
7. God does not allow people to blame others for their sin (vv. 12–13). Whom are you tempted to blame for your shortcomings?

4 - DISCIPLINE

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Trace the path Cain took from God’s presence to God’s absence (vv. 1–16).
2. How does sin lie at the door for everyone (v. 7)? What sin lies at your door?
3. How does our improper worship affect our relationships (v. 9)? How is your worship affecting your relationships?
4. Does God abandon the one he disciplines (vv. 13–15)?
5. How do our actions affect the generations that follow us (vv. 17–22)? How could your current attitude harm your children or grandchildren?
6. What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord (v. 26)?

^A3:17 Lit *it through pain* ^B3:19 Or *food* ^C3:20 Lit *Living, or Life* ^D4:1 Lit *the LORD*

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."^A And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

¹⁰ Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"¹¹ So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed.^B ¹² If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

¹³ But Cain answered the LORD, "My punishment^C is too great to bear!¹⁴ Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me."

¹⁵ Then the LORD replied to him, "In that case,^D whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." And he placed a mark on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him.¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod,^E east of Eden.

THE LINE OF CAIN

¹⁷ Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son.¹⁸ Irad was born to Enoch, Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.¹⁹ Lamech took two wives for himself, one named Adah and the other named Zillah.²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the first^F of the nomadic herdsmen.²¹ His brother was named Jubal; he was the first^F of all who play the lyre and the flute.²² Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
wives of Lamech, pay attention
to my words.

For I killed a man
for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.

²⁴ If Cain is to be avenged
seven times over,
then for Lamech it will be seventy-
seven times!

²⁵ Adam was intimate with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has given^G me another offspring^H in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." ²⁶ A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.

THE LINE OF SETH

5 This is the document containing the family^I records of Adam.^J On the day that God created man,^K he made him in the likeness of God; ² he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind.^L

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God holds people directly accountable for their actions (vv. 6,9).
2. God is not obligated to accept any worship that is offered to him (vv. 3-5). How might you have been careless in your worship?
3. Genuine worship is pleasing to God (vv. 4-5). How have you sensed God's pleasure as you have worshiped him?
4. God worked through the line of sinful Cain to produce the instruments of the arts and civilization (vv. 17-22).
5. Pride leads to sin and violence toward others (vv. 23-24).
6. God always has others who will come behind us (vv. 25-26). Whom do you sense God is raising up behind you?

5 - LOVE RELATIONSHIP PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How is our life designed to pass on a blessing to the generations that follow (ch. 5)? How are you currently doing so?
2. How can a nine-hundred-year-old life be summed up in a handful of sentences (vv. 6-8)? How might your life be summarized?
3. What does it look like to walk with God (v. 24)?
4. Even the healthiest and strongest people eventually face death (v. 25). Are you prepared to do so?
5. How can God bring relief from life's difficulties (v. 29)? How is God comforting you?

^A4:8 Sam, LXX, Syr, Vg; MT omits "Let's go out to the field." ^B4:11 Lit blood from your hand ^C4:13 Or sin ^D4:15 LXX, Syr, Vg read "Not so!" ^E4:16 Lit Wandering ^F4:20,21 Lit father ^G4:25 The Hb word for given sounds like the name "Seth." ^H4:25 Lit seed ^I5:1 Lit written family ^J5:1 Or mankind ^K5:1 Or Adam, human beings ^L5:2 Hb 'adam

GENESIS 5-6

³ Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ Adam lived 800 years after he fathered Seth, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ⁵ So Adam's life lasted 930 years; then he died.

⁶ Seth was 105 years old when he fathered Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived 807 years after he fathered Enosh, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ⁸ So Seth's life lasted 912 years; then he died.

⁹ Enosh was 90 years old when he fathered Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived 815 years after he fathered Kenan, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹¹ So Enosh's life lasted 905 years; then he died.

¹² Kenan was 70 years old when he fathered Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived 840 years after he fathered Mahalalel, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ So Kenan's life lasted 910 years; then he died.

¹⁵ Mahalalel was 65 years old when he fathered Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived 830 years after he fathered Jared, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ So Mahalalel's life lasted 895 years; then he died.

¹⁸ Jared was 162 years old when he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived 800 years after he fathered Enoch, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁰ So Jared's life lasted 962 years; then he died.

²¹ Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. ²² And after he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²³ So Enoch's life lasted 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him.

²⁵ Methuselah was 187 years old when he fathered Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived 782 years after he fathered Lamech, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁷ So Methuselah's life lasted 969 years; then he died.

²⁸ Lamech was 182 years old when he fathered a son. ²⁹ And he named him Noah, ^a saying, "This one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed." ³⁰ Lamech lived 595 years after he fathered Noah, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ³¹ So Lamech's life lasted 777 years; then he died.

³² Noah was 500 years old, and he fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

SONS OF GOD AND DAUGHTERS OF MANKIND

6 When mankind began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves. ³ And the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain ^b with ^c mankind forever, because they are corrupt. ^d Their days will be 120 years." ⁴ The Nephilim ^e

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Seth inherited his image from his father Adam, which God gave to Adam (v. 3).
2. Eternal life begins when we start walking with God and continues after death (v. 24).
3. God is continually working out his purposes from one generation to the next (ch. 5). How are you completing something God began with an earlier generation?
4. One of the greatest contributions of our life may be the children we produce (vv. 3-4). Are you intentionally investing in them as you should?
5. Even the healthiest, strongest, and wisest people ultimately meet their end in death (v. 27). What might you do so you are better prepared for when your time comes?

6 - DEPART FROM GOD PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How does God react when people depart from him (vv. 3,5-7)? Is there any way in which you have departed from the love relationship with God?
2. What characterizes the person who has departed from God (v. 5)?
3. Describe the relationship between God and Noah (vv. 8-9,22; 7:1). How would you describe your relationship with God right now?
4. What invitation did God give Noah (v. 14; 7:1)? What is God inviting you to do?
5. How could God's invitation to Noah have caused a crisis of belief (6:14-7:6)? How are you currently experiencing a crisis of belief?
6. What life adjustments did Noah and his family have to make to join God in what he was doing (6:14-7:7)? What adjustments are required of you to join God's activity?

^a5:29 In Hb, the name *Noah* sounds like "bring us relief." ^b6:3 Or *strive* ^c6:3 Or *in* ^d6:3 Lit *flesh* ^e6:4 Possibly means "fallen ones"; traditionally, "giants"; Nm 13:31-33

were on the earth both in those days and afterward, when the sons of God came to the daughters of mankind, who bore children to them. They were the powerful men of old, the famous men.

JUDGMENT DECREED

④⁵ When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time,⁶ the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved.⁷ Then the LORD said, “I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky — for I regret that I made them.”

♥⁸ Noah, however, found favor with the LORD.

GOD WARNS NOAH

⁹ These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God.¹⁰ And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with wickedness.¹² God saw how corrupt the earth was, for every creature had corrupted its way on the earth. ☒¹³ Then God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

☒¹⁴ “Make yourself an ark of gopher^B wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside.¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.^C ¹⁶ You are to make a roof,^D finishing the sides of the ark to within eighteen inches^E of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks.

¹⁷ “Understand that I am bringing a flood — floodwaters on the earth to destroy every creature under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.

♥¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives.¹⁹ You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.²⁰ Two of everything — from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground according to their kinds — will come to you so that you can keep them alive.²¹ Take with you every kind of food that is

^A 6:11 Or *injustice*, also in v. 13 ^B 6:14 Unknown species of tree; perhaps pine or cypress ^C 6:15 Or *300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high* ^D 6:16 Or *window, or hatch*; Hb uncertain ^E 6:16 Lit to a cubit

CHARACTER PROFILE

NOAH

Enormous tasks are rarely easy to accomplish, especially if they are being done for the first time, for a problem that has never occurred before, in the midst of ridicule. Noah lived in perhaps the wickedest period in human history (6:1–7). Yet he steadfastly determined to honor God by living righteously (6:8). There is no record of it ever having rained on the earth before the flood (2:6). Noah may have had no concept of what a flood, or even rain, was. He may have never seen a ship before. Yet God told him to build an enormous craft. Repeatedly we are told that he did everything God told him to do (6:22; 7:5). It may have taken a hundred years to build the ark. He preached to his contemporaries during that time, explaining why he was constructing the enormous ship

(2Pt 2:5). Yet not one of his neighbors or extended family believed him.

This presented a crisis of belief for Noah. Would he devote a major period of his life to obey what God told him to do even though all of his friends and neighbors thought he was crazy for doing so? He chose to believe and obey, and the result was that he saved his three sons and their wives, along with his own wife. God extended a new covenant to Noah that lasted throughout history (8:20–22). After being a shipbuilder for one hundred years, Noah’s next assignment was to become a farmer at the age of six hundred (9:20)! Noah demonstrated that you are never too old for God to begin a new work in your life if only you will believe and obey.

GENESIS 6-7

eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.”²² And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.

ENTERING THE ARK

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.² You are to take with you seven pairs, a male and its female, of all the clean animals, and two of the animals that are not clean, a male and its female,³ and seven pairs, male and female, of the birds of the sky — in order to keep offspring alive throughout the earth.⁴ Seven days from now I will make it rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing I have made I will wipe off the face of the earth.”⁵ And Noah did everything that the LORD commanded him.

⁶ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came and water covered the earth.⁷ So Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives entered the ark because of the floodwaters.⁸ From the animals that are clean, and from the animals that are not clean, and from the birds and every creature that crawls on the ground,⁹ two of each, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, just as God had commanded him.¹⁰ Seven days later the floodwaters came on the earth.

THE FLOOD

¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the sources of the vast watery depths burst open, the floodgates of the sky were opened,¹² and the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.¹³ On that same day Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, entered the ark, along with Noah’s wife and his three sons’ wives.¹⁴ They entered it with all the wildlife according to their kinds, all livestock according to their kinds, all the creatures that crawl on the earth according to their kinds, every flying creature — all the birds and every winged creature — according to their kinds.¹⁵ Two of every creature that has the breath of life in it came to Noah and entered the ark.¹⁶ Those that entered, male and female of every creature, entered just as God had commanded him. Then the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷ The flood continued for forty days on the earth; the water increased and lifted up the ark so that it rose above the earth.¹⁸ The water surged and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.¹⁹ Then the water surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered.²⁰ The mountains were covered as the water surged above them more than twenty feet.²¹ Every creature perished — those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind.²² Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils — everything on dry land died.²³ He wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the earth, from mankind to livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God’s patience with sin and evil has its limit (v. 3)!
2. Evil inevitably increases when left unchecked (vv. 5–7). How are you witnessing that today?
3. A righteous person is never lost from God’s sight in a crowd (v. 8). How does this comfort you?
4. God gave specific guidance to Noah so he was able to do his will (vv. 14–21). What specific guidance do you need from God?
5. Throughout God’s directions to Noah, Noah never argued, resisted, or even spoke. How willingly and submissively do you embrace God’s will?
6. Even in the midst of judgment, God extends mercy (v. 18). How has God expressed his mercy to you?

7 - JUDGMENT


PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What did Noah and his family have to do if they were to be saved (v. 1)?
2. What effect did Noah’s decision to obey God have on his family (vv. 7,13,23)? How have decisions you have made with God affected your family?
3. What is significant about God’s shutting Noah in (v. 16)?
4. How might Noah have felt when he finally entered the ark (v. 7)?
5. What is significant about the water prevailing over the earth for 150 days (v. 24)?

²¹7:20 Lit. surged 15 cubits


Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.²⁴ And the water surged on the earth 150 days.


THE FLOOD RECEDES

8  God remembered Noah, as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water began to subside.² The sources of the watery depths and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky stopped.³ The water steadily receded from the earth, and by the end of 150 days the water had decreased significantly.⁴ The ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

⁵ The water continued to recede until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were visible.⁶ After forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made,⁷ and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.⁸ Then he sent out a dove to see whether the water on the earth's surface had gone down,⁹ but the dove found no resting place for its foot. It returned to him in the ark because water covered the surface of the whole earth. He reached out and brought it into the ark to himself.¹⁰ So Noah waited seven more days and sent out the dove from the ark again.¹¹ When the dove came to him at evening, there was a plucked olive leaf in its beak. So Noah knew that the water on the earth's surface had gone down.¹² After he had waited another seven days, he sent out the dove, but it did not return to him again.¹³ In the six hundred first year,^A in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water that had covered the earth was dried up. Then Noah removed the ark's cover and saw that the surface of the ground was drying.¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was dry.

THE LORD'S PROMISE

¹⁵ Then God spoke to Noah, ¹⁶ "Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you.¹⁷ Bring out all the living creatures that are with you — birds, livestock, those that crawl on the earth — and they will spread over the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."¹⁸ So Noah, along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, came out.¹⁹ All the animals, all the creatures that crawl, and all the flying creatures — everything that moves on the earth — came out of the ark by their families.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, he said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of human beings, even though the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth onward. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.

²² As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Notice the simple summary of why God considered Noah to be righteous (v. 5).
2. Noah's greatest contribution in life occurred after he was six hundred years old (v. 6). What do you sense God still has for you to do?
3. Notice the specific reference to the day when the flood began (v. 11).
4. God's judgment is inescapable (v. 19, 21–23).

8 - GOD'S NATURE PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What does it mean for God to remember someone (v. 1; see 19:29; 30:22)? Do you ever feel as if God may have forgotten you?
2. What process did Noah use to determine when it was time to leave the ark (vv. 6–12)? How do you determine God's timing for your life?
3. How did God renew the blessing of creation (v. 17)?
4. What do you think Noah might have seen after he left the ark (v. 18)?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. There is no record of God's speaking to Noah during the storm. Noah had to cling to what God had already told him (v. 15). During life's storms, what do you cling to?
2. Noah responded in worship before God announced his plan for grace (vv. 20–22).
3. God viewed worship that was pleasing to him as a "pleasing aroma" (v. 21). How does God view your worship?
4. God's promises are permanent (v. 22).

^A8:13 = of Noah's life

summer and winter, and day and night will not cease.”

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

9 ☉ God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.² The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority.³ Every creature that lives and moves will be food for you; as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything.⁴ However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it.⁵ And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood;^A I will require it from any animal and from any human; if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person's life.

⁶ Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image.

⁷ But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it.”

⁸ Then God said to Noah and his sons with him,⁹ “Understand that I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you,¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you — birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you — all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. ☉¹¹ I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations:¹³ I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.¹⁴ Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds,¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures: water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature.¹⁶ The bow will be in the clouds, and I will look at it and remember the permanent covenant between God and all the living creatures on earth.”¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and every creature on earth.”

PROPHECIES ABOUT NOAH'S FAMILY

☉¹⁸ Noah's sons who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan.¹⁹ These three were Noah's sons, and from them the whole earth was populated.

²⁰ Noah, as a man of the soil, began by planting^B a vineyard. ☉²¹ He drank some of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside.²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a cloak and placed it over both their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father naked.

²⁴ When Noah awoke from his drinking and learned what his youngest son had done to him,²⁵ he said:

Canaan is cursed.

He will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers.

²⁶ He also said:

9 – LOVE RELATIONSHIP PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. When Noah pleased God, who else shared in the blessing (v. 1)? How has your family been blessed by God's pleasure on your life?
2. How seriously does God treat murder? Why (v. 6)?
3. After suffering God's most comprehensive judgment, how long did it take for people to sin again (v. 22)? How long does it take for sin to creep into your life?
4. To what length does God go to keep his promises (vv. 13–17)? Are you as diligent to keep yours?

^A9:5 Lit. *And your blood belonging to your life I will seek* ^B9:20 Or *Noah began to be a farmer and planted*

Blessed be the LORD, the God
of Shem;
Let Canaan be^A Shem's slave.
27 Let God extend Japheth,^B
let Japheth dwell in the tents
of Shem;
let Canaan be Shem's slave.

²⁸ Now Noah lived 350 years after the flood. ²⁹ So Noah's life lasted 950 years; then he died.

THE TABLE OF NATIONS

10 These are the family records of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They also had sons after the flood.

² Japheth's sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³ Gomer's sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴ And Javan's sons: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. ^C ⁵ From these descendants, the peoples of the coasts and islands spread out into their lands according to their clans in their nations, each with its own language.

⁶ Ham's sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. ⁷ Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. And Raamah's sons: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush fathered Nimrod, who began to be powerful in the land. ⁹ He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD. That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD." ¹⁰ His kingdom started with Babylon, Erech, ^D Accad, ^E and Calneh, ^F in the land of Shinar. ^G ¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹² and Resen, between Nineveh and the great city Calah.

¹³ Mizraim^H fathered the people of Lud, Anam, Lehab, Naphtuh, ¹⁴ Pathrus, Casluh (the Philistines came from them), and Caphtor.

¹⁵ Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, ¹⁶ as well as the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the Canaanite clans scattered. ¹⁹ The Canaanite border went from Sidon going toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and going toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim as far as Lasha.

²⁰ These are Ham's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

²¹ And Shem, Japheth's older brother, also had sons. Shem was the father of all the sons of Eber. ²² Shem's sons were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴ Arpachshad fathered^I Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. ²⁵ Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg,^J for during his days the earth was divided; his

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God spoke to Noah's sons as well as to Noah (v. 8). How have you helped your children recognize God's voice?
2. God holds people accountable for their relationships with other people (v. 5).
3. God often uses signs and symbols to help us in our walk with him (v. 12). What symbols help you best remember God's love for you?
4. At the age of 601, Noah entered into a new season in his life (v. 20). Do you need a new beginning?
5. The first recorded word of Noah speaking is when he cursed his grandson (v. 25). Do you ever say things in anger you regret later?

10 – FAMILY

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Notice the impact one family can have on history (ch. 10). What distant relative had an impact on you?
2. The character of a father can have enormous influence on succeeding generations (ch. 10). How did your father affect you for good or for evil?
3. Every person leaves a legacy, either for good or for evil (ch. 10). What will yours be?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God created the nations from Noah (vv. 1,32). How many nations have you studied or visited?
2. Ham sinned against his father, and his descendants caused the Jewish people enormous grief (vv. 6–14). Have you ever been on a mission trip or intentionally tried to bless a person from a different nationality from your own?
3. God can develop people of great skill and accomplishment despite their sinful past (vv. 8–9). What have you learned to enjoy from different cultures?
4. Though the three sons spoke the same language, their descendants eventually developed their own (vv. 5,20,31). Have you ever attempted to learn another language?

^A 9:26 As a wish or prayer; others interpret the verbs in vv. 26–27 as prophecy: *Canaan will be* . . . ^B 9:27 In Hb, the name *Japheth* sounds like the word "extend." ^C 10:4 Some Hb mss, LXX read *Rodanim*; 1Ch 1:7 ^D 10:10 Or *Uruk* ^E 10:10 Or *Akkad* ^F 10:10 Or *and all of them* ^G 10:10 Or *in Babylonia* ^H 10:13 = Egypt ^I 10:24 LXX reads *fathered Cainan, and Cainan fathered*; Gn 11:12–13; Lk 3:35–36 ^J 10:25 = Division

brother was named Joktan.²⁶ And Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba,²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were Joktan's sons.³⁰ Their settlements extended from Mesha to Sephar, the eastern hill country.

³¹ These are Shem's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

³² These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their family records, in their nations. The nations on earth spread out from these after the flood.

THE TOWER OF BABYLON

11 The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary.² As people migrated from the east,^A they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.³ They said to each other, "Come, let's make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.)⁴ And they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth."

⁵ Then the LORD came down to look over the city and the tower that the humans^B were building.⁶ The LORD said, "If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.⁷ Come, let's go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech."⁸ So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city.⁹ Therefore it is called Babylon,^{C,D} for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

FROM SHEM TO ABRAM

¹⁰ These are the family records of Shem. Shem lived 100 years and fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.¹¹ After he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived 500 years and fathered other sons and daughters.¹² Arpachshad lived 35 years^E and fathered Shelah.¹³ After he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters.¹⁴ Shelah lived 30 years and fathered Eber.¹⁵ After he fathered Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters.¹⁶ Eber lived 34 years and fathered Peleg.¹⁷ After he fathered Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters.¹⁸ Peleg lived 30 years and fathered Reu.¹⁹ After he fathered Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²⁰ Reu lived 32 years and fathered Serug.²¹ After he fathered Serug, Reu lived 207 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²² Serug lived 30 years and fathered Nahor.²³ After he fathered Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²⁴ Nahor lived 29 years and fathered Terah.²⁵ After he fathered Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²⁶ Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

²⁷ These are the family records of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot.²⁸ Haran died in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans, during his father Terah's lifetime.²⁹ Abram and Nahor took wives: Abram's wife was named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was named Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah.³⁰ Sarai was unable to conceive; she did not have a child.

^A11:2 Or *migrated eastward* ^B11:5 Or *the descendants of Adam* ^C11:9 Hb *Babel* ^D11:9 In Hb, the name for "Babylon," *babel* sounds like the word for "confuse," *balal*. ^E11:12-13 LXX reads *years and fathered Cainan*. ¹³After he fathered Cainan, Arpachshad lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters, and he died. Cainan lived 130 years and fathered Shelah. After he fathered Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and fathered other sons and daughters, and he died; Gn 10:24; Lk 3:35-36

11 - GOD'S MISSION PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What about great cities makes them conducive to pride and sin (vv. 1-4)?
2. How can pride ruin otherwise great human achievement (vv. 1-9)?
3. How does God's mission of redeeming the world differ from the goals of the people at Shinar (vv. 1-9)? Do your goals glorify you or God?
4. Terah set out for Canaan but never reached it (vv. 31-32). What might God begin with you and fulfill with your descendants? Do you have any goals that are bigger than you?
5. How did Abram's calling build on what God did in his father's life (v. 31)? How are you building on what previous generations passed down to you?

31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran's son), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. 32 Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.

THE CALL OF ABRAM

12 The LORD said to Abram:

- Go from your land,
your relatives,
and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.
- 2 I will make you into a great nation,
I will bless you,
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
- 3 I will bless those who bless you,
I will curse anyone who treats you
with contempt,
and all the peoples on earth
will be blessed^A through you.^B

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. 5 He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.) 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring^C I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar to the LORD there, and he called on the name of the LORD. 9 Then Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev.

ABRAM IN EGYPT

10 There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a while because the famine in the land was severe. 11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' They will kill me but let you live. 13 Please say you're my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account." 14 When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, so the woman was taken to

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Good communication is more important for societal advance than is technology (vv. 1-9).
2. Self-centeredness destroys a nation (v. 4). How are you seeing this truth in your nation?
3. Humans have magnificent potential when they work together but potential for harm when they ignore God (vv. 5-7).
4. Abraham's life fulfilled his father's dream, just as Isaac would do the same for Abraham (v. 31). How is your life an answer to someone's prayers?

12 - INVITATION PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What was God's invitation to Abram (v. 1)? What is God inviting you to do?
2. What faith and action did God require of Abram in this crisis of belief (v. 1)?
3. What did it mean for God to make Abram's name great (v. 2)? What would that look like in your life?
4. How did Abram commemorate his love relationship with God (vv. 7-8)? What have you done to remember your encounters with God?
5. Why would God allow Canaan to suffer a famine after God led Abram to immigrate to it (vv. 6, 10-11)? Have you ever experienced a famine just after you obeyed what God told you to do?
6. Why did Abram resort to deception with Pharaoh rather than trust in God's promise (vv. 3, 13)? When have you been tempted to resort to falsehood?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God did not provide Abram with instructions. Instead, God provided Abram with himself (v. 1). Are you more comfortable with a map or a mapmaker?
2. God's purpose for his people is to be a blessing to others (vv. 2-3). Who is God currently blessing through you?
3. When Abram made decisions without first seeking God's direction, he made mistakes (v. 10). What has happened when you took matters into your own hands rather than seeking God's guidance?
4. Abram did not build an altar to God in Egypt, and that period of his life was filled with shame (v. 10). Is it obvious from your life's history when you were not seeking God's guidance?
5. This pharaoh's response to God's punishment is much different from that of the pharaoh under Moses (vv. 17-20; see Ex 7:23; 8:15,32; 9:7,34; 10:20,27).

^A 12:3 Or will find blessing ^B 12:3 Or will bless themselves by you ^C 12:7 Lit seed

Pharaoh's household. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well because of her, and Abram acquired flocks and herds, male and female donkeys, male and female slaves, and camels.

☉ ¹⁷ But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife, Sarai. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She's my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife. Take her and go!" ²⁰ Then Pharaoh gave his men orders about him, and they sent him away with his wife and all he had.

ABRAM AND LOT SEPARATE

13 Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev — he, his wife, and all he had, and Lot with him. ☉ ² Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold. ³ He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been, ☉ ⁴ to the site where he had built the altar. And Abram called on the name of the LORD there.

⁵ Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents. ⁶ But the land was unable to support them as long as they stayed together, for they had so many possessions that they could not stay together, ☹ ⁷ and there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. (At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land.)

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, since we are relatives. ⁹ Isn't the whole land

13 – GOD'S WAYS

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How did God bless Abram (v. 2)? How has God blessed you?
2. Why did Abram return to the altar where he had previously worshiped God (v. 4)? How could you do that?
3. Why did Abram act more nobly on this occasion than when he was in Egypt (vv. 3,9)?
4. What does Lot's behavior reveal about his character and walk with God (vv. 7–13)? When have you acted like the world rather than like a child of God?
5. What does Abram's behavior reveal about his character and walk with God (vv. 7–18)? What have your recent decisions revealed about your trust in God?

CHARACTER PROFILE

ABRAHAM

Abraham was a loyal son, brother, husband, and uncle. He originally thought he would be a shepherd in Ur, then in Haran, where his family had moved (Gn 11:31–32). One day God spoke to Abram, telling him to get up and go to a land God would show him (Gn 12:1–3). This caused a major crisis of belief. Before police forces and courts of law, nomadic shepherds were vulnerable to local inhabitants. They were in constant danger of being attacked or cheated. To travel far from home would leave Abram vulnerable and totally dependent on God. We are told, "So Abram went" (Gn 12:4).

Abram made numerous adjustments every time God spoke to him. He traveled to Canaan where God led him. He trusted God for a son even though he was seventy-five years old and his wife was past childbearing age. When God told Abram to circumcise all of the males in his clan, he did so. When God changed his name to Abraham, he accepted his new designation as "father of a multitude" even though he did not have a child. Over and over again, God gave Abraham a difficult task, and Abraham obeyed. Because Abraham believed God, God counted it to him as righteousness (Gn 15:6). And just as

God had promised, at the age of one hundred, Abraham became the father of Isaac, and ultimately he became the father of many nations.

You might assume that after observing many years of faithful obedience, God would finally stop testing Abraham. But after Isaac had become an older child or teenager, God gave Abraham his greatest test. He told him to take his son to Mount Moriah and to offer him as a sacrifice (Gn 22:1–19). This was a common practice among the Canaanite religions, and Abraham may have thought God was now testing him to see if he loved his God as much as the Canaanites loved theirs. Abraham rose early the next morning and set out for Mount Moriah with his son. Scripture indicates that Abraham trusted God and he believed that, if necessary, God could resurrect his son from the dead, though Abraham had never experienced that before (Heb 11:17–19). At the last second, God stopped Abraham and spared Isaac's life. As a result of Abraham's obedience, he experienced God as a friend (Jms 2:23). He is the only person in Scripture specifically designated as such.

before you? Separate from me: if you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left."

¹⁰ Lot looked out and saw that the entire plain^A of the Jordan as far as Zoar was well watered everywhere like the LORD's garden and the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ So Lot chose the entire plain of the Jordan for himself. Then Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other. ¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, but Lot lived in the cities on the plain and set up his tent near Sodom. ¹³ (Now the men of Sodom were evil, sinning immensely^B against the LORD.)

¹⁴ After Lot had separated from him, the LORD said to Abram, "Look from the place where you are. Look north and south, east and west, ¹⁵ for I will give you and your offspring^C forever all the land that you see. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Get up and walk around the land, through its length and width, for I will give it to you."

¹⁸ So Abram moved his tent and went to live near the oaks of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.

ABRAM RESCUES LOT

14 In those days King Amraphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim^D ² waged war against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, and King Shemeber of Zeboim, as well as the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³ All of

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Prosperity often causes its own problems (v. 7).
2. Lot should have deferred to his uncle out of respect (vv. 10–13).
3. God urged Abram to claim the land that was promised (v. 17). Have you laid claim to all of God's promises?
4. When Abram moved to Hebron, his first act was to build an altar (v. 18). Is your relationship with God always your first priority?
5. Lot moved near Sodom but was soon enticed to live in Sodom (vv. 12; 14:12). Have you been tempted to get as close to sin as you can?

14 – LOVE RELATIONSHIP PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What causes fighting and war (vv. 1–11)? Are you currently in the midst of a conflict?
2. What motivated Abram to join in war (vv. 12,16,21–24)? How do you decide whether to enter a conflict?
3. What God did Melchizedek serve (vv. 18–19)?
4. To whom did Melchizedek give credit for Abram's success in battle, and how did Abram show that he agreed (v. 20)? Do you always honor God with your successes?
5. What do Abram's actions reveal about his view of material wealth (vv. 20–24)? How does the way you handle your money reflect on God?

^A13:10 Lit *circle*; i.e., probably the large round plain where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea, also in v. 11

^B13:13 Lit *evil and sinful* ^C13:15 Lit *seed* ^D14:1 Or *nations*

SPIRITUAL MARKERS

A spiritual marker is a reminder of an encounter with God. Often God revealed his will or disclosed a truth about his word or his nature through that encounter.

The spiritual marker, therefore, becomes a guidepost as you determine where God is leading you in the future.

When Joshua was leading the Israelites into the promised land, God miraculously stopped the waters of the Jordan River so they could cross on dry land. God commanded them to take twelve stones from the middle of the river and to erect a monument on the shore (Jos 4). Thereafter, whenever the next generations saw the monument, they were reminded of what God had done and what he had promised. When Abraham was journey-

ing in the promised land, he built altars and worshiped God wherever he had a fresh encounter with God (Gn 12:7,8; 13:4,18; 22:9). Whenever Abraham needed to regain his spiritual bearings, he returned to an altar and remembered what God had said to him there.

Spiritual markers are particularly helpful when facing a decision about the future. At times, two different paths can appear equally attractive. By reviewing your markers, you may see that one decision lines up with everything God has done and said in your life thus far, while the other may divert you from what God has already been doing in your life. God is purposeful in guiding people. Spiritual markers identify God's activity in your life.

these came as allies to the Siddim Valley (that is, the Dead Sea).⁴ They were subject to Chedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,⁶ and the Horites in the mountains of Seir, as far as El-paran by the wilderness.⁷ Then they came back to invade En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they defeated the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸ Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and lined up for battle in the Siddim Valley⁹ against King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar — four kings against five.¹⁰ Now the Siddim Valley contained many asphalt pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them,^a but the rest fled to the mountains.¹¹ The four kings took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food and went on.¹² They also took Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, for he was living in Sodom, and they went on.

¹³ One of the survivors came and told Abram the Hebrew, who lived near the oaks belonging to Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshcol and the brother of Aner. They were bound by a treaty with Abram.¹⁴ When Abram heard that his relative had been taken prisoner, he assembled^b his 318 trained men, born in his household, and they went in pursuit as far as Dan.¹⁵ And he and his servants deployed against them by night, defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus.¹⁶ He brought back all the goods and also his relative Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the other people.

MELCHIZEDEK'S BLESSING

¹⁷ After Abram returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the Shaveh Valley (that is, the King's Valley).¹⁸ Melchizedek, king of Salem,^c brought out bread and wine; he was a priest to God Most High.¹⁹ He blessed him and said:

Abram is blessed by God Most High,
Creator^d of heaven and earth,

²⁰ and blessed be God Most High
who has handed over
your enemies to you.

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

²¹ Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people, but take the possessions for yourself."

²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand in an oath to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,²³ that I will not take a thread or sandal strap or anything that belongs to you, so you can never say, 'I made Abram rich.'²⁴ I will take nothing except what the servants have eaten. But as for the share of the men who came with me — Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre — they can take their share."

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. When Abram heard of human conflict, he chose to become involved and make a difference (v. 14). Have you sat on the sidelines too long?
2. Humans write history as a succession of battles for political and economic power, while the Bible writes it as a love relationship between God and people, with wars as one example of how God and his people work together in his mission (ch. 14).
3. Lot continually drifts to the easiest place and, as a result, constantly finds himself in crisis (v. 12; 19:12–14, 30–35). Are you drawn to the easiest place or the hard place?
4. Melchizedek means "king of righteousness" (v. 18; see Heb 5:6; 7:17, 21).
5. Abram worshiped and made offerings to God. Others counted spoils of war (vv. 18–24). Are your first thoughts about God or about money and possessions?

^a14:10 Sam, LXX; MT reads *fell there* ^b14:14 Sam; MT reads *poured out* ^c14:18 = Jerusalem ^d14:19 Or *Possessor*

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

15 After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield;
your reward will be very great.

² But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in^b my house will be my heir."

⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body^c will be your heir."⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous."

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

⁸ But he said, "Lord GOD, how can I know that I will possess it?"

⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

¹⁰ So he brought all these to him, cut them in half, and laid the pieces opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. ¹² As the sun was setting, a deep sleep came over Abram, and suddenly great terror and darkness descended on him.

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know this for certain: Your offspring will be resident aliens for four hundred years in a land that does not belong to them and will be enslaved and oppressed.^d ¹⁴ However, I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward they will go out with many possessions. ¹⁵ But you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."^e

¹⁷ When the sun had set and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the divided animals. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "I give this land to your offspring, from the Brook of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River: ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hethites, Perizzites, Rephaim, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

16 Abram's wife, Sarai, had not borne any children for him, but she owned an Egyptian slave named Hagar. ² Sarai said to Abram, "Since the LORD has prevented me from bearing children, go to my slave; perhaps through her I can build a family."

15 – GOD'S WAYS

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Who initiated the conversation between God and Abram (v. 1)? Has God been trying to say something to you?
2. In light of chapter 14, why did God reveal himself to Abram as a "shield" and a "reward" (v. 1)? What name of God do you currently need to experience?
3. Why did God view Abram as "righteous" (v. 6)? What promise of God are you struggling to believe?
4. How did God show his love for Abram (vv. 4–5,18)? How has God recently demonstrated his love for you?
5. Why did God delay so long before giving Canaan to Abram's descendants (v. 16)? What promise of God are you currently waiting on?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God honored the boldness and confidence Abram demonstrated in asking God hard questions (vv. 2–3,8). What questions do you have for God?
2. Abram had faith to wait for God to fulfill his promises four generations after he died (vv. 6,16). How long would you be willing to wait on God?
3. There will always be enemies to God's will (v. 11). What enemy to God's will are you currently dealing with?
4. Despite the horrific evil of the Amorites, God granted them four centuries to repent before judgment finally came under Joshua (v. 16). What wicked persons is God currently showing patience to?

^a15:2 Hb obscure ^b15:3 Lit a son of ^c15:4 Lit loins ^d15:13 Lit will serve them and they will oppress them ^e15:16 Lit Amorites is not yet complete

GENESIS 16

And Abram agreed to what Sarai said.³ So Abram's wife, Sarai, took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, and gave her to her husband, Abram, as a wife for him. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan ten years.⁴ He slept with^A Hagar, and she became pregnant. When she saw that she was pregnant, her mistress became contemptible to her.⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for my suffering!^B I put my slave in your arms,^C and when she saw that she was pregnant, I became contemptible to her. May the LORD judge between me and you."

⁶ Abram replied to Sarai, "Here, your slave is in your power; do whatever you want with her." Then Sarai mistreated her so much that she ran away from her.

⁷ The angel of the LORD found her by a spring in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.⁸ He said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?"

She replied, "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai."

⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to

16 – FAMILY

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What happens when people attempt to do God's work the world's way (vv. 4–5)? How have you been tempted to use worldly reasoning to accomplish God's purposes?
2. What action did Abram take in an attempt to restore right relationships (v. 6)?
3. Why did Sarah react the way she did (vv. 4–5)?
4. Why are the questions God asks Hagar so important (v. 8)? How would you answer those questions?
5. Why are the names of God so significant (vv. 13–14)? What name of God have you recently experienced?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God often makes his people wait. His timing is unlike ours (v. 1)! What are you currently waiting for? How are you handling the wait?
2. Abram listened to human advice rather than God's counsel (v. 2). Whose advice do you normally seek first?
3. There are no acceptable shortcuts to achieving God's will (v. 2). What shortcut are you being tempted to take?
4. God is the Father of the Arab people. He loves all nations (v. 10). Do you pray for the people of other nations and religions?
5. Even in a desolate wilderness, God hears cries for help (v. 11). How is that a comfort to you?

^A16:4 Lit *He came to* ^B16:5 Or "*May my suffering be on you!*" ^C16:5 Lit *bosom*

CHARACTER PROFILE

HAGAR

Hagar was a slave woman from Egypt. She would have been viewed as having little worth and no status in the society in which she lived. She entered the household of Abram as Sarah's maidservant. When Sarah could not have children, she made Hagar have sexual relations with Abraham, according to local custom, so that any child she had would be considered Sarah's. Once Hagar conceived a son, Ishmael, however, she took pride in accomplishing something her mistress could not. This made Sarah furious, and she treated Hagar so cruelly that she fled into the wilderness. As a runaway slave woman in a harsh wilderness, it was unlikely that she would ever find her way back to her homeland in Egypt.

An angel of the Lord found her and asked her two crucial questions: "Where have you come from?" and "Where are you going?" (Gn 16:8). The angel made her confess her past, but then he promised that God would bless her and her descendants in the future. He instructed her to return to her mistress and submit to her. Hagar

named that place El Roi, for she realized God had seen her, even in a remote, desolate wilderness (Gn 16).

Fourteen years later, Sarah finally had a son of her own, named Isaac. When Ishmael mocked his half brother, Sarah insisted that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away (Gn 21:8–21). Abraham was reluctant to do so, but God assured him it was for the best. Cast out into the parched wilderness, it appeared Hagar and Ishmael would perish. Hagar placed Ishmael far enough away from her so she would not have to watch her only son die.

Once more, an angel found Hagar in the wilderness. God had seen her again! The angel opened her eyes so she saw a well from which to drink. Ishmael would survive and become the father of the Arab peoples. Hagar learned that, though she was not a primary character in God's work to build the nation of Israel through whom the Messiah would come, God still had a purpose for her life. God saw her life and valued her. She was not worthless. She was not defined merely by her past. Her life could also be a blessing to the earth in the future.

her authority.”¹⁰ The angel of the LORD said to her, “I will greatly multiply your offspring, and they will be too many to count.”

¹¹ The angel of the LORD said to her, “You have conceived and will have a son. You will name him Ishmael,^a for the LORD has heard your cry of affliction. ¹² This man will be like a wild donkey. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him; he will settle near all his relatives.”

¹³ So she named the LORD who spoke to her: “You are El-roi,”^b for she said, “In this place, have I actually seen the one who sees me?”^c ¹⁴ That is why the well is called Be-er-lahai-roi.^d It is between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar gave birth to Abram’s son, and Abram named his son (whom Hagar bore) Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

COVENANT CIRCUMCISION

17 ¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him, saying, “I am God Almighty. Live^e in my presence and be blameless. ² I will set up my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you greatly.”

³ Then Abram fell facedown and God spoke with him: ⁴ “As for me, here is my covenant with you: You will become the father of many nations. ⁵ Your name will no longer be Abram;^f your name will be Abraham,^g for I will make you the father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you. ⁷ I will confirm my covenant that is between me and you and your future offspring throughout their generations. It is a permanent covenant to be your God and the God of your offspring after you. ⁸ And to you and your future offspring^h I will give the land where you are residing — all the land of Canaan — as a permanent possession, and I will be their God.”

⁹ God also said to Abraham, “As for you, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations are to keep my covenant. ¹⁰ This is my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, which you are to keep: Every one of your males must be circumcised. ¹¹ You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² Throughout your generations, every male among you is to be circumcised at eight days old — every male born in your household or purchased from any foreigner and not your offspring. ¹³ Whether born in your household or purchased, he must be circumcised. My covenant will be marked in your flesh as a permanent covenant. ¹⁴ If any male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that man will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, “As for your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai, for Sarahⁱ will be her name. ¹⁶ I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will produce nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

¹⁷ Abraham fell facedown. Then he laughed and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a hundred-year-old man? Can Sarah, a ninety-year-old woman, give birth?” ¹⁸ So Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael were acceptable^k to you!”

¹⁹ But God said, “No. Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac.^l I will confirm my covenant with him as a permanent covenant for his future offspring. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will certainly bless him; I will make him fruitful

17 – REVELATION

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Why was it important that God reveal himself as “God Almighty” to Abram (v. 1)? Is your view of God as big as it needs to be?
2. How did Abram respond to an encounter with God (v. 3)? How have encounters with God changed your life?
3. What promises did the covenant relationship give Abraham (ch. 17)? What divine promises are you clinging to?
4. What life adjustments did God ask Abraham to make (vv. 10–11)? What adjustments is God asking you to make?
5. How did Abraham try to use his human reasoning to accomplish God’s work (v. 18)? How have you overestimated your ability and underestimated God’s help?

^a16:11 = God Hears ^b16:13 = God Sees Me ^c16:13 Hb obscure ^d16:14 = Well of the Living One Who Sees Me

^e17:1 Or Walk ^f17:5 = The Father Is Exalted ^g17:5 = Father of a Multitude ^h17:8 Lit seed ⁱ17:11 You in v. 11 is pl.

^j17:15 = Princess ^k17:18 Lit alive ^l17:19 = He Laughs

GENESIS 17-18

and will multiply him greatly. He will father twelve tribal leaders, and I will make him into a great nation. ²¹ But I will confirm my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year." ²² When he finished talking with him, God withdrew^A from Abraham.

23 So Abraham took his son Ishmael and those born in his household or purchased — every male among the members of Abraham's household — and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that very day, just as God had said to him. ²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised, ²⁵ and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised. ²⁶ On that very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. ²⁷ And all the men of his household — whether born in his household or purchased from a foreigner — were circumcised with him.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God had no obligation or reason to make a promise to Abraham except on the basis of his love (vv. 2–8). Have you ever been overwhelmed by the reality that God has a purpose for your life?
2. God's word far surpassed anything Abraham could have imagined (vv. 1–8). Have you expected too little concerning what God intends for you?
3. Rejecting God's word leads to condemnation (v. 14).
4. Abraham showed he was in a love relationship with God by immediate and complete obedience (vv. 23–27). How much time typically elapses between when you know God's will and when you obey it?
5. Though Ishmael received the sign of the covenant, he would not receive its promises (vv. 23–26).

ABRAHAM'S THREE VISITORS

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day. ² He looked up, and he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, bowed to the ground, ³ and said, "My lord, if I have found favor with you, please do not go on past your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, that you may wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ I will bring a bit of bread so that you may strengthen yourselves. This is why you have passed your servant's way. Later, you can continue on."

"Yes," they replied, "do as you have said."

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Knead three measures^B of fine flour and make bread."^{C7} Abraham ran to the herd and got a tender, choice calf. He gave it to a young man, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ Then Abraham took curds^D and milk, as well as the calf that he had prepared, and set them before the men. He served^E them as they ate under the tree.

18 - LOVE RELATIONSHIP

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How did Abraham respond to a divine visitation (vv. 2–7)? How quickly do you recognize a divine visitation?
2. How did Sarah respond to God's promise (vv. 12–15)? Has God ever told you anything that seemed laughable?
3. What has God revealed to you through your love relationship with him (v. 17)?
4. How aware is God of the wickedness committed on the earth (vv. 17–21)? Do you ever feel as if you need to inform him about what is taking place?
5. Why does God reveal his activity to those in a love relationship with him (v. 17)? What has God revealed to you about what he is doing around you?

SARAH LAUGHS

⁹ "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.

"There, in the tent," he answered.

10 The LORD said, "I will certainly come back to you in about a year's time, and your wife Sarah will have a son!" Now Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him.

¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were old and getting on in years. ¹² Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. ¹² So she laughed to herself: "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I have delight?"

^A17:22 Lit *went up, or ascended* ^B18:6 Lit *three seahs*; about 21 quarts ^C18:6 A round, thin, unleavened bread
^D18:8 Or *butter* ^E18:8 Lit *was standing by* ^F18:11 Lit *days*

¹³ But the LORD asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Can I really have a baby when I'm old?' ¹⁴ Is anything impossible for the LORD? At the appointed time I will come back to you, and in about a year she will have a son."

¹⁵ Sarah denied it. "I did not laugh," she said, because she was afraid. But he replied, "No, you did laugh."

ABRAHAM'S PLEA FOR SODOM

¹⁶ The men got up from there and looked out over Sodom, and Abraham was walking with them to see them off. ¹⁷ Then the LORD said, "Should I hide what I am about to do from Abraham? ¹⁸ Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ For I have chosen^a him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. This is how the LORD will fulfill to Abraham what he promised him." ²⁰ Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is immense, and their sin is extremely serious. ²¹ I will go down to see if what they have done justifies the cry that has come up to me. If not, I will find out."

²² The men turned from there and went toward Sodom while Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ²³ Abraham stepped forward and said, "Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people who are in it? ²⁵ You could not possibly do such a thing: to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. You could not possibly do that! Won't the Judge of the whole earth do what is just?"

²⁶ The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

²⁷ Then Abraham answered, "Since I have ventured to speak to my lord — even though I am dust and ashes — ²⁸ suppose the fifty righteous lack five. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?"

He replied, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

²⁹ Then he spoke to him again, "Suppose forty are found there?"

He answered, "I will not do it on account of forty."

³⁰ Then he said, "Let my lord not be angry, and I will speak further. Suppose thirty are found there?"

^a18:19 Lit *known* ^b18:22 Alt Hb tradition reads *while the LORD remained standing before Abraham*

CHARACTER PROFILE

SARAH

Sarai, whose name means "princess," may well have begun her marriage expecting her life to be just like all of the other young women of her day. She would give birth to several children, hopefully including at least one son to inherit the family wealth, and she would thereby bring honor to her husband and to herself. Sarai sought to do everything that was expected of her. She moved with her husband and father-in-law to Haran. Then she followed her husband Abraham to Canaan, even though he was uncertain where they were going. When her husband gave his nephew the choicest land and took the wilderness for himself, there is no record that she complained.

The one thing Sarah struggled with was that God had promised she would have a son. As an old woman, this seemed like nothing more than a cruel joke. God was promising the impossible. So Sarah attempted to

take matters into her own hands and have her husband produce a child through her maidservant, Hagar (Gn 16:1–6). This was a commonly accepted practice in such situations at that time. But God refused to allow Sarah to settle for less than his best for her. God was not asking Sarah to find a way to accomplish the impossible with her own ingenuity and problem-solving ability. God was asking her to trust him.

There were times when Sarah laughed at what God had promised (Gn 18:12). Ultimately, Sarah believed God was capable of fulfilling every promise to her, and she experienced a miracle (Heb 11:11). She named her son Isaac, which means "laughter," because that is what God brought to her life as a result of her faith and obedience. Her name was changed from Sarai to Sarah, which indicated she would be the mother of "kings of peoples." To this day, people are blessed because she believed.

GENESIS 18-19

He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

³¹ Then he said, "Since I have ventured to speak to my lord, suppose twenty are found there?"

He replied, "I will not destroy it on account of twenty."

³² Then he said, "Let my lord not be angry, and I will speak one more time. Suppose ten are found there?"

He answered, "I will not destroy it on account of ten."³³ When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

19 The two angels entered Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in Sodom's gateway. When Lot saw them, he got up to meet them. He bowed with his face to the ground ² and said, "My lords, turn aside to your servant's house, wash your feet, and spend the night. Then you can get up early and go on your way."

"No," they said. "We would rather spend the night in the square."³ But he urged them so strongly that they followed him and went into his house. He prepared a feast and baked unleavened bread for them, and they ate.

⁴ Before they went to bed, the men of the city of Sodom, both young and old, the whole population, surrounded the house. ⁵ They called out to Lot and said, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out to us so we can have sex with them!"

⁶ Lot went out to them at the entrance and shut the door behind him. ⁷ He said, "Don't do this evil, my brothers. ⁸ Look, I've got two daughters who haven't been intimate with a man. I'll bring them out to you, and you can do whatever you want^A to them. However, don't do anything to these men, because they have come under the protection of my roof."

⁹ "Get out of the way!" they said, adding, "This one came here as an alien, but he's acting like a judge! Now we'll do more harm to you than to them." They put pressure on Lot and came up to break down the door. ¹⁰ But the angels^B reached out, brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ They struck the men who were at the entrance of the house, both young and old, with blindness^C so that they were unable to find the entrance.

¹² Then the angels said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here: a son-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of this place, ¹³ for we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against its people is so great before the LORD, that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were going to marry his daughters. "Get up," he said. "Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God had promised land, but Abraham still lived as a nomad in a tent (v. 1). Do God's promises for you seem far away?
2. God encountered Abraham at a time of day he would not have expected (v. 1). How often have your encounters with God occurred when you least expected?
3. Sarah laughed at God's promise and denied God's accusation, yet ultimately she became a hero of the faith (see Heb 11:11-12). Does God's will seem laughable at times?
4. Abraham interceded based on God's character, not Abraham's wishes (v. 25).
5. Intercession, even on behalf of the most wicked people, can still make a difference (vv. 23-33). Who are you presently interceding for?

19 - JUDGMENT
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What caused God to judge and punish the cities (vv. 4-11,13; see 18:20-21)? Does this describe any modern cities today?
2. How much did Lot's sons-in-law respect him (v. 14)? How seriously does your family take your spiritual convictions?
3. What does God do if a person rejects his love (vv. 14-15)?
4. Why does God allow some people to escape judgment (v. 16)?
5. How does Lot treat God's word (vv. 16,19-20,30)? Do you ever argue with God?
6. How was God's rescue of Lot related to Abraham's mission of blessing the nations (v. 29; see 12:1-3; 18:22-33)?
7. What happens to those whom God sees as more committed to the world than to him (v. 26)? Have you ever looked back after you started obeying God?

^A19:8 Lit do what is good in your eyes ^B19:10 Lit men, also in v. 12 ^C19:11 Or a blinding light

¹⁵ At daybreak the angels urged Lot on: “Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment^A of the city.” ¹⁶ But he hesitated. Because of the LORD’s compassion for him, the men grabbed his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters. They brought him out and left him outside the city.

☉¹⁷ As soon as the angels got them outside, one of them^B said, “Run for your lives! Don’t look back and don’t stop anywhere on the plain! Run to the mountains, or you will be swept away!”

¹⁸ But Lot said to them, “No, my lords^C — please. ¹⁹ Your servant has indeed found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness by saving my life. But I can’t run to the mountains; the disaster will overtake me, and I will die. ²⁰ Look, this town is close enough for me to flee to. It is a small place. Please let me run to it — it’s only a small place, isn’t it? — so that I can survive.”

²¹ And he said to him, “All right,^D I’ll grant your request^E about this matter too and will not demolish the town you mentioned. ²² Hurry up! Run to it, for I cannot do anything until you get there.” Therefore the name of the city is Zoar.^F

²³ The sun had risen over the land when Lot reached Zoar. ☒²⁴ Then out of the sky the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah burning sulfur from the LORD. ²⁵ He demolished these cities, the entire plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and whatever grew on the ground. ²⁶ But Lot’s wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Early in the morning Abraham went to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸ He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the plain, and he saw that smoke was going up from the land like the smoke of a furnace. ☉²⁹ So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the middle of the upheaval when he demolished the cities where Lot had lived.

THE ORIGIN OF MOAB AND AMMON

³⁰ Lot departed from Zoar and lived in the mountains along with his two daughters, because he was afraid to live in Zoar. Instead, he and his two daughters lived in a cave.

³¹ Then the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man in the land to sleep with us as is the custom of all the land. ³² Come, let’s get our father to drink wine so that we can sleep with him and preserve our father’s line.” ³³ So they got their father to drink wine that night, and the firstborn came and slept with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁴ The next day the firstborn said to the younger, “Look, I slept with my father last night. Let’s get him to drink wine again tonight so you can go sleep with him and we can preserve our father’s line.” ³⁵ That night they again got their father to drink wine, and the younger went and slept with him; he did not know when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁶ So both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn gave birth to a son and named him Moab.^G He is the father of the Moabites of today. ³⁸ The younger also gave birth to a son, and she named him Ben-ammi.^H He is the father of the Ammonites of today.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. The intense devotion to hospitality by biblical people (vv. 1–3; see 18:1–8). How seriously do you take your hospitality toward others?
2. The intense devotion of sinful people to their evil ways (vv. 4–11).
3. Evil people felt condemned by a good man’s presence in their midst (v. 9). Have you found it difficult to be salt and light to the people around you?
4. Deliverance comes from accepting God’s invitation (vv. 12–14).
5. Lot was prepared to sacrifice his daughters so they ultimately exploited him (vv. 31–38). Are you paying today for mistakes you made with your children previously?

^A19:15 Or *iniquity, or guilt* ^B19:17 LXX, Syr, Vg read *outside, they* ^C19:18 Or *my Lord, or my lord* ^D19:21 Or “*Look!*”
^E19:21 Lit. *I will lift up your face* ^F19:22 In Hb, the name Zoar is related to “small” in v. 20; its previous name was “Bela”; Gn 14:2. ^G19:37 = From My Father ^H19:38 = Son of My People

GENESIS 20-21

SARAH RESCUED FROM ABIMELECH

20 From there Abraham traveled to the region of the Negev and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While he was staying in Gerar, ¹ **2** Abraham said about his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.

³ **3** But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “You are about to die because of the woman you have taken, for she is a married woman.”^A

⁴ **4** Now Abimelech had not approached her, so he said, “Lord, would you destroy a nation even though it is innocent? ⁵ Didn't he himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ I did this with a clear conscience^B and clean^C hands.”

⁶ **6** Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you did this with a clear conscience.^P I have also kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I have not let you touch her. ⁷ Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours.”

⁸ **8** Early in the morning Abimelech got up, called all his servants together, and personally^F told them all these things, and the men were terrified.

⁹ **9** Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said to him, “What have you done to us? How did I sin against you that you have brought such enormous guilt on me and on my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” ¹⁰ Abimelech also asked Abraham, “What made you do this?”

¹¹ **11** Abraham replied, “I thought, ‘There is absolutely no fear of God in this place. They will kill me because of my wife.’ ¹² Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. ¹³ So when God had me wander from my father's house, I said to her: Show your loyalty to me wherever we go and say about me, ‘He's my brother.’”

¹⁴ **14** Then Abimelech took flocks and herds and male and female slaves, gave them to Abraham, and returned his wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ Abimelech said, “Look, my land is before you. Settle wherever you want.”^F ¹⁶ And he said to Sarah, “Look, I am giving your brother one thousand pieces of silver. It is a verification of your honor^G to all who are with you. You are fully vindicated.”

¹⁷ **17** Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female slaves so that they could bear children, ¹⁸ for the LORD had completely closed all the wombs in Abimelech's household on account of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

21 ¹ **1** The LORD came to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time God had told him. ³ Abraham named his son who was born

20 - PRAYER

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Why would Abraham relocate to the area of the Philistines just after Lot suffered for living among the Sodomites (v. 1)?
2. How does God protect Abimelech (vv. 3,6)?
3. Was Abraham fully repentant for his deception (v. 11)? Are you ever tempted to make excuses rather than to repent or apologize?
4. Does God demand that a person be perfect morally to intercede for other people (ch. 20)? Have you ever felt inadequate to pray for others?
5. Does God speak to unbelievers (vv. 3-7)?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Abraham repeated his sin (ch. 20; see 12:10-20; 26:6-7). What reoccurring sin do you struggle with?
2. Abraham's fear led him and his wife to sin (v. 11). How has fear led you to sin?
3. The first reference to a “prophet” in Scripture is found here (v. 7).
4. God finally purges Abraham of his deceit shortly before he receives God's promise (ch. 20). How long has it taken for you to renounce some sins?
5. Abimelech appears to be more fearful of God than Abraham is (v. 8).

^A20:3 Lit is possessed by a husband ^B20:5 Lit with integrity of my heart ^C20:5 Lit cleanness of my ^D20:6 Lit with integrity of your heart ^E20:8 Lit in their ears ^F20:15 Lit Settle in the good in your eyes ^G20:16 Lit a covering of the eyes

to him — the one Sarah bore to him — Isaac. ⁴ When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

⁶ Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears will laugh with me." ⁷ She also said, "Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne a son for him" ⁸ in his old age."

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL SENT AWAY

⁸ The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. ⁹ But Sarah saw the son mocking — the one Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham. ¹⁰ So she said to Abraham, "Drive out this slave with her son, for the son of this slave will not be a coheir with my son Isaac!"

¹¹ This was very distressing to ^c Abraham because of his son. ¹² But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed ^d about the boy and about your slave. Whatever Sarah says to you, listen to her, because your offspring will be traced through Isaac, ^e ¹³ and I will also make a nation of the slave's son because he is your offspring."

¹⁴ Early in the morning Abraham got up, took bread and a waterskin, put them on Hagar's shoulders, and sent her and the boy away. She left and wandered in the Wilderness of Beer-sheba. ¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she left the boy under one of the bushes ^f ¹⁶ and went and sat at a distance, about a bowshot away, for she said, "I can't bear to watch the boy die!" While she sat at a distance, she ^f wept loudly.

¹⁷ God heard the boy crying, and the ^f angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What's wrong, Hagar? Don't be afraid, for God has heard the boy crying from the place where he is. ¹⁸ Get up, help the boy up, and grasp his hand, for I will make him a great nation." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. So she went and filled the waterskin and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew; he settled in the wilderness and became an archer. ²¹ He settled in the Wilderness of Paran, and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

ABRAHAM'S COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH

²² At that time Abimelech, accompanied by Phicol the commander of his army, said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. ²³ Swear to me by God here and now, that you will not break an agreement with me or with my children and descendants. As I have been loyal to you, so you will be loyal to me and to the country where you are a resident alien."

²⁴ And Abraham said, "I swear it." ²⁵ But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well that Abimelech's servants had seized.

²⁶ Abimelech replied, "I don't know who did this thing. You didn't report anything to me, so I hadn't heard about it until today."

²⁷ Abraham took flocks and herds and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. ²⁸ Abraham separated seven ewe lambs from the flock. ²⁹ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "Why have you separated these seven ewe lambs?"

³⁰ He replied, "You are to accept the seven ewe lambs from me so that this act ^g will serve as my witness that I dug this well." ³¹ Therefore that place was called Beer-sheba ^h because it was there that the two of them swore an oath. ³² After they had made a

21 – GOD'S WAYS

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What can people expect when God makes a promise (vv. 1–13)? How has God proven himself faithful to you?
2. The world may scoff at God's word (v. 9). Have people ever mocked you for your trust in God to work?
3. The result of our sin and unbelief often lingers to remind us of our foolishness (vv. 9–10). Do you still have to deal with the lingering results of your previous sins?
4. God chooses to work through his promises rather than through our improvisations (v. 12).
5. How is God's presence in our life recognizable to others (v. 22)?

^a21:6 Isaac = He Laughs; Gn 17:19 ^b21:7 Sam, Tg Jonathan; MT omits *him* ^c21:11 Lit was very bad in the eyes of
^d21:12 Lit "Let it not be bad in your eyes" ^e21:16 LXX reads the boy ^f21:17 Or an ^g21:30 Lit that it ^h21:31 = Well of the Oath, or Seven Wells

covenant at Beer-sheba, Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, left and returned to the land of the Philistines.

☉³³ Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. ³⁴ And Abraham lived as an alien in the land of the Philistines for many days.

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

22 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he answered.

☿² "Take your son," he said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

☉³ So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together.

⁷ Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, "My father."

And he replied, "Here I am, my son."

Isaac said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

☉⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide^a the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac^b and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am."

☉¹² Then he said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me." ¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram^c caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide,^d so today it is said, "It will be provided^e on the LORD's mountain."

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "By myself I have sworn," this is the LORD's declaration: "Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, ☉¹⁷ I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the city gates of their^f enemies. ¹⁸ And all the nations of the earth will be blessed^g by your offspring because you have obeyed my command."

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God may have plans for people you hate (vv. 12–13). Can you celebrate when God works through someone you dislike?
2. God used a family dispute to make Abraham a father of a nation and thus a blessing to the nations (vv. 12–18). How has God brought good out of your mistakes?
3. Every name of God reveals a dimension of his character and ways (v. 33). What is your favorite name for God? Why?
4. God blessed Ishmael because of his love for Abraham (v. 13).
5. The first words of angels to people is typically "fear not!" (v. 17). Do you need God to send you that message too?

22 - LOVE RELATIONSHIP


PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Why does God test people—for his sake or ours (v. 1)? How are you currently being tested?
2. Why would God ask Abraham to surrender the most precious thing in his life (v. 2)? What in your life is more precious to you than God?
3. How did Abraham's obedience affect God's blessing (vv. 3, 15–18)?
4. What evidence is there that Abraham believed Isaac would survive the ordeal (v. 5)?
5. How does Isaac's behavior reflect on his relationship with God and with Abraham (vv. 7–9)?


^a22:8 Lit see ^b22:9 Or *Isaac hand and foot* ^c22:13 Some Hb mss, Sam, LXX, Syr, Tg; other Hb mss read *saw behind him a ram* ^d22:14 = *Yahweh-yireh* ^e22:14 Or "He will be seen" ^f22:17 Lit *his* ^g22:18 Or *will consider themselves blessed, or will find blessing*

¹⁹ Abraham went back to his young men, and they got up and went together to Beer-sheba. And Abraham settled in Beer-sheba.

REBEKAH'S FAMILY

 ²⁰ Now after these things Abraham was told, "Milcah also has borne sons to your brother Nahor: ²¹ Uz his firstborn, his brother Buz, Kemuel the father of Aram, ²² Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." ²³ And Bethuel fathered Rebekah. Milcah bore these eight to Nahor, Abraham's brother. ²⁴ His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

SARAH'S BURIAL

23 Now Sarah lived 127 years; these were all the years of her life.  ² Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

 ³ When Abraham got up from beside his dead wife, he spoke to the

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. A love relationship with God involves absolute trust in God's words and in his ways (vv. 1–18). Do you trust that God's will for you is an expression of his perfect love?
2. Notice the careful precision in which God instructed Abraham (v. 1). Has God made his will for you perfectly clear?
3. Notice the significance of God's name (v. 14). Would Abraham have come to know God that way if he had not obeyed?
4. Unbeknownst to Abraham, God was already working out his plan for the next generation (vv. 20–24). How might God be already preparing the way for what he has next for you?

23 – GOD'S WAYS

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What type of family relationships do God's ways create among his people (v. 2)?
2. How did God work in the life of Abraham to give him the first installment on the promise of the land (ch. 23)? Has God somehow given you a taste of what is still to come?
3. Why did Abraham insist on purchasing the land for Sarah's burial (vv. 9–16)?
4. How does Abraham's behavior reveal him as a skilled businessman (vv. 3–20)? How has God made use of your skills to further his kingdom?

CHARACTER PROFILE

ISAAC

Isaac, whose name means "laughter," had brought much joy into his aged parents' home. His parents had been one hundred and ninety years old when he was born. He was truly a miracle child! For the first years of his life, he was undoubtedly doted on by his parents and the household staff. But one day his father took him on a journey to Mount Moriah to offer a sacrifice to God (Gn 22). Isaac knew his father loved God dearly, but Abraham had not brought a sacrifice to offer once they made it to the top of the mountain. We cannot imagine what Isaac must have felt when his father began to bind him and to prepare him to be sacrificed to God. Abraham would have been over 110 years old, and so the youthful Isaac certainly could have escaped had he chosen to. Yet perhaps he had watched his father's walk with God for so long that he had come to trust God as well. What a relief it must have been when God suddenly called out to Abraham to stay his hand. God declared that now he knew Abraham would withhold nothing from him. Suddenly Abraham found a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. He used it as an offering to God instead of Isaac. In that graphic, unforgettable experience, Isaac experienced his father's absolute commitment and obedience to God.

Much of God's promise to the patriarchs hinged on their producing suitable heirs. Yet the patriarchs' wives all had difficulty bearing children. Sarah was ninety before she finally had a child. Rebekah had difficulty having children so that Isaac pled with God on her behalf (Gn 25:21). Rachel would also have much difficulty having children and would ultimately die giving birth to her second child, Benjamin (Gn 30:1; 35:16–20). It is ironic that God would call a people to establish a great nation and then allow the first three generations to struggle to have children. Perhaps this was God's way of making clear that he was the author of the babies and of the multitude of descendants that would result.

Isaac, like his father Abraham, would build altars to the Lord to worship him and to establish landmarks in his spiritual pilgrimage (Gn 12:7,8; 13:4,18; 26:25). Each time the patriarchs worshiped God at an altar, they gained a sense of direction for their lives and experienced a fresh encounter with God. Whenever the patriarchs returned to an altar, they were reminded of what God had told them at that place. Each patriarch would learn from the spiritual journey of the generation that preceded him. God would develop a unique relationship with Isaac, but it would be built on the relationship God built with his father, Abraham.

Hethites: ⁴ "I am an alien residing among you. Give me burial property among you so that I can bury my dead."^a

⁵ The Hethites replied to Abraham, ⁶ "Listen to us, my lord. You are a prince of God^c among us. Bury your dead in our finest burial place. ⁹ None of us will withhold from you his burial place for burying your dead."

⁷ Then Abraham rose and bowed down to the Hethites, the people of the land. ⁸ He said to them, "If you are willing for me to bury my dead, listen to me and ask Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf ⁹ to give me the cave of Machpelah that belongs to him; it is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me in your presence, for the full price, as burial property."

¹⁰ Ephron was sitting among the Hethites. So in the hearing^e of all the Hethites who came to the gate of his city, Ephron the Hethite answered Abraham: ¹¹ "No, my lord. Listen to me. I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the sight^f of my people. Bury your dead."

¹² Abraham bowed down to the people of the land ¹³ and said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, "Listen to me, if you please. Let me pay the price of the field. Accept it from me, and let me bury my dead there."

¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham and said to him, ¹⁵ "My lord, listen to me. Land worth four hundred shekels of silver — what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

¹⁶ Abraham agreed with Ephron, and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the silver that he had agreed to in the hearing of the Hethites: four hundred standard shekels^g of silver. ¹⁷ So Ephron's field at Machpelah near Mamre — the field with its cave and all the trees anywhere within the boundaries of the field — became ¹⁸ Abraham's possession in the sight of all the Hethites who came to the gate of his city. ¹⁹ After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field at Machpelah near Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

²⁰ The field with its cave passed from the Hethites to Abraham as burial property.

A WIFE FOR ISAAC

24 ¹ Abraham was now old, getting on in years,^h and the LORD had blessed him in everything. ² Abraham said to his servant, the elder of his household who managed all he owned, "Place your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will have you swear by the LORD, God of heaven and God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I live, ⁴ but will go to my land and my family to take a wife for my son Isaac."

⁵ The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is unwilling to follow me to this land? Should I have your son go back to the land you came from?"

⁶ Abraham answered him, "Make sure that you don't take my son back there.

⁷ The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Following God's will does not make you immune from the normal griefs and losses of life (v. 2). What is a painful experience you have had as you have followed God's will?
2. God intends for us to treat the dead with honor (v. 4).
3. Abraham followed normal Near Eastern bargaining practices in which the seller appears to offer the property for free and the buyer offers to pay the asking price (vv. 3–20).

24 - INVITATION PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Why would Abraham not want his son to marry a Canaanite woman (v. 1; see also Dt 7:3; 2Co 6:14–15)? How particular are you about whom your children marry?
2. What do the titles for God teach you about him (vv. 3,7)? Do you pray to God using his different names?
3. How did the servant use prayer to follow God's will (v. 12)? How does God guide you as you go?
4. How did God affirm his leading of the servant (vv. 14,27,45)?
5. What did Rebekah's willingness to tend ten thirsty camels reveal about her character (v. 19)? How has your faithfulness led to new opportunities?
6. How sudden and dramatic would God's invitation to Rebekah have appeared (v. 58)? Has God ever surprised you with a new opportunity seemingly out of the blue?

^a23:4 Lit *dead from before me* ^b23:5 Lit *Abraham, saying to him* ^c23:6 Or *a mighty prince* ^d23:6 Or *finest graves*

^e23:10 Lit *ears*, also in vv. 13,16 ^f23:11 Lit *in the eyes of the sons* ^g23:16 Lit *400 shekels passing to the merchant*

^h24:1 Lit *days*

from my native land, who spoke to me and swore to me, 'I will give this land to your offspring'^a — he will send his angel before you, and you can take a wife for my son from there.⁸ If the woman is unwilling to follow you, then you are free from this oath to me, but don't let my son go back there."⁹ So the servant placed his hand under his master Abraham's thigh and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰ The servant took ten of his master's camels, and with all kinds of his master's goods in hand, he went to Aram-naharaim, to Nahor's town.¹¹ At evening, the time when women went out to draw water, he made the camels kneel beside a well outside the town.

⊕¹² "LORD, God of my master Abraham," he prayed, "make this happen for me today, and show kindness to my master Abraham."¹³ I am standing here at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water.¹⁴ Let the girl to whom I say, 'Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,' and who responds, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels also' — let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."

⊕¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah — daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor — coming with a jug on her shoulder.¹⁶ Now the girl was very beautiful, a virgin — no man had been intimate with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up.¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me have a little water from your jug."

¹⁸ She replied, "Drink, my lord." She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink.¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I'll also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink."²⁰ She quickly emptied her jug into the trough and hurried to the well again to draw water. She drew water for all his camels²¹ while the man silently watched her to see whether or not the LORD had made his journey a success.

²² As the camels finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing half a shekel, and for her wrists two bracelets weighing ten shekels of gold.²³ "Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

²⁴ She answered him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor."²⁵ She also said to him, "We have plenty of straw and feed and a place to spend the night."

⊕²⁶ Then the man knelt low, worshiped the LORD,²⁷ and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld his kindness and faithfulness from my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives."

²⁸ The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things.²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and Laban ran out to the man at the spring.³⁰ As soon as he had seen the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he had heard his sister Rebekah's words — "The man said this to me!" — he went to the man. He was standing there by the camels at the spring.

³¹ Laban said, "Come, you who are blessed by the LORD. Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels."³² So the man came to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and feed were given to the camels, and water was brought to wash his feet and the feet of the men with him.

³³ A meal was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have said what I have to say."

So Laban said, "Please speak."

³⁴ "I am Abraham's servant," he said. ⊕³⁵ "The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become rich. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys.³⁶ Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master in her^c old age, and he has given him everything he owns.³⁷ My master put me under this oath: 'You will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I live³⁸ but will go to my father's family and to my clan to take a wife for my son.'³⁹ But I said to my master, 'Suppose the woman will not come back with


^a 24:7 Lit seed ^b 24:19 Lit they are finished drinking ^c 24:36 Sam, LXX read his

me?' ⁴⁰ He said to me, 'The LORD before whom I have walked will send his angel with you and make your journey a success, and you will take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's family.' ⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath if you go to my family and they do not give her to you — you will be free from my oath.'

⁴² "Today when I came to the spring, I prayed: LORD, God of my master Abraham, if only you will make my journey successful! ⁴³ I am standing here at a spring. Let the young woman ^a who comes out to draw water, and I say to her, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jug,' ⁴⁴ and who responds to me, 'Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels also' — let her be the woman the LORD has appointed for my master's son.

⁴⁵ "Before I had finished praying silently, there was Rebekah coming with her jug on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, 'Please let me have a drink.' ⁴⁶ She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels also.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels. ⁴⁷ Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She responded, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. ⁴⁸ Then I knelt low, worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who guided me on the right way to take the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. ⁴⁹ Now, if you are going to show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; if not, tell me, and I will go elsewhere."^b

⁵⁰ Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we have no choice in the matter. ^c ⁵¹ Rebekah is here in front of you. Take her and go, and let her be a wife for your master's son, just as the LORD has spoken."


 ⁵² When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed to the ground before the LORD. ⁵³ Then he brought out objects of silver and gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious gifts to her brother and her mother. ⁵⁴ Then he and the men with him ate and drank and spent the night.

When they got up in the morning, he said, "Send me to my master."

⁵⁵ But her brother and mother said, "Let the girl stay with us for about ten days. Then she ^d can go."


⁵⁶ But he responded to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey a success. Send me away so that I may go to my master."

⁵⁷ So they said, "Let's call the girl and ask her opinion."^e

 ⁵⁸ They called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She replied, "I will go." ⁵⁹ So they sent away their sister Rebekah with the one who had nursed and raised her, ^f and Abraham's servant and his men.

⁶⁰ They blessed Rebekah, saying to her:

Our sister, may you become
thousands upon ten thousands.
May your offspring possess
the city gates of their ^g enemies.

 ⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her female servants got up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶² Now Isaac was returning from Beer-lahai-roi, ^h for he was living in the Negev region. ⁶³ In the early evening Isaac went out to walk ⁱ in the field, and looking up he saw camels coming. ⁶⁴ Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac,

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Abraham's servant may have been Eliezer, who at one point was destined to inherit Abraham's wealth if Isaac had not been born (see 15:2). Do you take genuine delight in serving well and prospering your employer?
2. Abraham wanted his son to have a wife who would follow God's ways (vv. 5,8).
3. Abraham's servant discovered that doing his work to the glory of God was an act of worship (v. 52). Is God pleased with your attitude toward your work?
4. Abraham's servant was unwilling to be delayed in fulfilling his responsibilities (vv. 55–60). Do you tolerate delays in completing your assignments?
5. Isaac was waiting prayerfully for his bride (v. 63).

^a24:43 Or the virgin ^b24:49 Lit go to the right or to the left ^c24:50 Lit we cannot say to you anything bad or good
^d24:55 Or you ^e24:57 Lit mouth ^f24:59 Lit with her wet nurse; Gn 35:8 ^g24:60 Lit his ^h24:62 = A Well of the Living One Who Sees Me ⁱ24:63 Or pray, or meditate; Hb obscure

she got down from her camel ⁶⁵ and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?”

The servant answered, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah and took Rebekah to be his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was comforted after his mother’s death.

ABRAHAM’S OTHER WIFE AND SONS

25 Abraham had taken ^A another wife, whose name was Keturah, ² and she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. Dedan’s sons were the Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴ And Midian’s sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were sons of Keturah. ⁵ Abraham gave everything he owned to Isaac. ⁶ But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines, and while he was still alive he sent them eastward, away from his son Isaac, to the land of the East.

^A25:1 Or *Abraham took*

25 – FAMILY PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Why did Abraham give all of his wealth to Isaac and send his other sons away (vv. 5–6)?
2. Why did God allow Sarah and Rebekah to be barren when he promised to give them many descendants (v. 21)? How has following God’s will been difficult for you in the early stages?
3. How did Isaac and Rebekah respond to confusing circumstances (vv. 21–22)? How have you found answers to your questions in prayer?
4. Why did God choose the younger son to serve him rather than the oldest, as would be expected (v. 23)? How have God’s ways surprised you?
5. How did Jacob live up to his name of “supplanter” (v. 31; see 27:36)? How have you acted selfishly?
6. What does Esau’s willingness to sell his birthright reveal about him (v. 34)? Have you ever surrendered God’s will for you too carelessly?

CHARACTER PROFILE

REBEKAH

Isaac was a miracle child, given to his parents in their old age. Clearly, he required a unique person to be his wife. The one stipulation Abraham had for his son was that Isaac must not marry a woman from the pagan Canaanites. Instead, he should wed someone from among his relatives in Paddan-aram, in Mesopotamia. Abraham’s chief servant, probably Eliezer, was dispatched with ten camels laden with gifts (Gn 24). Upon entering the city, the servant prayed for God to reveal to him God’s choice for Isaac. The servant waited by the well where the women would come each morning and evening to get water. He waited for God’s guidance to the right person. Whichever woman not only offered to give him a drink but also offered to water all ten of his camels would be the one. Such a task would have required an enormous amount of work and represented a generous spirit toward a stranger. While he was praying, Rebekah arrived. She was the granddaughter of Abraham’s brother Nahor, who had remained in Mesopotamia. She gave him a drink and offered to water his camels.

When Abraham’s servant explained to Rebekah’s relatives the nature of his journey, Rebekah agreed to return with him to Canaan to marry Isaac. Isaac loved Rebekah and was comforted by her at the death of his mother Sarah (Gn 24:67).


As with Sarah, Rebekah was barren for the first years of her marriage. Finally, Isaac prayed to God on behalf of

his wife, and she became pregnant (Gn 25:21). God gave Rebekah twin sons: Esau, the eldest, and Jacob. When the boys became young men, Rebekah displayed a dark side of her character. She obviously favored her son Jacob over his brother Esau. She schemed with Jacob to trick Isaac into giving Jacob the firstborn blessing (Gn 27). When the deception was discovered, Esau hated his brother and plotted to kill him. As a result, Rebekah was forced to send her beloved son Jacob away to her relatives. The favoritism she displayed among her children divided her family and caused her to lose the son she cherished. Her son would eventually demonstrate favoritism toward one wife and one child that would cause enormous grief in his family as well. We do not hear of Rebekah again, except that she was eventually buried in the same tomb as Isaac.


Rebekah showed remarkable grace and courage as a young woman. When God invited her to join him in what he was doing through the descendants of Abraham, she faced a crisis of belief. Would she travel to a distant land to marry a man she had never met, knowing she might never see her family again? Would she leave all she knew and trust God for her future? Or would she cling to the world she knew and live a predictable, safe life? She dared to trust God and was swept up into his eternal activity to build a people for himself, through whom the Savior of humanity would eventually come.

GENESIS 25


ABRAHAM'S DEATH

⁷ This is the length of Abraham's life:^a 175 years. ⁸ He took his last breath and died at a good old age, old and contented,^b and he was gathered to his people. ⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hethite. ¹⁰ This was the field that Abraham bought from the Hethites. Abraham was buried there with his wife Sarah. ¹¹ After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who lived near Beer-lahai-roi.

ISHMAEL'S FAMILY RECORDS

¹² These are the family records of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's slave, bore to Abraham. ¹³ These are the names of Ishmael's sons; their names according to the family records are Nebaioth, Ishmael's firstborn, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵ Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶ These are Ishmael's sons, and these are their names by their settlements and encampments: twelve leaders^c of their clans. ^d¹⁷ This is the length^e of Ishmael's life: 137 years. He took his last breath and died, and was gathered to his people. ¹⁸ And they^f settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt as you go toward Asshur. ^g He^h stayed nearⁱ all his relatives.

THE BIRTH OF JACOB AND ESAU

¹⁹ These are the family records of Isaac son of Abraham. Abraham fathered Isaac. ²⁰ Isaac was forty years old when he took as his wife Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. ²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The LORD was receptive to his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. ²² But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?"^j So she went to inquire of the LORD.

²³ And the LORD said to her:

Two nations are in your womb;
two peoples will come from you and be separated.
One people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger.

²⁴ When her time came to give birth, there were indeed twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first one came out red-looking,^k covered with hair^l like a fur coat, and they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out grasping Esau's heel with his hand. So he was named Jacob.^m Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman,ⁿ but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home.^o

²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I'm exhausted." That is why he was also named Edom.^p

³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Abraham's sons and grandsons became fathers of the nations of Arabia making Abraham a blessing to the nations (vv. 1–4; see 21:1–3). How has God done far more through your life than you had expected?
2. Ishmael helped bury Abraham along with Isaac (v. 9).
3. At Abraham's death, he only possessed one cave in the land God promised him (v. 9).
4. God blessed Ishmael just as he promised (vv. 12–18). How is God blessing your children?
5. Though twins, the two brothers were completely different (vv. 24–28).
6. This represents the first case of twins in the Bible as well as the first clear example of parental favoritism, which ends in disaster (v. 28). How do you ensure you treat your family members fairly?

^a25:7 Lit *And these are the days of the years of the life of Abraham that he lived* ^b25:8 Sam, LXX, Syr read *full of days*
^c25:16 Or *chieftains* ^d25:16 Or *peoples* ^e25:17 Lit *And these are the years* ^f25:18 LXX, Vg read *he* ^g25:18 Or *Assyria*
^h25:18 = Ishmael and his descendants ⁱ25:18 Or *He settled down alongside of* ^j25:22 Lit *said, "If thus, why this I?"*
^k25:25 In Hb, *red-looking* sounds like "Edom"; Gn 32:3. ^l25:25 In Hb, *hair* sounds like "Seir"; Gn 32:3. ^m25:26 = He Grasps the Heel ⁿ25:27 Lit *a man of the field* ^o25:27 Lit *man living in tents* ^p25:30 = Red

³² “Look,” said Esau, “I’m about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?”
³³ Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him.
³⁴ Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright.

THE PROMISE REAFFIRMED TO ISAAC

26 ¹ There was another famine in the land in addition to the one that had occurred in Abraham’s time. And Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar. ² The LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt. Live in the land that I tell you about; ³ stay in this land as an alien, and I will be with you and bless you. For I will give all these lands to you and your offspring, and I will confirm the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴ I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky, I will give your offspring all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed^a by your offspring, ⁵ because Abraham listened to me and kept my mandate, my commands, my statutes, and my instructions.” ⁶ So Isaac settled in Gerar.

26 – REVELATION

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How did Isaac know God’s will (vv. 1–3)? How has God made his will clear to you?
2. Why would God not want Isaac to leave Canaan (v. 2)? How have you been tempted to make the same mistakes your parents made?
3. How could people tell that God was with Isaac (v. 28)? How can people tell God is with you?
4. How were the sins of Abraham passed down to Isaac (vv. 6–11; see ch. 20)? What generational sins do you struggle with?

ISAAC’S DECEPTION

⁷ When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say “my wife,” thinking, “The men of the place will kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is a beautiful woman.” ⁸ When Isaac had been there for some time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from the window and was surprised to see^b Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah.

⁹ Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, “So she is really your wife! How could you say, ‘She is my sister?’”

Isaac answered him, “Because I thought I might die on account of her.”

¹⁰ Then Abimelech said, “What have you done to us? One of the people could easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.” ¹¹ So Abimelech warned all the people, “Whoever harms this man or his wife will certainly be put to death.”

CONFLICTS OVER WELLS


¹² Isaac sowed seed in that land, and in that year he reaped^c a hundred times what was sown. The LORD blessed him, ¹³ and the man became rich and kept getting richer until he was very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, and many slaves, and the Philistines were envious of him. ¹⁵ Philistines stopped up all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham, filling them with dirt. ¹⁶ And Abimelech said to Isaac, “Leave us, for you are much too powerful for us.”^d

¹⁷ So Isaac left there, camped in the Gerar Valley, and lived there. ¹⁸ Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham and that the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died. He gave them the same names his father had given them. ¹⁹ Then Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and found a well of spring^e water there. ²⁰ But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen and said, “The water is ours!” So he named the well Esek^f because they argued with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well and quarreled over that one also, so he named it Sitnah. ²² He moved from there and dug another, and they did not quarrel over it. He named it Rehoboth^h and said, “For now the LORD has made space for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.”

^a26:4 Or will consider themselves blessed ^b26:8 Or and he looked and behold — ^c26:12 Lit found ^d26:16 Or are more numerous than we are ^e26:19 Lit living ^f26:20 = Argument ^g26:21 = Hostility ^h26:22 = Open Spaces


THE LORD APPEARS TO ISAAC

²³ From there he went up to Beer-sheba,  ²⁴ and the LORD appeared to him that night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your offspring because of my servant Abraham.”

 ²⁵ So he built an altar there, called on the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there. Isaac’s servants also dug a well there.


COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH

²⁶ Now Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army. ²⁷ Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me? You hated me and sent me away from you.”

 ²⁸ They replied, “We have clearly seen how the LORD has been with you. We think there should be an oath between two parties — between us and you. Let us make a covenant with you: ²⁹ You will not harm us, just as we have not harmed you but have done only what was good to you, sending you away in peace. You are now blessed by the LORD.”

³⁰ So he prepared a banquet for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹ They got up early in the morning and swore an oath to each other. ^A Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace. ³² On that same day Isaac’s servants came to tell him about the well they had dug, saying to him, “We have found water!” ³³ He called it Sheba. ^B Therefore the name of the city is still Beer-sheba ^C today.


ESAU’S WIVES

 ³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he took as his wives Judith daughter of Beroi the Hethite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hethite. ³⁵ They made life bitter ^D for Isaac and Rebekah.

THE STOLEN BLESSING

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could not see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.”

And he answered, “Here I am.”

 ² He said, “Look, I am old and do not know the day of my death. ³ So now take your hunting gear, your quiver and bow, and go out in the field to hunt some game for me. ⁴ Then make me a delicious meal that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I can bless you before I die.”

⁵ Now Rebekah was listening to what Isaac said to his son Esau. So while Esau went to the field to hunt some game to bring in, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Listen! I heard your father talking with your brother Esau. He said, ⁷ ‘Bring me game and make a delicious meal for me to eat so that I can bless you in the LORD’s presence before I die.’ ⁸ Now, my son, listen to me and do what I tell you. ⁹ Go to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, and I

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God can choose to bless you regardless of your circumstances (v. 12). How has God demonstrated his determination to bless you?
2. God’s blessings may make others jealous of you (vv. 19–21). Has anyone envied God’s activity in your life?
3. Esau’s marriage to local, pagan women indicated his disdain for God’s promises (vv. 34–35).
4. God’s greatest assurance for his people is his presence (v. 24). How have you experienced the difference God’s presence makes?

27 – FAMILY
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How does God work through families with problems (26:34–27:46)? What problems in your family does God have to overcome?
2. What happens when obedience to parents leads to dishonoring God (vv. 6–13)? Have your parents helped you honor God, or have they made it more difficult?
3. How was family leadership transmitted from one generation to another in families (vv. 27–29)?
4. How was the father’s blessing related to God’s blessing (vv. 27–29)? Were you blessed in your family?
5. What happens when a person uses human ways to achieve God’s purposes (vv. 40–43)? How have you been tempted to take matters into your own hands?
6. What often happens when parents show favoritism (vv. 42–46; see 25:28)? Have you been affected by favoritism in your family?

^A 26:31 Lit *swore, each man to his brother* ^B 26:33 Or *Shibah* ^C 26:33 = Well of the Oath ^D 26:35 Lit *And they became bitterness of spirit*

will make them into a delicious meal for your father — the kind he loves.¹⁰ Then take it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies.”

¹¹ Jacob answered Rebekah his mother, “Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a man with smooth skin.¹² Suppose my father touches me. Then I will be revealed to him as a deceiver and bring a curse rather than a blessing on myself.”

¹³ His mother said to him, “Your curse be on me, my son. Just obey me and go get them for me.”

¹⁴ So he went and got the goats and brought them to his mother, and his mother made the delicious food his father loved.¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best clothes of her older son Esau, which were in the house, and had her younger son Jacob wear them.¹⁶ She put the skins of the young goats on his hands and the smooth part of his neck.¹⁷ Then she handed the delicious food and the bread she had made to her son Jacob.

¹⁸ When he came to his father, he said, “My father.”

And he answered, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?”

¹⁹ Jacob replied to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may bless me.”

²⁰ But Isaac said to his son, “How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?”

He replied, “Because the LORD your God made it happen for me.”

²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come closer so I can touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau or not?”

²² So Jacob came closer to his father Isaac. When he touched him, he said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him.²⁴ Again he asked, “Are you really my son Esau?”

And he replied, “I am.”

²⁵ Then he said, “Bring it closer to me, and let me eat some of my son’s game so that I can bless you.” Jacob brought it closer to him, and he ate; he brought him wine, and he drank.

²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come closer and kiss me, my son.”²⁷ So he came closer and kissed him. When Isaac smelled[^] his clothes, he blessed him and said:

Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a field
that the LORD has blessed.

²⁸ May God give to you —
from the dew of the sky
and from the richness of the land —
an abundance of grain and new wine.

²⁹ May peoples serve you
and nations bow in worship to you.
Be master over your relatives;
may your mother’s sons bow in worship to you.
Those who curse you will be cursed,
and those who bless you will be blessed.

³⁰ As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob and Jacob had left the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau arrived from his hunting.³¹ He had also made some delicious food and brought it to his father. He said to his father, “Let my father get up and eat some of his son’s game, so that you may bless me.”

³² But his father Isaac said to him, “Who are you?”

He answered, “I am Esau your firstborn son.”

³³ Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably. “Who was it then,” he said, “who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it all before you came in, and I blessed him. Indeed, he will be blessed!”

³⁴ When Esau heard his father’s words, he cried out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me too, my father!”

³⁵ But he replied, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.”

[^] 27:27 Lit *smelled the smell of*

³⁶ So he said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob?^a For he has cheated me twice now. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing." Then he asked, "Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"

³⁷ But Isaac answered Esau, "Look, I have made him a master over you, have given him all of his relatives as his servants, and have sustained him with grain and new wine. What then can I do for you, my son?"

³⁸ Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" And Esau wept loudly.^b

³⁹ His father Isaac answered him,
Look, your dwelling place will be
away from the richness of the land,
away from the dew of the sky above.

⁴⁰ You will live by your sword,
and you will serve your brother.
But when you rebel,^c
you will break his yoke from your neck.

ESAU'S ANGER

🕒 ⁴¹ Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. And Esau determined in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

⁴² When the words of her older son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she summoned her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Listen, your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. 🕒 ⁴³ So now, my

son, listen to me. Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, ⁴⁴ and stay with him for a few days until your brother's anger subsides — ⁴⁵ until your brother's rage turns away from you and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I lose you both in one day?"

⁴⁶ So Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm sick of my life because of these Hethite girls. If Jacob marries someone from around here,^d like these Hethite girls, what good is my life?"

JACOB'S DEPARTURE

28 So Isaac summoned Jacob, blessed him, and commanded him, "Do not marry a Canaanite girl. ² Go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father. Marry one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. 🕒 ³ May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you so that you become an assembly of peoples. ⁴ May God give you and your offspring the blessing of Abraham so that you may possess the land where you live as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham." ⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Parental favoritism sets a pattern for deception and lying (ch. 27; see 25:28). How has dysfunction in your home affected your walk with God?
2. The blessing brought material prosperity, political power, and family control (vv. 28–29).
3. Once spoken, the blessing was in force and could not be taken back (v. 33). How were you blessed in your family?
4. Deception in a family leads to anger, grief, bitterness, and hatred (vv. 33–36, 41–43).
5. Despite the betrayal, lying, and death threats, God still worked out his purposes for Isaac's family (vv. 42–46). How has God enabled you to overcome the dysfunction of your family?

28 - LOVE RELATIONSHIP PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How does God begin a love relationship with Jacob (vv. 12–15)? How did God initiate one with you?
2. Why did Isaac bless Jacob after Jacob stole Esau's blessing (vv. 1–4)?
3. What do the angels ascending and descending represent (v. 12)? Have you ever been surprised by how much God was working around you?
4. What was God's promise to Jacob (v. 15)? Is God's presence enough for you?

^a27:36 = He Grasps the Heel ^b27:38 Lit Esau lifted up his voice and wept ^c27:40 Hb obscure ^d27:46 Lit someone like these daughters of the land

⁶ Esau noticed that Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to get a wife there. When he blessed him, Isaac commanded Jacob, "Do not marry a Canaanite girl." ⁷ And Jacob listened to his father and mother and went to Paddan-aram. ⁸ Esau realized that his father Isaac disapproved of the Canaanite women, ⁹ so Esau went to Ishmael and married, in addition to his other wives, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son. She was the sister of Nebaioth.

JACOB AT BETHEL

¹⁰ Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He reached a certain place and spent the night there because the sun had set. He took one of the stones from the place, put it there at his head, and lay down in that place. ¹² And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching the sky, and God's angels were going up and down on it. ¹³ The LORD was standing there beside him, ^a saying, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸ Early in the morning Jacob took the stone that was near his head and set it up as a marker. He poured oil on top of it ¹⁹ and named the place Bethel, ^b though previously the city was named Luz. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow: "If God will be with me and watch over me during this journey I'm making, if he provides me with food to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ and if I return safely to my father's family, then the LORD will be my God. ²² This stone that I have set up as a marker will be God's house, and I will give to you a tenth of all that you give me."

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. At Jacob's lowest point, he had his greatest encounter with God (vv. 10–17). How have your failures prepared you for a deeper walk with God?
2. Jacob discovered that God was always at work around him (vv. 13–16).
3. The relationship with God did not mean broken family relationships had also been restored. Jacob's problems with Esau stayed with him for years to come (v. 22; see chs. 32–33).
4. Jacob the schemer would try to make a deal with God (vv. 20–22). Have you ever tried to negotiate with God?

JACOB MEETS RACHEL

29 ^a Jacob resumed his journey ^c and went to the eastern country. ^d He looked and saw a well in a field. Three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it because the sheep were watered from this well. But a large stone covered the opening of the well. ³ The shepherds would roll the stone from the opening of the well and water the sheep when all the flocks ^e were gathered there. Then they would return the stone to its place over the well's opening.

⁴ Jacob asked the men at the well, "My brothers! Where are you from?"

"We're from Haran," they answered.

⁵ "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?" Jacob asked them.

They answered, "We know him."

29 – FAMILY

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What are God's ways of working through normal daily events and relationships (vv. 1–20)?
2. What does God's blessing of Leah reveal about God's love (vv. 31–35)?
3. How does God fulfill his blessing of a large family for Jacob (29:31–30:21; see 28:14)?
4. Why did God allow Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel to all have difficulty having children when they were supposed to be the matriarchs of a great nation (v. 31)? How has doing God's will been more difficult than you expected?

^a 28:13 Or *there above it* ^b 28:19 = House of God ^c 29:1 Lit *Jacob picked up his feet* ^d 29:1 Lit *the land of the children of the east* ^e 29:3 Sam, some LXX mss read *flocks and the shepherds*

⁶ “Is he well?” Jacob asked.

“Yes,” they said, “and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with his sheep.”

⁷ Then Jacob said, “Look, it is still broad daylight. It’s not time for the animals to be gathered. Water the flock, then go out and let them graze.”

⁸ But they replied, “We can’t until all the flocks have been gathered and the stone is rolled from the well’s opening. Then we will water the sheep.”

⁹ While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess.¹⁰ As soon as Jacob saw his uncle Laban’s daughter Rachel with his sheep,^a he went up and rolled the stone from the opening and watered his uncle Laban’s sheep.¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept loudly.^b ¹² He told Rachel that he was her father’s relative, Rebekah’s son. She ran and told her father.

JACOB DECEIVED

¹³ When Laban heard the news about his sister’s son Jacob, he ran to meet him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then he took him to his house, and Jacob told him all that had happened.

¹⁴ Laban said to him, “Yes, you are my own flesh and blood.”^c

After Jacob had stayed with him a month,¹⁵ Laban said to him, “Just because you’re my relative, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.”


¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters: the older was named Leah, and the younger was named Rachel.¹⁷ Leah had tender eyes, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful.¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel, so he answered Laban, “I’ll work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.”

¹⁹ Laban replied, “Better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay with me.”

²⁰ So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Since my time is complete, give me my wife, so I can sleep with^d her.”²² So Laban invited all the men of the place and sponsored a feast.



²³ That evening, Laban took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and he slept with her.²⁴ And Laban gave his slave Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her slave.

 ²⁵ When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, “What have you done to me? Wasn’t it for Rachel that I worked for you? Why have you deceived me?”

²⁶ Laban answered, “It is not the custom in our country to give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn.²⁷ Complete this week of wedding celebration, and we will also give you this younger one in return for working yet another seven years for me.”

²⁸ And Jacob did just that. He finished the week of celebration, and Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.²⁹ And Laban gave his slave Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her slave.³⁰ Jacob slept with Rachel also, and indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

JACOB’S SONS

 ³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah was neglected, he opened her womb; but Rachel was unable to conceive.  ³² Leah conceived, gave birth to a son, and named him Reuben,^e for she said, “The LORD has seen my affliction; surely my husband will love me now.”

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Jacob thought he was in control of his situation, but he was not (vv. 15–25).
2. Just as Jacob experienced favoritism from his parents, so he demonstrated it in his own family (vv. 25–31). In what ways have you carried the sins of your childhood family into your adult life?
3. God seeks to provide love to those without loving human relationships (v. 31). How has God sought to make up in your life what you lacked from others?
4. Through Laban’s deceit, Jacob had two wives who produced twelve sons, and twelve tribes of Israel (29:26–30:24). How has God taken your hardships and brought good from them?

^a29:10 Lit with the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother ^b29:11 Lit and he lifted his voice and wept ^c29:14 Lit my bone and my flesh ^d29:21 Lit can go to ^e29:32 = See, a Son; in Hb, the name *Reuben* sounds like “has seen my affliction.”

³³ She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, “The LORD heard that I am neglected and has given me this son also.” So she named him Simeon.^A

³⁴ She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, “At last, my husband will become attached to me because I have borne three sons for him.” Therefore he was named Levi.^B

³⁵ And she conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she named him Judah.^C Then Leah stopped having children.

30 ♡ When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she envied her sister. “Give me sons, or I will die!” she said to Jacob.

² Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, “Am I in the place of God? He has withheld offspring^D from you!”

³ Then she said, “Here is my maid Bilhah. Go sleep with her, and she’ll bear children for me^E so that through her I too can build a family.”⁴ So Rachel gave her slave Bilhah to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her.⁵ Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. ♣⁶ Rachel said, “God has vindicated me; yes, he has heard me and given me a son,” so she named him Dan.^F

⁷ Rachel’s slave Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.⁸ Rachel said, “In my wrestlings with God,^G I have wrestled with my sister and won,” and she named him Naphtali.^H

30 – FAMILY PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What happens when jealousy and favoritism dominate family relationships (vv. 1–2, 14–16)? Does it comfort you to know that God has done some of his best work through unhealthy families?
2. What does it mean for God to “remember” (v. 22; see 8:1; 9:15; 19:29; 21:1)?
3. How had Jacob fulfilled God’s mission of blessing the nations (vv. 27, 30; see 28:14)?
4. How did God work through jealous, dissatisfied people to accomplish his plan of world redemption (vv. 32–39)? Has it surprised you that God has done so much through your life?

^A29:33 In Hb, the name *Simeon* sounds like “has heard.” ^B29:34 In Hb, the name *Levi* sounds like “attached to.”

^C29:35 In Hb, the name *Judah* sounds like “praise.” ^D30:2 Lit *the fruit of the womb* ^E30:3 Lit *bear on my knees*

^F30:6 In Hb, the name *Dan* sounds like “has vindicated,” or “has judged.” ^G30:8 Or “*With mighty wrestlings*

^H30:8 In Hb, the name *Naphtali* sounds like “my wrestling.”

CHARACTER PROFILE

LEAH

Few things are as painful as being unloved. Love is a powerful force. It can work miracles in people’s lives. But being unloved causes pain and suffering to the depths of people’s souls. Leah is one of the tragic characters in the Bible who desperately wanted her husband Jacob to love her, yet nothing she did endeared her to him.

When Jacob first appeared on the scene, all of Leah’s family was astir. It soon became obvious that Jacob was smitten by Rachel, Leah’s younger sister. Jacob offered to work for Laban for seven years if he could have Rachel as his wife. His seven years of labor flew by. On their wedding night, unbeknownst to Jacob, Laban withheld Rachel from Jacob and gave him Leah instead. Not until the next morning did Jacob realize he had been cheated. Imagine the shame and embarrassment Leah felt when she saw the look of shock and disappointment on her husband’s face. She knew Jacob did not love or want her. Her father had used her so he could cheat his son-in-law into an additional seven years of labor. When confronted, Laban offered to give Rachel to Jacob a week later if he would work seven more years. Jacob eagerly agreed.

Leah endured a painful marriage in which she knew Jacob loved Rachel with all of his heart but had no love for her.

God is love. He fully understands people’s need for it. He is sensitive to the needs of the unloved. God did not change Jacob’s heart to love Leah, but God did bless Leah with children who loved their mother. God gave Leah a total of seven children: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah. There is evidence that Leah’s children loved her and were sensitive to her difficult life (Gn 30:14). Ironically, Rachel struggled to have children. She ultimately gave birth to only two: Joseph and Benjamin.

Life is not equal or seemingly fair for everyone. God develops different paths and relationships with his people. Leah was not destined to enjoy a marriage relationship as she had hoped, but God ministered to her and gave her children who loved her. Ironically, she would ultimately share a tomb with Isaac, while Rachel would be buried alone (Gn 35:16–20; 49:29–32).

⁹ When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her slave Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Leah's slave Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ Then Leah said, "What good fortune!"^A and she named him Gad.^B

¹² When Leah's slave Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, ¹³ Leah said, "I am happy that the women call me happy," so she named him Asher.^C

¹⁴ Reuben went out during the wheat harvest and found some mandrakes in the field. When he brought them to his mother Leah, Rachel asked, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

¹⁵ But Leah replied to her, "Isn't it enough that you have taken my husband? Now you also want to take my son's mandrakes?"

"Well then," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes."

¹⁶ When Jacob came in from the field that evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come with me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So Jacob slept with her that night.

☞ ¹⁷ God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my slave to my husband," and she named him Issachar.^D

¹⁹ Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰ "God has given me a good gift," Leah said. "This time my husband will honor me because I have borne six sons for him," and she named him Zebulun.^E ²¹ Later, Leah bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

☞ ²² Then God remembered Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb. ²³ She conceived and bore a son, and she said, "God has taken away my disgrace."²⁴ She named him Joseph^F and said, "May the LORD add another son to me."

JACOB'S FLOCKS MULTIPLY

²⁵ After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way so that I can return to my homeland. ²⁶ Give me my wives and my children that I have worked for, and let me go. You know how hard I have worked for you."

²⁷ But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor with you, stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you." ²⁸ Then Laban said, "Name your wages, and I will pay them."

²⁹ So Jacob said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your herds have fared with me. ☞ ³⁰ For you had very little before I came, but now your wealth has increased. The LORD has blessed you because of me. And now, when will I also do something for my own family?"

³¹ Laban asked, "What should I give you?"

And Jacob said, "You don't need to give me anything. If you do this one thing for me, I will continue to shepherd and keep your flock. ³² Let me go through all your sheep today and remove every sheep that is speckled or spotted, every dark-colored sheep among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the female goats. Such will be my wages. ³³ In the future when you come to check on my wages, my honesty will testify for me. If I have any female goats that are not speckled or spotted, or any lambs that are not black, they will be considered stolen."


³⁴ "Good," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said."

³⁵ That day Laban removed the streaked and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats — every one that had any white on it — and every dark-colored one among the lambs, and he placed his sons in charge of them. ³⁶ He put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob. Jacob, meanwhile, was shepherding the rest of Laban's flock.

³⁷ Jacob then took branches of fresh poplar, almond, and plane wood, and peeled the bark, exposing white stripes on the branches. ³⁸ He set the peeled branches in the troughs in front of the sheep — in the water channels where the sheep came to drink.

^A30:11 Alt Hb tradition, LXX, Vg read "Good fortune has come!" ^B30:11 = Good Fortune ^C30:13 = Happy ^D30:18 In Hb, the name *Issachar* sounds like "reward." ^E30:20 In Hb, the name *Zebulun* sounds like "honored." ^F30:24 = He Adds

And the sheep bred when they came to drink.³⁹ The flocks bred in front of the branches and bore streaked, speckled, and spotted young.⁴⁰ Jacob separated the lambs and made the flocks face the streaked sheep and the completely dark sheep in Laban's flocks. Then he set his own stock apart and didn't put them with Laban's sheep.

⁴¹ Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob placed the branches in the troughs, in full view of the flocks, and they would breed in front of the branches.⁴² As for the weaklings of the flocks, he did not put out the branches. So it turned out that the weak sheep belonged to Laban and the stronger ones to Jacob. ⁴³ And the man became very rich.^A He had many flocks, female and male slaves, and camels and donkeys.

JACOB SEPARATES FROM LABAN

31 Now Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's and has built this wealth from what belonged to our

^A 30:43 Lit *The man spread out very much, very much*

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Despite our numerous weaknesses, God steadily works out his plan (ch. 30).
2. The world is filled with people who feel unloved (v. 20). How has your love relationship with God provided you a profound sense of being loved?
3. Every person has something in their life for which to be grateful (vv. 14,20).
4. Jacob constantly schemes without referencing God, yet God steadily works through events to accomplish his purposes (vv. 25,31; see 25:23).

31 – INVITATION

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How does the world respond to those God blesses (vv. 1–2)?
2. How can God bless you when others are seeking to take advantage of you (vv. 3–15)?
3. Is there a relationship between being a schemer and always being in conflict with other schemers (vv. 1–31)?
4. How do human conflicts and personality clashes fit into God's plan (vv. 20,22,26–31)? Do you have a history of conflict?
5. Why would anyone cling to idols after having received God's blessing (v. 19)? Do you still have idols in your life?

CHARACTER PROFILE

RACHEL

Rachel seemed to have everything a woman could want. She was beautiful and soon won the heart of Jacob when he began working for her father. Rachel's older sister, Leah, was not as attractive, and Jacob had shown no interest in her. Yet Jacob was willing to work seven years for Laban in order to marry Rachel.

On the wedding day, a great feast was served, and many guests were invited. Rachel had waited for this day for seven years! But to her horror, Rachel's father told her he was going to give Leah to Jacob instead of her, as had been agreed. Laban, attempting to get the better of Jacob, was gambling with his daughter's happiness to do so. It would have been disheartening for Rachel to then have to wait seven days while her beloved spent time with her sister before he was finally able to marry her.

Over time, Rachel began to grow increasingly frustrated. She was unable to have children. Leah ultimately had six sons and a daughter, but Rachel was barren. Finally, in exasperation she pled with Jacob, "Give me sons, or I will die!" (Gn 30:1). At this Jacob became angry with Rachel and pointed out that God had withheld children from her. Rachel finally offered her maidservant Bilhah to her husband so she could have children with him in her name. Bilhah had two sons, Dan and Naphtali. One

day Reuben, Leah's firstborn, brought mandrakes from the field for his mother. Rachel longed for the mandrakes and for a son to treat her in that way. Yet she had none. Finally, God remembered Rachel and gave her a son, Joseph. She declared, "God has taken away my disgrace" (Gn 30:23). Then she added, "May the Lord add another son to me" (v. 24). Rachel would ultimately have another son, Benjamin. But she would die in childbirth. What she wanted most would ultimately lead to her death.

Rachel is a complicated individual. Having been raised by Laban, the hard-driving businessman, and married to Jacob, the deceiver, it is perhaps not surprising. When Jacob told his wives of his plans to flee from Laban, they noted that Laban had sold them for gain, and they no longer felt obliged to him (Gn 31:14–16). Rachel stole Laban's household idols and then fooled him when he caught up with their caravan and searched for his lost possessions. Though she would only have two children, one would be Joseph, whose two sons would form the bulk of the northern nation of Israel, and her other son Benjamin would provide Israel's first king and would unite with Judah in the southern kingdom. Like her husband, she overcame adversity and ultimately left an indelible mark on God's people.

father." ² And Jacob saw from Laban's face that his attitude toward him was not the same as before.

³ The LORD said to him, "Go back to the land of your ancestors and to your family, and I will be with you."

⁴ Jacob had Rachel and Leah called to the field where his flocks were. ⁵ He said to them, "I can see from your father's face that his attitude toward me is not the same as before, but the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ You know that with all my strength I have served your father ⁷ and that he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God has not let him harm me. ⁸ If he said, 'The spotted sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born spotted. If he said, 'The streaked sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born streaked. ⁹ God has taken away your father's herds and given them to me.

¹⁰ "When the flocks were breeding, I saw in a dream that the streaked, spotted, and speckled males were mating with the females. ¹¹ In that dream the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' and I said, 'Here I am.' ¹² And he said, 'Look up and see: all the males that are mating with the flocks are streaked, spotted, and speckled, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. ¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you poured oil on the stone marker and made a solemn vow to me. Get up, leave this land, and return to your native land.'"

¹⁴ Then Rachel and Leah answered him, "Do we have any portion or inheritance in our father's family? ¹⁵ Are we not regarded by him as outsiders? For he has sold us and has certainly spent our purchase price. ¹⁶ In fact, all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So do whatever God has said to you."

¹⁷ So Jacob got up and put his children and wives on the camels. ¹⁸ He took all the livestock and possessions he had acquired in Paddan-aram, and he drove his herds to go to the land of Canaan, to his father Isaac. ¹⁹ When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household idols. ²⁰ And Jacob deceived^A Laban the Aramean, not telling him that he was fleeing. ²¹ He fled with all his possessions, crossed the Euphrates, and headed for^B the hill country of Gilead.

LABAN OVERTAKES JACOB

²² On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ²³ So he took his relatives with him, pursued Jacob for seven days, and overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴ But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night. "Watch yourself!" God warned him. "Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."

²⁵ When Laban overtook Jacob, Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban and his relatives also pitched their tents in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁶ Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You have deceived me and taken my daughters away like prisoners of war! ²⁷ Why did you secretly flee from me, deceive me, and not tell me? I would have sent you away with joy and singing, with tambourines and lyres, ²⁸ but you didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters. You have acted foolishly. ²⁹ I could do you great harm, but last night the God of your father said to me, 'Watch yourself! Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' ³⁰ Now you have gone off because you long for your father's family — but why have you stolen my gods?"

³¹ Jacob answered, "I was afraid, for I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. ³² If you find your gods with anyone here, he will not live! Before our relatives, point out anything that is yours and take it." Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols.

³³ So Laban went into Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and the tents of the two concubines,^C but he found nothing. When he left Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's tent. ³⁴ Now Rachel had taken Laban's household idols, put them in the saddlebag of the camel, and sat on them. Laban searched the whole tent but found nothing.

³⁵ She said to her father, "Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence; I am having my period." So Laban searched, but could not find the household idols.

^A31:20 Lit *And he stole the heart of* ^B31:21 Lit *and set his face to* ^C31:33 Lit *servants*

JACOB'S COVENANT WITH LABAN

³⁶ Then Jacob became incensed and brought charges against Laban. "What is my crime?" he said to Laban. "What is my sin, that you have pursued me?" ³⁷ You've searched all my possessions! Have you found anything of yours? ^a Put it here before my relatives and yours, and let them decide between the two of us. ³⁸ I've been with you these twenty years. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. ³⁹ I did not bring you any of the flock torn by wild beasts; I myself bore the loss. You demanded payment from me for what was stolen by day or by night. ⁴⁰ There I was — the heat consumed me by day and the frost by night, and sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹ For twenty years in your household I served you — fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks — and you have changed my wages ten times! ^b ⁴² If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, certainly now you would have sent me off empty-handed. But God has seen my affliction and my hard work, ^b and he issued his verdict last night."

⁴³ Then Laban answered Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters; the children, my children; and the flocks, my flocks! Everything you see is mine! But what can I do today for these daughters of mine or for the children they have borne? ⁴⁴ Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I. Let it be a witness between the two of us."

⁴⁵ So Jacob picked out a stone and set it up as a marker. ⁴⁶ Then Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a mound, then ate there by the mound. ⁴⁷ Laban named the mound Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Galeed. ^c

⁴⁸ Then Laban said, "This mound is a witness between you and me today." Therefore the place was called Galeed ^d ⁴⁹ and also Mizpah, ^d for he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight. ⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters or take other wives, though no one is with us, understand that God will be a witness between you and me." ⁵¹ Laban also said to Jacob, "Look at this mound and the marker I have set up between you and me. ⁵² This mound is a witness and the marker is a witness that I will not pass beyond this mound to you, and you will not pass beyond this mound and this marker to do me harm. ^e ⁵³ The God of Abraham, and the gods of Nahor — the gods of their father ^e — will judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. ⁵⁴ Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his relatives to eat a meal. So they ate a meal and spent the night on the mountain. ⁵⁵ Laban got up early in the morning, kissed his grandchildren and daughters, and blessed them. Then Laban left to return home.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Greed and overly aggressive business practices affect personal relationships (vv. 1–2). Have you ever acted as if money was more important than people?
2. God speaks to both people involved in a conflict to insert his will into the midst of the disagreement (vv. 3,24).
3. You cannot go with God and remain where you are (vv. 3–55). Is God preparing you for a significant change?
4. Jacob continued to have problems with personal relationships even after his encounter with God at Bethel (chs. 30–31).
5. Laban showed a lack of sincerity in his final conversation with his son-in-law (vv. 26–28).
6. God can bring peace to warring parties (vv. 44–55). With whom do you need to make peace?

PREPARING TO MEET ESAU

32 ^f Jacob went on his way, and God's angels met him. ² When he saw them, Jacob said, "This is God's camp." So he called that place Mahanaim. ^f

³ Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the territory of Edom. ⁴ He commanded them, "You are to say to my lord Esau, 'This is what your servant Jacob says. I have been staying with Laban and have been delayed until now.' ⁵ I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female slaves. I have sent this message

^a 31:37 Lit *What have you found from all of the possessions of your house?* ^b 31:42 Lit *and the work of my hands*

^c 31:47 *Jegar-sahadutha* is Aramaic, and *Galeed* is Hb; both names = Mound of Witness ^d 31:49 = Watchtower

^e 31:53 Two Hb mss, LXX omit *the gods of their father* ^f 32:2 = Two Camps

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to inform my lord, in order to seek your favor.”

⁶ When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, “We went to your brother Esau; he is coming to meet you — and he has four hundred men with him.” ⁷ Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; he divided the people with him into two camps, along with the flocks, herds, and camels. ⁸ He thought, “If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, the remaining one can escape.”

⁹ Then Jacob said, “God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Go back to your land and to your family, and I will cause you to prosper,’ ¹⁰ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. Indeed, I crossed over the Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two camps. ¹¹ Please rescue me from my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him; otherwise, he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children. ¹² You have said, ‘I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to be counted.’”

¹³ He spent the night there and took part of what he had brought with him as a gift for his brother Esau: ¹⁴ two hundred female goats, twenty male goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their young, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶ He entrusted them to his slaves as separate herds and said to them, “Go on ahead of me, and leave some distance between the herds.”

¹⁷ And he told the first one, “When my brother Esau meets you and asks, ‘Who do you belong to? Where are you going? And whose animals are these ahead of you?’ ¹⁸ then tell him, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau. And look, he is behind us.’”

¹⁹ He also told the second one, the third, and everyone who was walking behind the animals, “Say the same thing to Esau when you find him. ²⁰ You are also to say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.’” For he thought, “I want to appease Esau with the gift that is going ahead of me. After that, I can face him, and perhaps he will forgive me.”

²¹ So the gift was sent on ahead of him while he remained in the camp that night.

²² During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two slave women, and his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, along with all his possessions.

JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD

²⁴ Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob's hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. ²⁶ Then he said to Jacob, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

²⁷ “What is your name?” the man asked.

“Jacob,” he replied.

²⁸ “Your name will no longer be Jacob,” he said. “It will be Israel^a because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.”

²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.”

But he answered, “Why do you ask my name?” And he blessed him there.

32 – CRY FOR HELP
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How actively involved is God in people's lives (vv. 1–2)? How have you recognized God at work in your current situation?
2. How must Jacob have felt as he waited for Esau's response to his overture (vv. 3–5)?
3. On what does Jacob base his prayer of deliverance (vv. 9,12)?
4. In what way did Jacob's plan to appease Esau reflect his tendency to take matters into his own hands (vv. 13–21)? Are you currently trying to solve your own problems apart from God's intervention?
5. “Israel” comes from the word for “struggle.” How is that appropriate for Jacob as well as for the children of Israel (v. 28)? Could your life be described as a “struggle”?
6. Is it wise, or advisable, to wrestle with God (vv. 24–32)? Have you ever done so?

^a32:28 In Hb, the name *Israel* sounds like “he struggled (with) God.”

³⁰ Jacob then named the place Peniel,^a “For I have seen God face to face,” he said, “yet my life has been spared.”³¹ The sun shone on him as he passed by Penuel^b — limping because of his hip.³² That is why, still today, the Israelites don’t eat the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket: because he struck Jacob’s hip socket at the thigh muscle.^c

JACOB MEETS ESAU

33 Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming toward him with four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two slave women.² He put the slaves and their children first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.

³ He himself went on ahead and bowed to the ground seven times until he approached his brother.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Jacob finally had to face the sin and failure of his past (vv. 3–5).
2. Jacob continued to use human methods, including bribery, to achieve God’s purpose (vv. 13–21).
3. Jacob recognized that his God was also his father’s and grandfather’s God. It was his turn to walk with God as his spiritual ancestors had done (v. 9). What aspect of your parents’ faith would you like to be in your life?
4. At our lowest ebb and most fearful moment, we will find that God is present and working out his purposes in our life (vv. 24–32).
5. Jacob’s name change reflected that his character was finally changing (v. 28). How is God wanting to change your character?
6. Jacob received a blessing, but with the blessing also came a lifelong limp (v. 31). Would you embrace God’s blessing if it came with a limp?

^a 32:30 = Face of God ^b 32:31 Variant of Peniel ^c 32:32 Or tendon

CHARACTER PROFILE

JACOB

Jacob suffered from character issues for the first half of his life. From birth he was prepared to cheat, lie, and steal to get what he wanted. His name, Jacob, “supplanter,” said it all. When his brother Esau came in from the fields exhausted and hungry one day, Jacob, who had been making a stew, told him he could have some for the price of his birthright as the firstborn child (Gn 25:27–34). Later, Jacob conspired with his mother Rebekah to deceive Isaac and steal the firstborn son’s blessing (Gn 27). In Jacob’s early years, he looked out only for himself and would readily cheat and lie to get what he wanted.

Jacob would eventually learn that God is always at work around him. When fleeing from his estranged brother, Jacob spent the night near Bethel. There he had a vision of angels ascending and descending a ladder from the earth into heaven (Gn 28:10–22). Jacob awoke and exclaimed, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it” (Gn 28:16). On several occasions Jacob would be surprised at how actively God was working in his life.

Jacob would discover that when you spend your life trying to get the best of others, you must constantly be on your guard so others do not get the best of you. Jacob’s father-in-law would cheat Jacob and try to get the best of him. His wife Rachel would steal from her father as they were departing back for Canaan (Gn 31:19). Jacob’s sons Simeon and Levi would later deceive the people of Shechem and slaughter its inhabitants (Gn 34).

Ten of Jacob’s sons would sell their younger brother Joseph as a slave and then lie to their father and tell him Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (Gn 37:31–35). Later, Joseph would deceive his brothers once he was a ruler in Egypt. Jacob the deceiver would set in motion deception that would characterize his family for years to come.

Jacob would eventually return to the land promised to him and his fathers. On the night before he would meet his brother Esau, whom he had cheated, Jacob wrestled with God until morning (Gn 32:24–32). Throughout Jacob’s life, he had wrestled with God’s call on his life. On this occasion he tenaciously held on to God and demanded a blessing. God eventually blessed Jacob and gave him a new name, Israel, meaning “God strives.” Receiving a new name meant his character would be changed. But God would also cripple Jacob in that encounter, so he walked with a limp the rest of his life. He would never be the same again. Jacob called the place “Peniel,” “the face of God.” A face-to-face encounter with God changed everything.

Jacob had twelve sons who would become the twelve tribes of Israel. Ironically, the man named Israel would die in Egypt, waiting for God’s promise to be fulfilled. Jacob would learn that God pursues a love relationship with people, and he will not relent regardless of how far you may run from him. Jacob demonstrates that God can accomplish his divine purposes through some of the most unlikely people.

GENESIS 33-34

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him, hugged him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. Then they wept. ⁵ When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he asked, “Who are these with you?”

He answered, “The children God has graciously given your servant.” ⁶ Then the slaves and their children approached him and bowed down. ⁷ Leah and her children also approached and bowed down, and then Joseph and Rachel approached and bowed down.

⁸ So Esau said, “What do you mean by this whole procession ^A I met?”

“To find favor with you, my lord,” he answered.

⁹ “I have enough, my brother,” Esau replied. “Keep what you have.”

¹⁰ But Jacob said, “No, please! If I have found favor with you, take this gift from me. For indeed, I have seen your face, and it is like seeing God’s face, since you have accepted me. ¹¹ Please take my present that was brought to you, because God has been gracious to me and I have everything I need.” So Jacob urged him until he accepted.

¹² Then Esau said, “Let’s move on, and I’ll go ahead of you.”

¹³ Jacob replied, “My lord knows that the children are weak, and I have nursing flocks and herds. If they are driven hard for one day, the whole herd will die. ¹⁴ Let my lord go ahead of his servant. I will continue on slowly, at a pace suited to the livestock and the children, until I come to my lord at Seir.”

¹⁵ Esau said, “Let me leave some of my people with you.”

But he replied, “Why do that? Please indulge me, ^B my lord.”

¹⁶ That day Esau started on his way back to Seir, ¹⁷ but Jacob went to Succoth. He built a house for himself and shelters for his livestock; that is why the place was called Succoth. ^C

¹⁸ After Jacob came from Paddan-aram, he arrived safely at Shechem in the land of Canaan and camped in front of the city. ¹⁹ He purchased a section of the field where he had pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for a hundred pieces of silver. ^D ²⁰ And he set up an altar there and called it God, the God of Israel. ^E

DINAH DEFILED

34 Leah’s daughter Dinah, whom Leah bore to Jacob, went out to see some of the young women of the area. ² When Shechem — son of Hamor the Hivite, who was the region’s chieftain — saw her, he took her and raped her. ³ He became infatuated with Jacob’s daughter Dinah. He loved the young girl and spoke tenderly to her. ^F ⁴ “Get me this girl as a wife,” he told his father.

⁵ Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter Dinah, but since his sons were with his livestock in the field,

33 – REVELATION
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How different was Jacob’s reunion with Esau from what he feared (vv. 1–11)? How often is what you feared much less disastrous in reality?
2. Why does Esau initially refuse to receive Jacob’s gifts (v. 9)?
3. How does the altar Jacob built reflect the promise he made to God twenty years earlier (v. 20; see 28:20–22)? Have you kept your promises to God?
4. What significance is there that Jacob purchased land (v. 19)?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Esau was much more eager to meet Jacob than Jacob was to meet Esau (vv. 1–16).
2. Jacob lied to Esau again, never coming to him in Seir as he had said (vv. 12–17). Have you lied to avoid possible trouble?
3. Naming his altar, “God, the God of Israel,” reflected Jacob’s commitment to God for the future (v. 20).

34 – SIN
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What crisis of belief would Jacob have experienced as he entered Canaan (vv. 1–2)?
2. Why does conflict always seem to result whenever the patriarchs settle near cities in Canaan (ch. 31)? Where do you most often experience conflict?
3. Does God condone the murder and plunder that occurs (ch. 31)?
4. What is Jacob most upset about after his sons plunder Shechem (v. 30)?
5. Was Simeon and Levi’s response in proportion to the sin of Shechem (ch. 31)? How have you overreacted to people’s actions?

^A33:8 Lit *camp* ^B33:15 Lit *May I find favor in your eyes* ^C33:17 = Stalls or Huts ^D33:19 Lit *100 qesitahs*; the value of this currency is unknown ^E33:20 = *El-Elohe-Israel* ^F34:3 Lit *spoke to her heart*

he remained silent until they returned. ⁶ Meanwhile, Shechem's father Hamor came to speak with Jacob. ⁷ Jacob's sons returned from the field when they heard about the incident. They were deeply grieved and very angry, for Shechem had committed an outrage against Israel by raping Jacob's daughter, and such a thing should not be done.

⁸ Hamor said to Jacob's sons, "My son Shechem has his heart set on your^a daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. ⁹ Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ Live with us. The land is before you. Settle here, move about, and acquire property in it."

¹¹ Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "Grant me this favor,^b and I'll give you whatever you say. ¹² Demand of me a high compensation^c and gift; I'll give you whatever you ask me. Just give the girl to be my wife!"

¹³ But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully because he had defiled their sister Dinah. ¹⁴ "We cannot do this thing," they said to them. "Giving our sister to an uncircumcised man is a disgrace to us. ¹⁵ We will agree with you only on this condition: if all your males are circumcised as we are. ¹⁶ Then we will give you our daughters, take your daughters for ourselves, live with you, and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

¹⁸ Their words seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. ¹⁹ The young man did not delay doing this, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most important in all his father's family. ²⁰ So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city.

²¹ "These men are peaceful toward us," they said. "Let them live in our land and move about in it, for indeed, the region is large enough for them. Let's take their daughters as our wives and give our daughters to them. ²² But the men will agree to live with us and be one people only on this condition: if all our men are circumcised as they are. ²³ Won't their livestock, their possessions, and all their animals become ours? Only let's agree with them, and they will live with us."

²⁴ All the men who had come to the city gates listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and all those men were circumcised. ²⁵ On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords, went into the unsuspecting city, and killed every male. ²⁶ They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with their swords, took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went away. ²⁷ Jacob's sons came to the slaughter and plundered the city because their sister had been defiled. ²⁸ They took their flocks, herds, donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. ²⁹ They captured all their possessions, dependents, and wives and plundered everything in the houses.

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. We are few in number; if they unite against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed."

³¹ But they answered, "Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?"

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God's will for Jacob led him to encounter dangers, temptations, and misunderstandings (v. 2). How has following God led you into conflict?
2. Jacob's children practiced the same deceit that characterized him (v. 13).
3. The issue is whether ritual can unite God's people with pagan people (vv. 15-17).
4. Israel broke the agreement with violence and vengeance (vv. 25-29).
5. Jacob feared to lose what he had gained (v. 30).
6. The sons resorted to deceit and murder to bring about justice (v. 31). Have you ever acted in an ungodly way in order to bring about justice?

RETURN TO BETHEL

35 ¹ God said to Jacob, "Get up! Go to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."

² So Jacob said to his family and all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. ³ We must get up

^a 34:8 The Hb word for *your* is *pl*, showing that Hamor is speaking to Jacob and his sons. ^b 34:11 Lit "May I find favor in your eyes" ^c 34:12 Or *bride-price*, or *betrothal present*

GENESIS 35

and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.”

4 Then they gave Jacob all their foreign gods and their earrings, and Jacob hid them under the oak near Shechem.

5 When they set out, a terror from God came over the cities around them, and they did not pursue Jacob's sons. 6 So Jacob and all who were with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.

7 Jacob built an altar there and called the place El-bethel^a because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

8 Deborah, the one who had nursed and raised Rebekah,^b died and was buried under the oak south of Bethel. So Jacob named it Allon-bacuth.^c

9 God appeared to Jacob again after he returned from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. 10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; you will no longer be named Jacob, but your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel. 11 God also said to him, “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed an assembly of nations, will come from you, and kings will descend from you.” 12 I will give to you the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac. And I will give the land to your future descendants.” 13 Then God withdrew^e from him at the place where he had spoken to him.

14 Jacob set up a marker at the place where he had spoken to him — a stone marker. He poured a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. 15 Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

RACHEL'S DEATH

16 They set out from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth, and her labor was difficult. 17 During her difficult labor, the midwife said to her, “Don't be afraid, for you have another son.” 18 With her last breath — for she was dying — she named him Ben-oni,^f but his father called him Benjamin.^g 19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). 20 Jacob set up a marker on her grave; it is the marker at Rachel's grave still today.

ISRAEL'S SONS

21 Israel set out again and pitched his tent beyond the Tower of Eder.^h 22 While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard about it.

Jacob had twelve sons:

23 Leah's sons were Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

24 Rachel's sons were Joseph and Benjamin.

25 The sons of Rachel's slave Bilhah were Dan and Naphtali.

26 The sons of Leah's slave Zilpah were Gad and Asher.

35 – GOD'S MISSION

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Why did God ask Jacob to return to the place where they had their first encounter (v. 1; see 28:10–22)? How often do you return to your earlier spiritual markers?
2. What adjustments did Jacob's family have to make if they were to walk with God (vv. 2–4)? What adjustments might you need to make to go farther in your walk with God?
3. How did God protect Jacob as he dwelt in a foreign land filled with danger (v. 5)?
4. Why would building a spiritual marker at Bethel be significant for Jacob (v. 7)?
5. Why did Jacob use a different name for Benjamin from the one Rachel picked (v. 18)?
6. Why does Jacob not immediately deal with sin when he hears about it (v. 22; see 34:5)? Have you ever allowed fear of conflict to hinder you from confronting evil?


^a35:7 = God of Bethel ^b35:8 Lit Deborah, Rebekah's wet nurse; Gn 24:59 ^c35:8 = Oak of Weeping ^d35:11 Lit will come from your loins ^e35:13 Lit went up ^f35:18 = Son of My Sorrow ^g35:18 = Son of the Right Hand ^h35:21 Or beyond Migdal-eder


These are the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

ISAAC'S DEATH

²⁷ Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. ²⁸ Isaac lived 180 years. ²⁹ He took his last breath and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

ESAU'S FAMILY

36  These are the family records of Esau (that is, Edom). ² Esau took his wives from the Canaanite women: Adah daughter of Elon the Hethite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter^A of Zibeon the Hivite, ³ and Basemath daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel, ⁵ and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These were Esau's sons, who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

⁶ Esau took his wives, sons, daughters, and all the people of his household, as well as his herds, all his livestock, and all the property he had acquired in Canaan; he went to a land away from his brother Jacob.  ⁷ For their possessions were too many for them to live together, and because of their herds, the land where they stayed could not support them. ⁸ So Esau (that is, Edom) lived in the mountains of Seir.

⁹ These are the family records of Esau, father of the Edomites in the mountains of Seir.

¹⁰ These are the names of Esau's sons:
Eliphaz son of Esau's wife Adah,
and Reuel son of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were
Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

¹² Timna, a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz,
bore Amalek to Eliphaz.
These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah.

¹³ These are Reuel's sons:
Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.
These are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴ These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah
daughter of Anah and granddaughter^A of Zibeon:
She bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah to Edom.

¹⁵ These are the chiefs among Esau's sons:
the sons of Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn:
chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz,

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God pursues a love relationship with people that makes no room for idols or other loves besides himself (vv. 2-4).
2. God is always at work around us, even when we are unaware of what or how he is doing it (v. 5). How has God protected you?
3. The death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, is mentioned, but not that of Rebekah (v. 8). What people has God placed in your life in order to bless you?
4. Reuben's sin implied trying to take family leadership away from his father and brothers (v. 22). Is there a sin you need to confront in your own family?
5. The very thing Rachel longed for was what ultimately took her life (v. 18).
6. The father's death sealed the sons' reconciliation (v. 29; see ch. 33).

36 - HISTORY

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What do you learn about the nature of Scripture when you see that it retained so much interest in the people who later became Israel's strongest enemies (ch. 36; see Ob)? What interest do you show in people who are different from you?
2. How does this chapter reveal God's interest and involvement in the development of nations and people groups (ch. 36)?
3. What effect on God's sovereign rule of history do cultural and political change have (vv. 6-14, 15-43)?
4. How important is each generation as God works to develop nations and family trees (ch. 36)?

^A36:2,14 Sam, LXX read *Anah son*

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- ¹⁶ chief Korah,^a chief Gatam, and chief Amalek.
These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz
in the land of Edom.
These are the sons of Adah.
- ¹⁷ These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son:
chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, and chief Mizzah.
These are the chiefs descended from Reuel
in the land of Edom.
These are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath.
- ¹⁸ These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah:
chief Jeush, chief Jalam, and chief Korah.
These are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah
daughter of Anah.
- ¹⁹ These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom),
and these are their chiefs.

SEIR'S FAMILY

- ²⁰ These are the sons of Seir the Horite,
the inhabitants of the land:
Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,
- ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.
These are the chiefs among the Horites,
the sons of Seir, in the land of Edom.
- ²² The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman.
Timna was Lotan's sister.
- ²³ These are Shobal's sons:
Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.
- ²⁴ These are Zibeon's sons: Aiah and Anah.
This was the Anah who found the hot springs^b in the wilderness
while he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.
- ²⁵ These are the children of Anah:
Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah.
- ²⁶ These are Dishon's sons:
Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.
- ²⁷ These are Ezer's sons:
Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.
- ²⁸ These are Dishan's sons: Uz and Aran.
- ²⁹ These are the chiefs among the Horites:
chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah,
- ³⁰ chief Dishon, chief Ezer, and chief Dishan.
These are the chiefs among the Horites,
clan by clan,^c in the land of Seir.

RULERS OF EDOM

- ³¹ These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom
before any king reigned over the Israelites:
- ³² Bela son of Beor reigned in Edom;
the name of his city was Dinhabah.
- ³³ When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah reigned in his place.
- ³⁴ When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.
- ³⁵ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad reigned in his place.
He defeated Midian in the field of Moab;

^a36:16 Sam omits *Korah* ^b36:24 Syr, Vg; Tg reads *the mules*; Hb obscure ^c36:30 Lit *Horites, for their chiefs*

the name of his city was Avith.

³⁶ When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah reigned in his place.

³⁷ When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the Euphrates River reigned in his place.

³⁸ When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Achbor reigned in his place.

³⁹ When Baal-hanan son of Achbor died, Hadar^A reigned in his place. His city was Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred daughter of Me-zahab.

⁴⁰ These are the names of Esau's chiefs, according to their families and their localities, by their names:

chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth,

⁴¹ chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon,

⁴² chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar,

⁴³ chief Magdiel, and chief Iram. These are Edom's chiefs, according to their settlements in the land they possessed. Esau^B was father of the Edomites.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. At times God's word in Genesis paints Esau's actions in a better light than Jacob's even though Jacob is God's elect (ch. 36; see 25:23).
2. God's election and mission with Israel did not eliminate other nations from his work (ch. 36). What have you seen God doing in nations other than your own?
3. Scripture shows God silently at work in history by listing long generations of people in family trees without any narrative of their experiences with God (ch. 36).

JOSEPH'S DREAMS

37 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. ¹ These are the family records of Jacob.

At seventeen years of age, Joseph tended sheep with his brothers. The young man was working with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought a bad report about them to their father.

² Now Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph was a son born to him in his old age, and he made a long-sleeved robe^C for him.

⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not bring themselves to speak peaceably to him.

⁵ Then Joseph had a dream. When he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves of grain in the field. Suddenly my sheaf stood up, and your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf."

⁸ "Are you really going to reign over us?" his brothers asked him. "Are you really going to rule us?" So they hated him even more because of his dream and what he had said.

⁹ Then he had another dream and told it to his brothers. "Look," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

¹⁰ He told his father and brothers, and his father rebuked him. "What kind of dream is this that you have had?" he said. "Am I and your mother and your brothers really going to come and bow down to the ground before you?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

37 - GOD'S MISSION

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. Why does God choose to accomplish his purposes through families and individuals who are characterized by sin and dysfunction (vv. 2-11)? Do you assume you are too ordinary for God to use mightily for his purposes?
2. Why did Jacob not address the jealousy and hatred brewing among his sons (vv. 2-11)? What sin in your family have you tolerated that you should have addressed?
3. How does God use the dreams of our youth to foreshadow his work in the future (vv. 6-11)? Has God put something in your heart that you have not yet experienced?
4. Is it surprising that a former schemer and liar like Jacob should be deceived by his sons (vv. 31-36)?

^A 36:39 Many Hb mss, Sam, Syr read *Hadad* ^B 36:43 Lit *He Esau* ^C 37:3 Or *an ornate robe*; see 2Sm 13:18,19

GENESIS 37

JOSEPH SOLD INTO SLAVERY

¹² His brothers had gone to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem. ¹³ Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers, you know, are pasturing the flocks at Shechem. Get ready. I'm sending you to them."

"I'm ready," Joseph replied.

¹⁴ Then Israel said to him, "Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are doing, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the Hebron Valley, and he went to Shechem.

¹⁵ A man found him there, wandering in the field, and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁶ "I'm looking for my brothers," Joseph said. "Can you tell me where they are pasturing their flocks?"

¹⁷ "They've moved on from here," the man said. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph set out after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

① ¹⁸ They saw him in the distance, and before he had reached them, they plotted to kill him. ¹⁹ They said to one another, "Oh, look, here comes that dream expert!^A ²⁰ So now, come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of the pits.^B We can say that a vicious animal ate him. Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!"

²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from them.^C He said, "Let's not take his life." ²² Reuben also said to them, "Don't shed blood. Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him" — intending to rescue him from them and return him to his father.

²³ When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped off Joseph's robe, the long-sleeved robe that he had on. ② ²⁴ Then they took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty, without water.

²⁵ They sat down to eat a meal, and when they looked up, there was a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying aromatic gum, balsam, and resin, going down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ Come on, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay a hand on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh," and his brothers agreed. ²⁸ When Midianite traders passed by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took Joseph to Egypt.

²⁹ When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. ③ ³⁰ He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy is gone! What am I going to do?"^D ³¹ So they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the robe in its blood. ³² They sent the long-sleeved robe to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it. Is it your son's robe or not?"

④ ³³ His father recognized it. "It is my son's robe," he said. "A vicious animal has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces!" ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said. "I will go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." And his father wept for him.

³⁶ Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guards.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Jealousy and anger in one generation of a family, if left unchecked, can become more painful and acute in succeeding generations (vv. 3–4).
2. Joseph had to grow out of his immaturity and lack of prudence before he was ready to serve God on a large scale (vv. 2–11). How might you need to mature before God uses you more significantly?
3. Reuben meant well but was unable to follow through with his good intentions. Perhaps he wanted to make amends with his father (vv. 21–30; see 35:22). How have your best of intentions fallen short?
4. God uses tragic and painful events in our lives to advance his plans for world redemption (vv. 25–28, 36). How has God used a painful event in your life for good?

^A37:19 Lit comes the lord of the dreams ^B37:20 Or cisterns ^C37:21 Lit their hands ^D37:30 Lit And I, where am I going?

JUDAH AND TAMAR

38 At that time Judah left his brothers and settled near an Adullamite named Hirah. ² There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua; he took her as a wife and slept with her. ³ She conceived and gave birth to a son, and he named him Er. ⁴ She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and named him Onan. ⁵ She gave birth to another son and named him Shelah. It was at Chezib that ^{A,B} she gave birth to him.

⁶ Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ Now Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the LORD's sight, and the LORD put him to death.

⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife. Perform your duty as her brother-in-law and produce offspring for your brother." ⁹ But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, so whenever he slept with his brother's wife, he released his semen on the ground so that he would not produce offspring for his brother. ¹⁰ What he did was evil in the LORD's sight, so he put him to death also.

¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up." For he thought, "He might die too, like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

¹² After a long time ^c Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had finished mourning, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers. ¹³ Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." ¹⁴ So she took off her widow's clothes, veiled her face, covered herself, and

^A 38:5 LXX reads *She was at Chezib when* ^B 38:5 Or *He was at Chezib when* ^C 38:12 Lit *And there were many days, and*

38 - JUDGMENT

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How opposed is God to wicked people who refuse to obey him (vv. 7,10)?
2. What can explain the extreme wickedness of Judah's two eldest sons (vv. 3–10)?
3. How could God continue blessing Judah's descendants if all his sons died (vv. 1–12)?
4. What sin does God give harshest condemnation to in this story (ch. 38)?
5. How does Judah apply God's standards to change his viewpoint of Tamar (vv. 24–26)?
6. In what way did Judah's act threaten the fulfillment of God's blessing on the patriarchs (vv. 6–11,26; see 12:1–3)?
7. Why does Scripture include such chapters that show God's people in such a shameful light (ch. 38)?

CHARACTER PROFILE

JOSEPH

Joseph spent the first part of his life overcoming injustice. His mother Rachel died while he was young. His brothers hated him because he was obviously his father's favorite child. His brothers ultimately betrayed him and sold him as a slave (Gn 37). He was falsely accused by his master's wife and thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit (Gn 39). He graciously encouraged Pharaoh's cupbearer, who was also imprisoned at that time, but when the cupbearer was released, he promptly forgot Joseph (Gn 40). The first half of Joseph's life is a tragedy of Greek proportions.

During the most difficult period in Joseph's youth, he learned valuable lessons. He discovered that God is with you, regardless of whether you live in a loving home with your parents or in a desolate jail in a foreign country. He learned that God can take any circumstance in your life and use it for good. Finally, Joseph learned that God is always at work around you. The key is to have spiritual eyes to recognize what God is doing.

When a devastating drought struck the region, God used that event to work out his divine purposes. The

famine ravaged Canaan, so Joseph's ten older brothers came to Egypt to purchase grain. Joseph used this as an opportunity to test his brothers to determine if their characters had changed over the years. Ultimately Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and was reunited with his father.

Jacob and his family moved to Egypt to wait out the famine. Joseph blessed his brothers and established them in Egypt, from which they would not leave for four hundred years. Though the Israelites were ultimately enslaved by the Egyptians, they would continue to grow and multiply, while maintaining their religion. Four centuries later, the nation of Israel would be ready to leave Egypt and to occupy Canaan as a nation.

Joseph learned that God does some of his greatest work in the midst of our suffering. When God seems farthest from us, he may be very close. Joseph also learned to view people and circumstances through God's perspective. This enabled him to see God's hand on his life, carefully working out his purposes, year by year, even at the hand of his enemies.

sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had grown up, she had not been given to him as a wife.¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face.

④¹⁶ He went over to her and said, “Come, let me sleep with you,” for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

She said, “What will you give me for sleeping with me?”

¹⁷ “I will send you a young goat from my flock,” he replied.

But she said, “Only if you leave something with me until you send it.”

¹⁸ “What should I give you?” he asked.

She answered, “Your signet ring, your cord, and the staff in your hand.” So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him.¹⁹ She got up and left, then removed her veil and put her widow’s clothes back on.

²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get back the items he had left with the woman, he could not find her.²¹ He asked the men of the place, “Where is the cult prostitute who was beside the road at Enaim?”

“There has been no cult prostitute here,” they answered.

²² So the Adullamite returned to Judah, saying, “I couldn’t find her, and besides, the men of the place said, ‘There has been no cult prostitute here.’”

²³ Judah replied, “Let her keep the items for herself; otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send this young goat, but you couldn’t find her.”

²⁴ About three months later Judah was told, “Your daughter-in-law, Tamar, has been acting like a prostitute, and now she is pregnant.”

“Bring her out,” Judah said, “and let her be burned to death!”

²⁵ As she was being brought out, she sent her father-in-law this message: “I am pregnant by the man to whom these items belong.” And she added, “Examine them. Whose signet ring, cord, and staff are these?”

⑤²⁶ Judah recognized them and said, “She is more in the right^A than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not know her intimately again.

²⁷ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb.

²⁸ As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife took it and tied a scarlet thread around it, announcing, “This one came out first.”²⁹ But then he pulled his hand back, out came his brother, and she said, “What a break-out you have made for yourself!” So he was named Perez.^B ³⁰ Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread tied to his hand, came out, and was named Zerah.^C

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Judah does not seek God’s direction in any family decision he makes (vv. 1–12). Have you been guilty of this?
2. At times people act so wickedly that God brings immediate judgment against them (vv. 7,10).
3. Onan refused to practice the traditional, levirate duty of marriage by which the inheritance of a brother’s family was guaranteed (v. 9; see Dt 25:5–10; Ru 2:20; 3:2,9–13; 4:1–11; Mt 22:23–33). How dangerous can it be to flagrantly ignore God’s standards?
4. Judah suggested selling Joseph into slavery. His children grew to act more wickedly than their father (Gn 37–38).
5. Tamar was a Canaanite, but she acted more righteously and shrewdly than her Hebrew in-laws (ch. 38). Have you known unbelievers who acted more Christian than some Christians?

JOSEPH IN POTIPHAR’S HOUSE

39 ⑥ Now Joseph had been taken to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guards, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. ⑦² The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving^D in the household of his Egyptian master. ³ When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful, ⁴ Joseph found favor with his master and became his personal attendant. Potiphar also put him in charge of his household and placed all that he owned under his authority.^E ⑧⁵ From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house because of Joseph. The LORD’s blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields. ⁶ He left all that he owned under Joseph’s

^A 38:26 Or *more righteous* ^B 38:29 = Breaking Out ^C 38:30 = Brightness of Sunrise; perhaps related to the scarlet thread ^D 39:2 Lit *and he was* ^E 39:4 Lit *owned in his hand*

authority.^A he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome. ⁷ After some time his master's wife looked longingly at Joseph and said, "Sleep with me."

⁸ But he refused. "Look," he said to his master's wife, "with me here my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all that he owns under my authority." ⁹ No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. So how could I do this immense evil, and how could I sin against God?"

¹⁰ Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her.^C

¹¹ Now one day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there.^D ¹² She grabbed

him by his garment and said, "Sleep with me!" But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran outside.¹³ When she saw that he had left his garment with her and had run outside,¹⁴ she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "my husband brought a Hebrew man to make fools of us. He came to me so he could sleep with me, and I screamed as loud as I could." ¹⁵ When he heard me screaming for help,^E he left his garment beside me and ran outside."

¹⁶ She put Joseph's garment beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him the same story: "The Hebrew slave you brought to us came to make a fool of me,¹⁸ but when I screamed for help,^F he left his garment beside me and ran outside."

¹⁹ When his master heard the story his wife told him — "These are the things your slave did to me" — he was furious. ²⁰ and had him thrown into prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. So Joseph was there in prison.

JOSEPH IN PRISON

²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him. He granted him favor with the prison warden. ²² The warden put all the prisoners who were in the prison under Joseph's authority,^G and he was responsible for everything that was done there. ²³ The warden did not bother with anything under Joseph's authority,^H because the LORD was with him, and the LORD made everything that he did successful.

JOSEPH INTERPRETS TWO PRISONERS' DREAMS

40 After this, the king of Egypt's cupbearer and baker offended their master, the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,³ and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guards

39 – GOD'S STANDARDS PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How does Joseph respond to the unfair, difficult circumstances he experienced (ch. 39)? How have you responded to unfair circumstances in your life?
2. How could people tell that God was with Joseph (vv. 3,21–23)? How can people tell that God is with you?
3. How impossible would it have appeared to Joseph that he could still be a part of God's great work through his people while forgotten in a prison in Egypt (vv. 19–20)? Does it seem impossible that God could use you for his purposes?
4. How did Joseph know that God had not forgotten him or abandoned him (vv. 2–6,21–23)?
5. How did Joseph deal with temptation to sin (vv. 7–12)? How are you handling temptation?
6. How can God grant you success even when you seem far from where you ought to be (vv. 2–6,21–23)? Are you currently being faithful with the little God has granted you?

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Scripture continually repeats that God was with Joseph (vv. 2,3,21,23).
2. Unbelievers can feel offended by believers who refuse to sin like they do (vv. 7–18). Has the world ever been offended at your Christian standards?
3. God's desire is to make believers a blessing to everyone they come in contact with (vv. 5,23). Whom might God want you to bless?
4. Even in a desolate prison hundreds of miles from home, God was just as much with Joseph as when he lived in Canaan with his family (vv. 2,21,23).
5. Joseph did not allow the injustice he faced to become an excuse for him to forfeit his integrity (v. 9). Have you allowed evil people to compromise your standards and beliefs?
6. Even as Joseph's youthful dreams seemed farther away than ever, he was closer to their fulfillment than he realized (vv. 19–20; 37:5–11).

^A39:6 Lit owned in Joseph's hand ^B39:8 Lit owns in my hand ^C39:10 Lit he did not listen to her to lie beside her, to be with her ^D39:11 Lit there in the house ^E39:15 Lit he heard that I raised my voice and I screamed ^F39:18 Lit I raised my voice and screamed ^G39:22 Lit prison in the hand of Joseph ^H39:23 Lit anything in his hand

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in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guards assigned Joseph to them as their personal attendant, and they were in custody for some time.^A

⁵ The king of Egypt's cupbearer and baker, who were confined in the prison, each had a dream. Both had a dream on the same night, and each dream had its own meaning. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they looked distraught. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?"


⁸ "We had dreams," they said to him, "but there is no one to interpret them."


Then Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

⁹ So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph: "In my dream there was a vine in front of me. ¹⁰ On the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms came out and its clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

 ¹² "This is its interpretation," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days. ¹³ In just three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position. You will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand the way you used to when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴ But when all goes well for you, remember that I was with you. Please show kindness to me by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵ For I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should put me in the dungeon."^B

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was positive, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream. Three baskets of white bread were on my head. ¹⁷ In the top basket were all sorts of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

 ¹⁸ "This is its interpretation," Joseph replied. "The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ In just three days Pharaoh will lift up your head — from off you — and hang you on a tree. ²⁰ Then the birds will eat the flesh from your body."^D

²⁰ On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he gave a feast for all his servants. He elevated^E the chief cupbearer and the chief baker among his servants. ²¹ Pharaoh restored the chief cupbearer to his position as cupbearer, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. ²² But Pharaoh hanged^F the chief baker, just as Joseph had explained to them.  ²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAMS

41 At the end of two years Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing beside the Nile, ² when seven healthy-looking, well-fed cows came up from the Nile and began to graze among the reeds. ³ After them, seven other cows, sickly and thin, came up from the Nile and stood beside those cows along the bank of the Nile. ⁴ The sickly, thin cows ate

40 – REVELATION
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How could time serving in a prison be God's preparation for serving in the king's court (ch. 40)? How might your current circumstances be preparation for something else in the future?
2. Are there chance encounters with God? Or is every person we meet an opportunity for God to advance his work in our life (vv. 1–3)? Who has God currently placed in your life?
3. How could Joseph maintain a cheery disposition after the injustices he suffered (v. 7)? How do you hold on to your joy in difficult circumstances?
4. Why would Joseph think he might be able to interpret a dream (v. 8)?


DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Joseph always sought to do the best he could with what he could control, without fretting about what was out of his control (vv. 6–8). Are you doing your best with what is within your control?
2. People can hear God's voice without understanding what he is saying (vv. 9–19).
3. Joseph never presumed to take credit for what God did (v. 8). How have you given God glory for his work in your life?
4. God can advance his work in your life through people who are not believers (vv. 1–22).
5. Ultimately we must place our trust in God and not in people (v. 23). Whom are you trusting more, your boss or God?

^A 40:4 Lit *custody days* ^B 40:15 Or *pit, or cistern* ^C 40:19 Or *and impale you on a pole* ^D 40:19 Lit *eat your flesh from upon you* ^E 40:20 Lit *He lifted up the head of* ^F 40:22 Or *impaled*

the healthy, well-fed cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.⁵ He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: Seven heads of grain, plump and good, came up on one stalk.⁶ After them, seven heads of grain, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up.⁷ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven plump, full ones. Then Pharaoh woke up, and it was only a dream.


⁸ When morning came, he was troubled, so he summoned all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

 ⁹ Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I remember my faults.¹⁰ Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and he put me and the chief baker in the custody of the captain of the guards.¹¹ He


and I had dreams on the same night; each dream had its own meaning.¹² Now a young Hebrew, a slave of the captain of the guards, was with us there. We told him our dreams, he interpreted our dreams for us, and each had its own interpretation.¹³ It turned out just the way he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged."


¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon.^A He shaved, changed his clothes, and went to Pharaoh.

¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it."

 ¹⁶ "I am not able to," Joseph answered Pharaoh. "It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."^B

¹⁷ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile,¹⁸ when seven well-fed, healthy-looking cows came up from the Nile and grazed among the reeds.¹⁹ After them, seven other cows — weak, very sickly, and thin — came up. I've never seen such sickly ones as these in all the land of Egypt.²⁰ Then the thin, sickly cows ate the first seven well-fed cows.²¹ When they had devoured them, you could not tell that they had devoured them; their appearance was as bad as it had been before. Then I woke up.²² In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, coming up on one stalk.²³ After them, seven heads of grain — withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind — sprouted up.²⁴ The thin heads of grain swallowed the seven good ones. I told this to the magicians, but no one can tell me what it means."

 ²⁵ Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.²⁶ The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years. The dreams mean the same thing.²⁷ The seven thin, sickly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind are seven years of famine.

²⁸ "It is just as I told Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do.²⁹ Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt.³⁰ After them, seven years of famine will take place, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. The famine will devastate the land.³¹ The abundance in the land will not be remembered because of the famine that follows it, for the famine will be very severe.  ³² Since the dream was given twice to Pharaoh, it means that the matter has been determined by God, and he will carry it out soon.

³³ "So now, let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt.³⁴ Let Pharaoh do this: Let him appoint overseers over the land and take a fifth of the harvest of the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance.³⁵ Let them

41 – GOD'S WAYS

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How is God's timing different from ours? Why would God allow an innocent person to remain in prison for years before he was freed (v. 1; see 40:14)? Have you grown impatient with God's timing?
2. How does God use human errors to bring about his plan (40:23; 41:9)?
3. How was God fulfilling his promise to the patriarchs in the life of Joseph (vv. 33–52; see 12:1–7)?
4. How did God enable Joseph to know and do his will (v. 38)? How is God helping you know his will?
5. How does a person know where God is at work and what he is doing (v. 39)?
6. How quickly can things change for good the moment God chooses to act (v. 14)? How quickly could God change your circumstances for the better?

^A 41:14 Or *pit, or cistern* ^B 41:16 Or "God will answer Pharaoh with peace of mind."

gather all the excess food during these good years that are coming. Under Pharaoh's authority, store the grain in the cities, so they may preserve it as food.³⁶ The food will be a reserve for the land during the seven years of famine that will take place in the land of Egypt. Then the country will not be wiped out by the famine."

JOSEPH EXALTED

☉³⁷ The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants,³⁸ and he said to them, "Can we find anyone like this, a man who has God's spirit^a in him?"³⁹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one as discerning and wise as you are.⁴⁰ You will be over my house, and all my people will obey your commands.⁸ Only I, as king,^c will be greater than you."⁴¹ Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "See, I am placing you over all the land of Egypt."⁴² Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, clothed him with fine linen garments, and placed a gold chain around his neck.⁴³ He had Joseph ride in his second chariot, and servants called out before him, "Make way!"^d So he placed him over all the land of Egypt.⁴⁴ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh and no one will be able to raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt without your permission."⁴⁵ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah and gave him a wife, Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest at On.^e And Joseph went throughout^f the land of Egypt.

JOSEPH'S ADMINISTRATION

☉⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph left Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout the land of Egypt.

⁴⁷ During the seven years of abundance the land produced outstanding harvests.⁴⁸ Joseph gathered all the excess food in the land of Egypt during the seven years and put it in the cities. He put the food in every city from the fields around it.⁴⁹ So Joseph stored up grain in such abundance — like the sand of the sea — that he stopped measuring it because it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰ Two sons were born to Joseph before the years of famine arrived. Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest at On, bore them to him. ☉⁵¹ Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh^g and said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and my whole family."⁵² And the second son he named Ephraim^h and said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

⁵³ Then the seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt came to an end, ☉⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in every land, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food.⁵⁵ When the whole land of Egypt was stricken with famine, the people cried out to Pharaoh for food. Pharaoh told all Egypt, "Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you."⁵⁶ Now the famine had spread across the whole region, so Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.⁵⁷ Every land came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, for the famine was severe in every land.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Pharaoh was considered a god or at least God's representative on earth by Egyptian religion, but he could not interpret the dream that revealed God's plan (vv. 7–8).
2. God never focused on clearing Joseph's name or punishing those who lied about him. God intended to grant him ever increasing responsibility (vv. 33–34). Are you willing to leave justice in God's hands?
3. God revealed what would happen, when it would happen, and what needed to be done under the circumstances (vv. 29–36). Do you need God to give you specific guidance?
4. God helped Joseph forget the pain of his past as he embraced the joy of the present (v. 51). Do you need God to help you forget the pain of your past?
5. God's purpose was to save Joseph's family despite how they had hurt him (v. 51). Has God called you to help people who have hurt you?

^a41:38 Or the spirit of the gods, or a god's spirit ^b41:40 Lit will kiss your mouth ^c41:40 Lit Only the throne I
^d41:43 Or "Knee!" ^e41:45 Or Heliopolis, also in v. 50 ^f41:45 Or Joseph gained authority over ^g41:51 In Hb, the name Manasseh sounds like the verb "forget." ^h41:52 In Hb, the name Ephraim sounds like the word for "fruitful."

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS IN EGYPT

42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you keep looking at each other?"² Listen," he went on, "I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us so that we will live and not die."³ So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he thought, "Something might happen to him."

⁵ The sons of Israel were among those who came to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. ⁶ Joseph was in charge of the country; he sold grain to all its people. His brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷ When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan to buy food," they replied.

⁸ Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. ⁹ Joseph remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies. You have come to see the weakness^A of the land."

¹⁰ "No, my lord. Your servants have come to buy food," they said. ¹¹ "We are all sons of one man. We are honest; your servants are not spies."

¹² "No," he said to them. "You have come to see the weakness of the land."

¹³ But they replied, "We, your servants, were twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now^B with our father, and one is no longer living."

¹⁴ Then Joseph said to them, "I have spoken:^C 'You are spies!' ¹⁵ This is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶ Send one from among you to get your brother. The rest of you will be imprisoned so that your words can be tested to see if they are true. If they are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" ¹⁷ So Joseph imprisoned them together for three days.

¹⁸ On the third day Joseph said to them, "I fear God — do this and you will live. ¹⁹ If you are honest, let one of you^D be confined to the guardhouse, while the rest of you go and take grain to relieve the hunger of your households. ²⁰ Bring your youngest brother to me so that your words can be confirmed; then you won't die." And they consented to this.

²¹ Then they said to each other, "Obviously, we are being punished for what we did to our brother. We saw his deep distress when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this trouble has come to us."

²² But Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to harm the boy? But you wouldn't listen. Now we must account for his blood!"^E

²³ They did not realize that Joseph understood them, since there was an interpreter between them. ²⁴ He turned away from them and wept. When he turned back and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and had him bound before their eyes. ²⁵ Joseph then gave orders to fill their containers with grain, return each man's silver to his sack, and give them provisions for their journey. This order was carried out. ²⁶ They loaded the grain on their donkeys and left there.

THE BROTHERS RETURN HOME

²⁷ At the place where they lodged for the night, one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver there at the top of his bag. ²⁸ He said to his brothers,

42 – GOD'S PLAN

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How did God use a crisis to finally unite a family and address its past sins (v. 37; 43:3,8; see 37:22,26; 38:1,26; 42:22)? How has God used a crisis to do a fresh work in your life?
2. What must Joseph have thought when he saw his brothers bowing down before him just as he had dreamed (vv. 6,9)? Have you ever experienced a dream from your youth eventually come to pass?
3. Why did Joseph test his brothers rather than revealing himself to them right away (vv. 7–24)?
4. How did the ten brothers interpret what was happening to them (v. 28)? Have you ever been slow to recognize God's work in your life?
5. Can grief for a loss become a substitute for God (vv. 36–38; 43:6,14)? Have you ever held on to your grief for too long?

^A 42:9 Lit *nakedness*, also in v. 12 ^B 42:13 Or *today*, also in v. 32 ^C 42:14 Lit "That which I spoke to you saying:

^D 42:19 Lit *your brothers* ^E 42:22 Lit *Even his blood is being sought!*"

"My silver has been returned! It's here in my bag." Their hearts sank. Trembling, they turned to one another and said, "What has God done to us?"

²⁹ When they reached their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them:³⁰ "The man who is the lord of the country spoke harshly to us and accused us of spying on the country.³¹ But we told him, 'We are honest and not spies.'³² We were twelve brothers, sons of the same^A father. One is no longer living, and the youngest is now with our father in the land of Canaan.'³³ The man who is the lord of the country said to us, 'This is how I will know if you are honest: Leave one brother with me, take food to relieve the hunger of your households, and go.'³⁴ Bring back your youngest brother to me, and I will know that you are not spies but honest men. I will then give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the country.'"

³⁵ As they began emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his bag of silver! When they and their father saw their bags of silver, they were afraid.

³⁶ Their father Jacob said to them, "It's me that you make childless. Joseph is gone, and Simeon is gone. Now you want to take Benjamin. Everything happens to me!"

³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, "You can kill my two sons if I don't bring him back to you. Put him in my care,^B and I will return him to you."

³⁸ But Jacob answered, "My son will not go down with you, for his brother is dead and he alone is left. If anything happens to him on your journey, you will bring my gray hairs down to Sheol in sorrow."

DECISION TO RETURN TO EGYPT

43 Now the famine in the land was severe.² When they had used up the grain they had brought back from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little food."

³ But Judah said to him, "The man specifically warned us, 'You will not see me again unless your brother is with you.'⁴ If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy food for you.⁵ But if you will not send him, we will not go, for the man said to us, 'You will not see me again unless your brother is with you.'"

⁶ "Why have you caused me so much trouble?" Israel asked. "Why did you tell the man that you had another brother?"

⁷ They answered, "The man kept asking about us and our family: 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' And we answered him accordingly. How could we know that he would say, 'Bring your brother here?'"

⁸ Then Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the boy with me. We will be on our way so that we may live and not die — neither we, nor you, nor our dependents. ⁹ I will be responsible for him. You can hold me personally accountable!^C If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, I will be guilty before you forever.¹⁰ If we had not delayed, we could have come back twice by now."

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Jacob had not forgotten what happened to Joseph, and as a result he overprotected Benjamin and perhaps did not fully trust his other sons (v. 4). Is your life being driven by a fear of loss?
2. God used what appeared to be evil (famine) as part of his plan (41:54–42:16).
3. God used Joseph's stern, deceptive ways to work out his plan (vv. 7,17–20,23). Could you be misreading someone's stern exterior?
4. The brothers may have been haunted by Joseph's pleading for mercy (v. 21). How might the sin of your past be affecting your current actions?
5. As the firstborn, Reuben tried at times to lead but was never taken seriously (v. 37; see 37:21–22; 43:8).

43 – FAMILY PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What was God's purpose for the family? How aware of that purpose does the family appear to be (chs. 42–43; see 12:1–3; 35:11–12)? What is God's purpose for your family?
2. How does its history influence the way families make decisions (42:36–43:16)?
3. What does Joseph's care for his brothers and their fears say about the effect the love relationship with God has on family relationships (vv. 18–20,26–30,33–34)? How has your love for God helped you love your family?
4. How did God fulfill his promises to Joseph (v. 28; see 37:5–10)?
5. How could God use Egyptian racial prejudice for his purposes (v. 32; see 24:3; 26:34; 27:46; 38:2)? How does God work through racial prejudice?

^A42:32 Lit of our ^B42:37 Lit hand ^C43:9 Lit can seek him from my hand

¹¹ Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your packs and take them down to the man as a gift — a little balsam and a little honey, aromatic gum and resin, pistachios and almonds. ¹² Take twice as much silver with you. Return the silver that was returned to you in the top of your bags. Perhaps it was a mistake. ¹³ Take your brother also, and go back at once to the man. ¹⁴ May God Almighty cause the man to be merciful to you so that he will release your other brother and Benjamin to you. As for me, if I am deprived of my sons, then I am deprived."

THE RETURN TO EGYPT

¹⁵ The men took this gift, double the amount of silver, and Benjamin. They immediately went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his steward, "Take the men to my house. Slaughter an animal and prepare it, for they will eat with me at noon." ¹⁷ The man did as Joseph had said and brought them to Joseph's house.

¹⁸ But the men were afraid because they were taken to Joseph's house. They said, "We have been brought here because of the silver that was returned in our bags the first time. They intend to overpower us, seize us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys."

¹⁹ So they approached Joseph's steward^a and spoke to him at the doorway of the house.

²⁰ They said, "My lord, we really did come down here the first time only to buy food. ²¹ When we came to the place where we lodged for the night and opened our bags of grain, each one's silver was at the top of his bag! It was the full amount of our silver, and we have brought it back with us. ²² We have brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in the bags."

²³ Then the steward said, "May you be well. Don't be afraid. Your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your bags. I received your silver." Then he brought Simeon out to them. ²⁴ The steward brought the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet, and got feed for their donkeys. ²⁵ Since the men had heard that they were going to eat a meal there, they prepared their gift for Joseph's arrival at noon. ²⁶ When Joseph came home, they brought him the gift they had carried into the house, and they bowed to the ground before him.

²⁷ He asked if they were well, and he said, "How is your elderly father that you told me about? Is he still alive?"

²⁸ They answered, "Your servant our father is well. He is still alive." And they knelt low and paid homage to him.

²⁹ When he looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother that you told me about?" Then he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son." ³⁰ Joseph hurried out because he was overcome with emotion for his brother, and he was about to weep. He went into an inner room and wept there. ³¹ Then he washed his face and came out. Regaining his composure, he said, "Serve the meal."

³² They served him by himself, his brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who were eating with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, since that is detestable to them. ³³ They were seated before him in order by age, from the firstborn to the youngest. The men looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴ Portions were served

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. God seldom appears in the narrative but is directing all toward his purpose for this family (chs. 42–46). Do you trust that God is guiding your life's story even when his presence isn't obvious?
2. God's plan could not be finally initiated until the famine crisis reached its severest point (v. 1).
3. Even in his old age, Jacob continued to attempt to bargain through the use of gifts (vv. 11–14; see also 32:4–5). What character flaws are you still dealing with?
4. Joseph was testing the brothers to see if greed and envy still controlled their actions (v. 34). Are you passing character tests today that you would have failed in the past?
5. Judah had suggested selling Joseph as a slave, and now he is taking responsibility for Benjamin (v. 9). Have you witnessed God transform people's character?
6. Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews. Perhaps this is foreshadowing for their eventual hostility toward them (v. 32).

^a 43:19 Lit *approached the one who was over the house*

to them from Joseph's table, and Benjamin's portion was five times larger than any of theirs. They drank and became drunk with Joseph.

JOSEPH'S FINAL TEST

44 Joseph commanded his steward, "Fill the men's bags with as much food as they can carry, and put each one's silver at the top of his bag. ² Put my cup, the silver one, at the top of the youngest one's bag, along with the silver for his grain." So he did as Joseph told him.

³ At morning light, the men were sent off with their donkeys. ⁴ They had not gone very far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Get up. Pursue the men, and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?' ⁵ Isn't this the cup that my master drinks from and uses for divination? What you have done is wrong!"

⁶ When he overtook them, he said these words to them. ⁷ They said to him, "Why does my lord say these things? Your servants could not possibly do such a thing. ⁸ We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found at the top of our bags. How could we steal silver or gold from your master's house? ⁹ If it is found with one of us, your servants, he must die, and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves."

¹⁰ The steward replied, "What you have said is right, but only the one who is found to have it will be my slave, and the rest of you will be blameless."

¹¹ So each one quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. ¹² The steward searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³ Then they tore their clothes, and each one loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

¹⁴ When Judah and his brothers reached Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵ "What have you done?" Joseph said to them. "Didn't you know that a man like me could uncover the truth by divination?"

¹⁶ "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "How can we plead? How can we justify ourselves? God has exposed your servants' iniquity. We are now my lord's slaves — both we and the one in whose possession the cup was found."

¹⁷ Then Joseph said, "I swear that I will not do this. The man in whose possession the cup was found will be my slave. The rest of you can go in peace to your father."

JUDAH'S PLEA FOR BENJAMIN

¹⁸ But Judah approached him and said, "My lord, please let your servant speak personally to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, for you are like Pharaoh. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' ²⁰ and we answered my lord, 'We have an elderly father and a younger brother, the child of his old age. The boy's brother is dead. He is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.' ²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him to me so that I can see him.' ²² But we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father. If he were to leave, his father would die.' ²³ Then you said to your servants, 'If your younger brother does not come down with you, you will not see me again.'

²⁴ "This is what happened when we went back to your servant my father: We reported to him the words of my lord. ²⁵ But our father said, 'Go again, and buy us a little food.' ²⁶ We told him, 'We cannot go down unless our younger brother goes with us. If our younger brother isn't with us, we cannot see the man.' ²⁷ Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. ²⁸ One is gone from me — I said he must have been torn to pieces — and I have never seen him again. ²⁹ If you also take this one from me and anything happens to him, you will bring my gray hairs down to Sheol in sorrow.'

³⁰ "So if I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us — his life is wrapped up with the boy's life — ³¹ when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will

44 - FAMILY PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How does God use Joseph to determine or change the brothers' values and relationship with God (ch. 44)? How is God using you to accomplish his purposes in your family?
2. What sin does Judah confess (v. 16)?
3. What kind of relationship with his father does Judah begin to show (vv. 16–20)? Have you grown in your love and concern for your parents as you have matured?
4. What sense of responsibility does God want you to have for your family members (vv. 30–34)? Are you primarily driven by love as you relate to your family members?

die. Then your servants will have brought the gray hairs of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow.³² Your servant became accountable to my father for the boy, saying, 'If I do not return him to you, I will always bear the guilt for sinning against you, my father.'³³ Now please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave, in place of the boy. Let him go back with his brothers.³⁴ For how can I go back to my father without the boy? I could not bear to see the grief that would overwhelm my father."

JOSEPH REVEALS HIS IDENTITY

45 Joseph could no longer keep his composure in front of all his attendants,^a so he called out, "Send everyone away from me!" No one was with him when he revealed his identity to his brothers.² But he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and also Pharaoh's household heard it.³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But they could not answer him because they were terrified in his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please, come near me," and they came near. "I am Joseph, your brother," he said, "the one you sold into Egypt."⁵ And now don't be grieved or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life.⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there will be five more years without plowing or harvesting.⁷ God sent me ahead of you to establish you as a remnant within the land and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.⁸ Therefore it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

⁹ "Return quickly to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: "God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me without delay."¹⁰ You can settle in the land of Goshen and be near me — you, your children, and your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and all you have.¹¹ There I will sustain you, for there will be five more years of famine. Otherwise, you, your household, and everything you have will become destitute."¹² Look! Your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin can see that I'm^c the one speaking to you.¹³ Tell my father about all my glory in Egypt and about all you have seen. And bring my father here quickly."

¹⁴ Then Joseph threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder.¹⁵ Joseph kissed each of his brothers as he wept,^d and afterward his brothers talked with him.

THE RETURN FOR JACOB

¹⁶ When the news reached Pharaoh's palace, "Joseph's brothers have come," Pharaoh and his servants were pleased.¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Joseph appears to have used his special cup to determine God's will (v. 5).
2. In suggesting this sentence, the brothers show the total neglect of their father (v. 9). Have you ever spoken rashly?
3. The reason for the brothers' grief is unclear. Was it their danger or that Benjamin is caught (v. 13)? God sometimes places his people in crises where they must sacrifice what they love for the good of the family (vv. 25–30).
4. God expects love for family to make us willing to sacrifice personal gain, desire, or our life for our loved ones (vv. 32–34). How sacrificial is your love for your family?

45 – GOD'S PURPOSE PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What is God's purpose for his people? How is it different from what people expect for their life (v. 5)? Could God have different goals for your life from what you do?
2. Can guilt and grief keep you from knowing and being involved in God's purpose (v. 26)? Could regret for the past prevent you from experiencing God's best for today?
3. How does God use human institutions and leaders to achieve his purpose (vv. 8, 16–20)?
4. How was Joseph able to be so generous to his brothers after all they had done to him (vv. 4–10, 22)? Do you have a generous heart toward others?
5. Why was Joseph so generous with Benjamin (v. 22)?

^a 45:1 Lit all those standing about him ^b 45:7 Or keep alive for you many survivors ^c 45:12 Lit that my mouth is

^d 45:15 Lit brothers, and he wept over them

your animals and go on back to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸ Get your father and your families, and come back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you can eat from the richness of the land.' ¹⁹ You are also commanded to tell them, 'Do this: Take wagons from the land of Egypt for your dependents and your wives and bring your father here. ²⁰ Do not be concerned about your belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'

²¹ The sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them wagons as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them provisions for the journey. ²² He gave each of the brothers changes of clothes, but he gave Benjamin three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothes. ²³ He sent his father the following: ten donkeys carrying the best products of Egypt and ten female donkeys carrying grain, food, and provisions for his father on the journey. ²⁴ So Joseph sent his brothers on their way, and as they were leaving, he said to them, "Don't argue^a on the way."

²⁵ So they went up from Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. ²⁶ They said, "Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt!" Jacob was stunned,^b for he did not believe them. ²⁷ But when they told Jacob all that Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

²⁸ Then Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go to see him before I die."

JACOB LEAVES FOR EGYPT

46 ¹ Israel set out with all that he had and came to Beer-sheba, and he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² That night God spoke to Israel in a vision: "Jacob, Jacob!" he said.

And Jacob replied, "Here I am."

³ God said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you back. Joseph will close your eyes when you die."^c

⁵ Jacob left Beer-sheba. The sons of Israel took their father Jacob in the wagons Pharaoh had sent to carry him, along with their dependents and their wives. ⁶ They also took their cattle and possessions they had acquired in the land of Canaan. Then Jacob and all his offspring with him came to Egypt. ⁷ His sons and grandsons, his daughters and granddaughters, indeed all his offspring, he brought with him to Egypt.

JACOB'S FAMILY

⁸ These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt — Jacob and his sons: Jacob's firstborn: Reuben.

⁹ Reuben's sons: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Guilt over past sins can prevent you from enjoying current blessings (v. 3).
2. Joseph had gained God's view of his life's circumstances (vv. 5–8). Can you identify how God has guided your life over the years?
3. God's purpose led his people to leave the promised land for four centuries before eventually returning to claim it (v. 7). Have you ever assumed something in your life was temporary when it would actually last a long time?
4. While the famine was bringing others to financial ruin, God helped Jacob's family to prosper (v. 18).
5. The man of deceit feared deceit to the last (v. 26). Has God granted you freedom from your greatest fears?

46 – GOD'S PLAN

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. What response does God want from people involved in his work (v. 1)? Have you been hesitating to join God in what he is doing?
2. Why does God use Egypt both in the lives of the patriarchs and later to preserve the life of Jesus as a baby (v. 3)?
3. How steadfast is God in making a plan and carrying it out (vv. 3–4; see 12:1–7; 26:2–5; 28:12–15; 35:11–12)? Do you trust God with his plan for your life?
4. While the Israelites would eventually look on their time in Egypt as involving great suffering, God was using that time to make them a great nation (v. 3). How has God grown you during difficult times?
5. What danger threatened the identity of Israel as a nation (v. 34; see 24:3; 26:34; 27:46; 38:2; 43:32)? Has God called you to work with people who do not respect you?
6. What plan did God have to separate his people to maintain their identity (46:31–47:6)? How could God's separating you from others ultimately be a good thing?

^a 45:24 Or be anxious ^b 45:26 Lit Jacob's heart was numb ^c 46:4 Lit will put his hand on your eyes

- ¹⁰ Simeon's sons: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.
- ¹¹ Levi's sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.
- ¹² Judah's sons: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.
The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.
- ¹³ Issachar's sons: Tola, Puvah, ^A Jashub, ^B and Shimron.
- ¹⁴ Zebulun's sons: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.
- ¹⁵ These were Leah's sons born to Jacob in Paddan-aram, as well as his daughter Dinah. The total number of persons: ^C thirty-three.
- ¹⁶ Gad's sons: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.
- ¹⁷ Asher's sons: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah.
Beriah's sons were Heber and Malchiel.
- ¹⁸ These were the sons of Zilpah — whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah — that she bore to Jacob: sixteen persons.
- ¹⁹ The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.
- ²⁰ Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph in the land of Egypt.
They were born to him by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, a priest at On. ^D
- ²¹ Benjamin's sons: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.
- ²² These were Rachel's sons who were born to Jacob: fourteen persons.
- ²³ Dan's son: ^E Hushim.
- ²⁴ Naphtali's sons: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.
- ²⁵ These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel.
She bore to Jacob: seven persons.
- ²⁶ The total number of persons belonging to Jacob — his direct descendants, ^F not including the wives of Jacob's sons — who came to Egypt: sixty-six.
- ²⁷ And Joseph's sons who were born to him in Egypt: two persons.
All those of Jacob's household who came to Egypt: seventy ^G persons.

JACOB ARRIVES IN EGYPT

²⁸ Now Jacob had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to prepare for his arrival ^H at Goshen. When they came to the land of Goshen, ²⁹ Joseph hitched the horses to his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel. Joseph presented himself to him, threw his arms around him, and wept for a long time.

³⁰ Then Israel said to Joseph, "I'm ready to die now because I have seen your face and you are still alive!"

³¹ Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's family, "I will go up and inform Pharaoh, telling him, 'My brothers and my father's family, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. ³² The men are shepherds; they also raise livestock. They have brought their flocks and herds and all that they have.' ³³ When Pharaoh addresses you and asks, 'What is your occupation?' ³⁴ you are to say, 'Your servants, both we and our ancestors, have raised livestock ^I from our youth until now.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the land of Goshen, since all shepherds are detestable to Egyptians."

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Jacob sought a word from God before he journeyed to Egypt (vv. 1–4). Do you always seek a word from God before you undertake a new venture?
2. God's promise includes Jacob's greatest desire: to see Joseph (v. 4).
3. God does his greatest work with small groups of people and even babies, all of whom could be listed and named (vv. 8–27). Do you trust that God can do a great work from small beginnings?
4. Joseph's sons with Egyptian mothers are included in Israel as is Judah's son with a Canaanite mother (v. 27; see vv. 10,12,20).
5. Judah now had his father's trust (v. 28; see chs. 37–38).
6. The brothers are still listed by their mother's names, but that distinction will begin to fade (vv. 15–25).

^A46:13 Sam, Syr read *Puah*; 1Ch 7:1 ^B46:13 Sam, LXX; MT reads *lob* ^C46:15 Lit *All persons his sons and his daughters*
^D46:20 Or *Heliopolis* ^E46:23 Alt Hb tradition reads *sons*: ^F46:26 Lit *Jacob who came out from his loins* ^G46:27 LXX reads 75; Ac 7:14 ^H46:28 Lit *to give directions before him* ^I46:34 Lit *fathers, are men of livestock*


PHARAOH WELCOMES JACOB

47 So Joseph went and informed Pharaoh: “My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in the land of Goshen.”

² He took five of his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. ³ And Pharaoh asked his brothers, “What is your occupation?”


They said to Pharaoh, “Your servants, both we and our ancestors, are shepherds.” ⁴ And they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to stay in the land for a while

because there is no grazing land for your servants' sheep, since the famine in the land of Canaan has been severe. So now, please let your servants settle in the land of Goshen.”


⁵ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Now that your father and brothers have come to you,  ⁶ the land of Egypt is open before you; settle your father and brothers in the best part of the land. They can live in the land of Goshen. If you know of any capable men among them, put them in charge of my livestock.”

⁷ Joseph then brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many years have you lived?”

⁹ Jacob said to Pharaoh, “My pilgrimage has lasted 130 years. My years have been few and hard, and they have not reached the years of my ancestors during their pilgrimages.” ¹⁰ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh and departed from Pharaoh's presence.


 ¹¹ Then Joseph settled his father and brothers in the land of Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹² And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's family with food for their dependents.

THE LAND BECOMES PHARAOH'S

¹³ But there was no food in the entire region, for the famine was very severe. The land of Egypt and the land of Canaan were exhausted by the famine.  ¹⁴ Joseph collected all the silver to be found in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan in exchange for the grain they were purchasing, and he brought the silver to Pharaoh's palace. ¹⁵ When the silver from the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was gone, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us food. Why should we die here in front of you? The silver is gone!”

¹⁶ But Joseph said, “Give me your livestock. Since the silver is gone, I will give you food in exchange for your livestock.” ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks of sheep, the herds of cattle, and the donkeys. That year he provided them with food in exchange for all their livestock.

¹⁸ When that year was over, they came the next year and said to him, “We cannot hide from our lord that the silver is gone and that all our livestock belongs to our lord. There is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. ¹⁹ Why should we die here in front of you — both us and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food. Then we with our land will become Pharaoh's slaves. Give us seed so that we can live and not die, and so that the land won't become desolate.”

 ²⁰ In this way, Joseph acquired all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh, because every Egyptian sold his field since the famine was so severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, ²¹ and Joseph made the people servants^A from one end of Egypt to the other. ²² The only land he did not acquire belonged to the priests, for they had an allowance from Pharaoh. They ate from their allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.

47 – GOD'S MISSION

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How did God bless Israel in Egypt (vv. 11–12)? Has God blessed you in unusual ways or places?
2. How did God accomplish his mission through Joseph (ch. 47)? How is God accomplishing his purposes through you?
3. How did God accomplish his mission through Jacob (chs. 28–48)?
4. How did God bless the nations through Jacob and Joseph (vv. 7–10, 23–26)?
5. Did life in a foreign land prevent God from blessing Israel (v. 27)? Can anything prevent God from accomplishing his purposes for you?

^A47:21 Sam, LXX; MT reads *and he moved the people to the cities*

²³ Joseph said to the people, "Understand today that I have acquired you and your land for Pharaoh. Here is seed for you. Sow it in the land. ²⁴ At harvest, you are to give a fifth of it to Pharaoh, and four-fifths will be yours as seed for the field and as food for yourselves, your households, and your dependents."

²⁵ "You have saved our lives," they said. "We have found favor with our lord and will be Pharaoh's slaves." ²⁶ So Joseph made it a law, still in effect today in the land of Egypt, that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. Only the priests' land does not belong to Pharaoh.

ISRAEL SETTLES IN GOSHEN

🕒 ²⁷ Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They acquired property in it and became fruitful and very numerous. ²⁸ Now Jacob lived in the land of Egypt 17 years, and his life span was 147 years. ²⁹ When the time approached for him to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor with you, put your hand under my thigh and promise me that you will deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt. ³⁰ When I rest with my ancestors, carry me away from Egypt and bury me in their burial place."

Joseph answered, "I will do what you have asked."

³¹ And Jacob said, "Swear to me." So Joseph swore to him. Then Israel bowed in thanks at the head of his bed.^A

JACOB BLESSES EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

48 Some time after this, Joseph was told, "Your father is weaker." So he set out with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ² When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed.

🕒 ³ Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. 🕒 ⁴ He said to me, 'I will make you fruitful and numerous; I will make many nations come from you, and I will give this land as a permanent possession to your future descendants.' ⁵ Your two sons born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt are now mine. Ephraim and Manasseh belong to me just as Reuben and Simeon do. ⁶ Children born to you after them will be yours and will be recorded under the names of their brothers with regard to their inheritance. ⁷ When I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died along the way, some distance from Ephrath in the land of Canaan. I buried her there along the way to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).

⁸ When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

🕒 ⁹ And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons God has given me here."

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Jacob's description of his life shows that involvement in God's work may also involve suffering and troubles (v. 9). What has been most difficult for you when following God?
2. Joseph may be a ruler, but his family are still pilgrims, shepherds, and foreigners waiting for God to lead them back home (vv. 1–21).
3. Only the Hebrews had land they did not sell to Pharaoh, yet their promised land lay elsewhere (vv. 20,27). Do you sense your current situation is only temporary?
4. Pharaoh provided a living for the Egyptian priests, but they could not reveal God's will to him when he needed it (v. 22; see 41:8).
5. Joseph led the Egyptians to tithe 20 percent of their income to Pharaoh (v. 24).
6. When Jacob died, his descendants owned little land in Canaan; Israel continued to live by faith, not sight (vv. 29–31). Does God's will for you still seem far away?

48 – GOD'S PLAN PREPARE TO MEET GOD


1. What spiritual marker did Jacob look back to after all those years (v. 3)? What encounters with God are you still holding on to?
2. What was God's mission for Jacob (v. 4)?
3. By what name did Jacob know God (v. 15)? Have you come to experience the God of your parents and grandparents?
4. What was Jacob's primary role in his old age (vv. 9–20)? Whom does God want you to bless?
5. How did God ignore custom (vv. 17–20)? Is God asking you to do something contrary to custom or expectations?

^A 47:31 Or *Israel worshiped while leaning on the top of his staff*

GENESIS 48–49

So Israel said, “Bring them to me and I will bless them.”¹⁰ Now his eyesight was poor because of old age; he could hardly^A see. Joseph brought them to him, and he kissed and embraced them.¹¹ Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, but now God has even let me see your offspring.”¹² Then Joseph took them from his father's knees and bowed with his face to the ground.

EPHRAIM'S GREATER BLESSING

¹³ Then Joseph took them both — with his right hand Ephraim toward Israel's left, and with his left hand Manasseh toward Israel's right — and brought them to Israel.¹⁴ But Israel stretched out his right hand and put it on the head of Ephraim, the younger, and crossing his hands, put his left on Manasseh's head, although Manasseh was the firstborn.  ¹⁵ Then he blessed Joseph and said:


The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

¹⁶ the angel who has redeemed me from all harm —
may he bless these boys.

And may they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,
and may they grow to be numerous within the land.

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father had placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought it was a mistake^B and took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's.¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, “Not that way, my father! This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head.”

¹⁹ But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know! He too will become a tribe,^C and he too will be great; nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his offspring will become a populous nation.”^D ²⁰ So he blessed them that day, putting Ephraim before Manasseh when he said, “The nation Israel will invoke blessings by you, saying, ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.’”

 ²¹ Israel said to Joseph, “Look, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you back to the land of your fathers.”²² Over and above what I am giving your brothers, I am giving you the one mountain slope^E that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow.”

JACOB'S LAST WORDS

49 Then Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather around, and I will tell you what will happen to you in the days to come.”^F

² Come together and listen,
sons of Jacob;
listen to your father Israel:

³ Reuben, you are
my firstborn,

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Jacob adopted Joseph's sons (v. 5).
2. God controls human fertility and fulfills his promise of blessing in whatever land he chooses (v. 9).
3. The dying patriarch passed on God's blessing to the next generation (v. 9). How might God still have work for you to do even as you grow older?
4. Joseph showed great respect to his father (v. 12). How might you honor your parents?
5. God does not always work the way his servants want him to (vv. 18–19). How have you discovered that God's ways are not your ways?

49 – REVELATION
PREPARE TO MEET GOD

1. How do our actions affect the generations that follow (ch. 49)? How might your greatest influence for good be on the generation that succeeds you?
2. What tribes received discipline for their father's sins (vv. 3–7; see 34:25; 35:22)?
3. What tribes gained the most power (vv. 8–12, 22–26)?
4. What tribes would be servants of other peoples (vv. 13–15, 19)?
5. Does looking at the history of your family's relationship with God make you cry to him for salvation and deliverance (v. 18)?
6. Why does God's plan include such different futures for different parts of the same people (vv. 3–27)? How has God's will been different for your various family members?

^A 48:10 Lit he was not able to ^B 48:17 Or he was displeased; lit head, it was bad in his eyes ^C 48:19 Lit people

^D 48:19 Or a multitude of nations; lit a fullness of nations ^E 48:22 Or Shechem, Joseph's burial place; lit one shoulder

^F 49:1 Or in the last days

- my strength and the firstfruits of my virility,
excelling in prominence, excelling in power.
- 4 Turbulent as water, you will not excel,
because you got into your father's bed
and you defiled it — he^A got into my bed.
- 5 Simeon and Levi are brothers;
their knives are vicious weapons.
- 6 May I never enter their council;
may I never join their assembly.
For in their anger they kill men,
and on a whim they hamstring oxen.
- 7 Their anger is cursed, for it is strong,
and their fury, for it is cruel!
I will disperse them throughout Jacob
and scatter them throughout Israel.
- 8 Judah, your brothers will praise you.
Your hand will be on the necks
of your enemies;
your father's sons will bow down to you.
- 9 Judah is a young lion —
my son, you return from the kill.
He crouches; he lies down like a lion
or a lioness — who dares to rouse him?
- 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah
or the staff from between his feet
until he whose right it is comes^B
and the obedience of the peoples belongs to him.
- 11 He ties his donkey to a vine,
and the colt of his donkey to the choice vine.
He washes his clothes in wine
and his robes in the blood of grapes.
- 12 His eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth are whiter than milk.
- 13 Zebulun will live by the seashore
and will be a harbor for ships,
and his territory will be next to Sidon.
- 14 Issachar is a strong donkey
lying down between the saddlebags.^C
- 15 He saw that his resting place was good
and that the land was pleasant,
so he leaned his shoulder to bear a load
and became a forced laborer.
- 16 Dan will judge his people
as one of the tribes of Israel.
- 17 Dan will be a snake by the road,
a viper beside the path,
that bites the horse's heels
so that its rider falls backward.

^A49:4 LXX, Syr, Tg read you ^B49:10 Or until tribute comes to him, or until Shiloh comes, or until he comes to Shiloh

^C49:14 Or sheep pens

GENESIS 49

- ¹⁸ I wait for your salvation, LORD.
- ¹⁹ Gad will be attacked by raiders,
but he will attack their heels.
- ²⁰ Asher's^A food will be rich,
and he will produce royal delicacies.
- ²¹ Naphtali is a doe set free
that bears beautiful fawns.
- ²² Joseph is a fruitful vine,
a fruitful vine beside a spring;
its branches^B climb over the wall.^C
- ²³ The archers attacked him,
shot at him, and were hostile toward him.
- ²⁴ Yet his bow remained steady,
and his strong arms were made agile
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
by the name of^D the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
- ²⁵ by the God of your father who helps you,
and by the Almighty who blesses you
with blessings of the heavens above,
blessings of the deep that lies below,
and blessings of the breasts and the womb.
- ²⁶ The blessings of your father excel
the blessings of my ancestors^E
and^F the bounty of the ancient hills.^C
May they rest on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the prince of his brothers.
- ²⁷ Benjamin is a wolf; he tears his prey.
In the morning he devours the prey,
and in the evening he divides the plunder."

☞²⁸ These are the tribes of Israel, twelve in all, and this is what their father said to them. He blessed them, and he blessed each one with a suitable blessing.

JACOB'S BURIAL INSTRUCTIONS

²⁹ Then he commanded them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hethite. ³⁰ The cave is in the field of Machpelah near Mamre, in the land of Canaan. This is the field Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hethite as burial property. ³¹ Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried there, Isaac and his wife Rebekah are buried there, and I buried Leah there. ³² The field and the cave in it were purchased from the Hethites." ³³ When Jacob had finished giving charges to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed, took his last breath, and was gathered to his people.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Note the reversal of fortune for the firstborn (vv. 3–4). How have you paid the price for earlier sins?
2. Which sins brought discipline on the tribes (vv. 4–7)? Which tribe held leadership and hope for all the tribes (v. 10)? How has God demonstrated grace to you, despite what you have done?
3. What reward did Issachar want so much he was willing to become a slave to obtain it (vv. 14–15)? What was the importance of the tribe of Joseph and its future history as the leader of Israel, the northern kingdom (vv. 22–26)? Through three generations of promises, God had given only a burial cave that Abraham paid for (v. 30).

^A 49:19–20 LXX, Syr, Vg; MT reads *their heel*. ^B 49:22 Lit *daughters* ^C 49:22,26 Hb obscure
^D 49:24 Syr, Tg; MT reads *Jacob, from there* ^E 49:26 Or *of the mountains* ^F 49:26 Lit to

JACOB'S BURIAL

50 Then Joseph, leaning over his father's face, wept and kissed him.² He commanded his servants who were physicians to embalm his father. So they embalmed Israel.³ They took forty days to complete this, for embalming takes that long, and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

⁴ When the days of mourning were over, Joseph said to Pharaoh's household, "If I have found favor with you, please tell Pharaoh that ⁵ my father made me take an oath, saying, 'I am about to die. You must bury me there in the tomb that I made for myself in the land of Canaan.'


Now let me go and bury my father. Then I will return."

⁶ So Pharaoh said, "Go and bury your father in keeping with your oath."


⁷ Then Joseph went to bury his father, and all Pharaoh's servants, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt went with him,⁸ along with all Joseph's family, his brothers, and his father's family. Only their dependents, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen.⁹ Horses and chariots went up with him; it was a very impressive procession.¹⁰ When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, which is across the Jordan, they lamented and wept loudly, and Joseph mourned seven days for his father.¹¹ When the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a solemn mourning on the part of the Egyptians." Therefore the place is named Abel-mizraim.^A It is across the Jordan.

¹² So Jacob's sons did for him what he had commanded them.¹³ They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave at Machpelah in the field near Mamre, which Abraham had purchased as burial property from Ephron the Hethite.¹⁴ After Joseph buried his father, he returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone with him to bury his father.

JOSEPH'S KINDNESS


 ¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said to one another, "If Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will certainly repay us for all the suffering we caused him."

¹⁶ So they sent this message to Joseph, "Before he died your father gave a command: ¹⁷ 'Say this to Joseph: Please forgive your brothers' transgression and their sin — the suffering they caused you.' Therefore, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when their message came to him.¹⁸ His brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, "We are your slaves!"

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?  ²⁰ You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result — the survival of many people.²¹ Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.^B

JOSEPH'S DEATH

²² Joseph and his father's family remained in Egypt. Joseph lived 110 years.²³ He saw Ephraim's sons to the third generation; the sons of Manasseh's son Machir were recognized by^{C,D} Joseph.

 ²⁴ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will certainly come to your aid and bring you up from this land to the land he swore to give to Abraham, Isaac,

50 – GOD'S PLAN**PREPARE TO MEET GOD**

1. What two events led Joseph to weep in this chapter (vv. 1,17)? How has God ministered to you in your loss?
2. What do rituals and expressions of grief accomplish (vv. 1–9)?
3. How did a crisis bring unity to Jacob's family (vv. 1–12)? How has God used crises to accomplish good in your life?
4. How can God use evil that people intended and bring about his good purposes instead (v. 29)?
5. How does a love relationship with God change a person's perspective on the injustices received from others (vv. 17–21)? How has God's grace for you enabled you to show grace to others?

^A50:11 = Mourning of Egypt ^B50:21 Lit *spoke to their hearts* ^C50:23 Lit *were born on the knees of* ^D50:23 Referring to a ritual of adoption or of legitimation; Gn 30:3

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and Jacob.”²⁵ So Joseph made the sons of Israel take an oath: “When God comes to your aid, you are to carry my bones up from here.”

²⁶ Joseph died at the age of 110. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt.

DID YOU NOTICE?

1. Joseph weeps over his father and over his brothers (vv. 1,17). Although Joseph was doing God’s will, he was not immune to weeping. For what have you wept?
2. Our past sins can haunt us until we experience forgiveness (v. 15). For what do you still need to experience forgiveness?
3. Those in a right relationship with God are able to forgive even the most painful transgressions (v. 19). What might your unwillingness to forgive reveal about your relationship with God?
4. God can take the evil that people do and use it to accomplish his plan (v. 20).
5. After four generations of patriarchs, Joseph is in a coffin in Egypt, and the patriarchs only possess one burial cave in Canaan (v. 26). Are you still trusting God for what you cannot yet see?

