



HILL COUNTRY  
BIBLE CHURCH

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

# FAITHFUL IN THE MESS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS

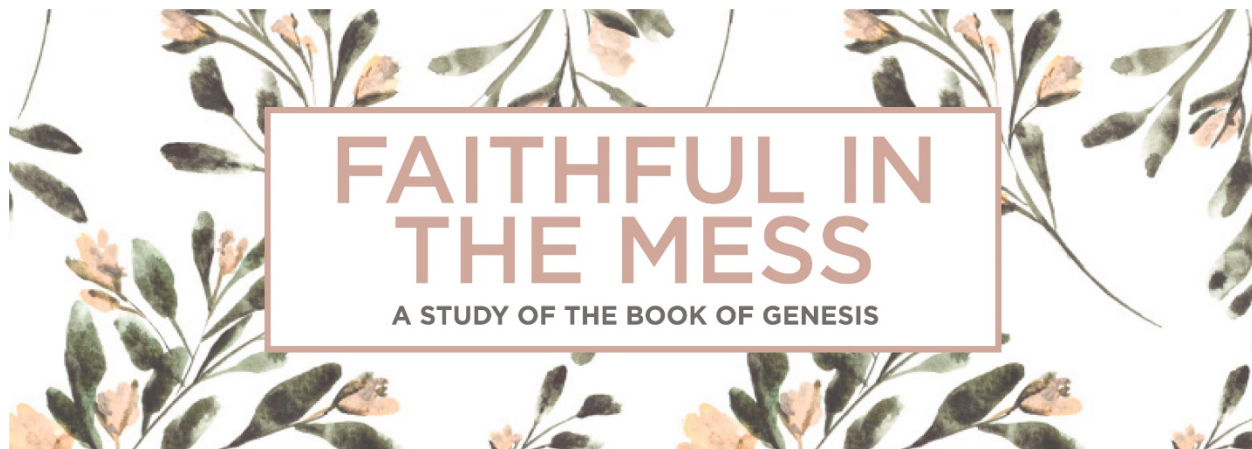
2023 - 2024

**THIS BOOK BELONGS TO**

**LEADER NAME**

**CONTACT INFO:**

Please email [women@hcbc.com](mailto:women@hcbc.com) with questions or feedback.



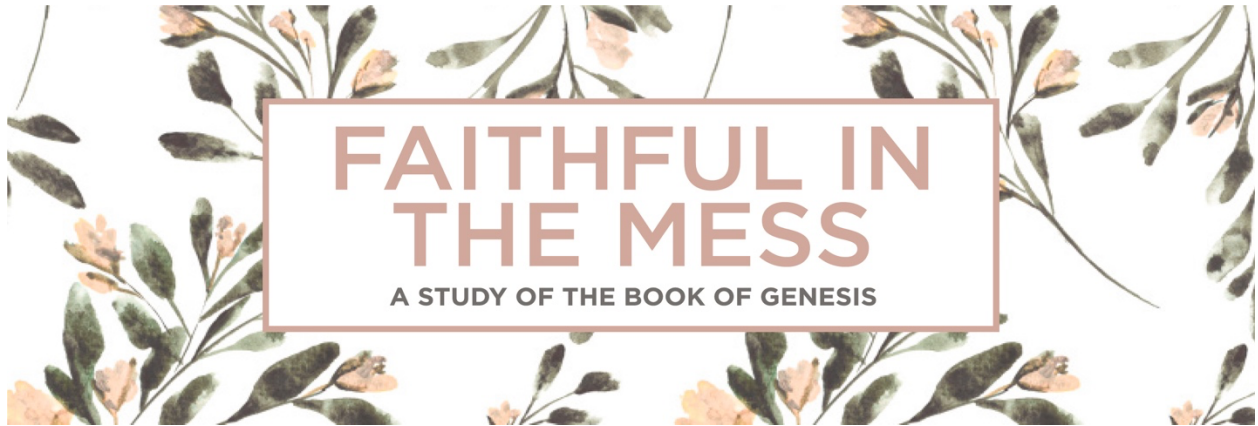
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Dear friend,

Have you ever had one of those days where it all seems like such a mess? Your life? Your relationships? Your pursuits? Your dreams? They all can feel like a mess at times.

The reality is most of us face moments where we feel like everything is a mess. But truthfully, this world also feels like a mess. Have things always been this crazy and confusing? What is happening in the world? Does God even notice or care?

Our desire for you as we journey together through this year, is that you find a new or renewed understanding of how we got in this mess and God's incredible faithfulness in spite of the mess. In this study of the book of Genesis, we will answer these questions by taking a fresh look at real people and their chaotic, tangled stories. We will discover their ancient world, just like our modern world, was a mess. Thankfully, our faithful God works in their mess. Could He do the same in ours?

In this notebook you will find the homework for our time together as well as pages to take notes during the lectures and even some additional resources at the back. We know the size of the notebook alone may seem daunting, but we will take it week by week, story by story. We hope you will dedicate time each week to study the stories on your own. And then join us as we meet together in groups to uncover more and grow in relationship together and with God as we see that truly He is the One that is Faithful in the Mess.

Excited for the journey ahead!  
Love your messy friends,

Heather and Kim



# *God's Glorious Creation*

## *Lesson 1 - Genesis 1-2*

### Introduction

Life is hard. Even though we all enjoy an abundance of blessing in our lives; nevertheless, life is hard. Over the course of our lives, we will all encounter grievous losses, deep disappointments, and personal pain. We face challenges in our marriages, in our families, and in our personal lives. Life is hard.

And we wonder...what is God *doing*, for heaven's sake? We come to the Bible hoping to understand what purpose there may be in the problems we face and the sorrows we suffer. Are we simply adrift in a turbulent sea of chaos, or – could it possibly be – is God still in control? What is God *doing*, for heaven's sake? We can find answers that bring reassurance and hope in the very first book of the Bible.

Although the Bible includes a lot of practical wisdom and helpful guidance about how to live life; nevertheless, it is important to understand that the Bible is more than just that. The Bible comprises many books, and taken together, these books present a single story. It's not a story about us; it's a story about God – about who He is and what He is doing.

The Bible tells the story of what is wrong with our world,  
what God is doing to fix it,  
and how it's all going to turn out in the end.

-- Tim Keller

The Bible weaves together a single glorious story that moves from the creation to the fall of man, to the salvation God provides through Jesus, and finally to the promise of the eternal Kingdom. The Bible tells the story of creation, man's rebellion, redemption, and the glory of the new creation. The book of Genesis is the gateway into this epic story of God and His ongoing plan and purpose.

## Author and Purpose

The word “*genesis*” means “*origin*”. The book of Genesis reveals the origin of our material universe, the origin of mankind, and the origins of God’s people Israel.



Genesis is not a stand-alone book; it is the first of five books of the Bible written by Moses. These five books, Genesis-Deuteronomy, are known as the Torah. The Torah was written during the years when the people of Israel were traveling through wilderness on their way to the promised land of Canaan. They had been delivered from their centuries-long slavery in Egypt, and they were learning to live as the people of God under the leadership of Moses and according to the law and the promises given in the Torah.

### 1. Read Genesis 1:1-2 *God created everything from nothing*

- a. What does this passage reveal about how the universe came to be? See also Hebrews 11:3 and Revelation 4:11.

- b. What did creation look like initially?

### 2. Read Genesis 1:3-2:3 *God establishes order and adds abundant fullness*



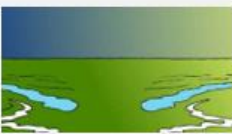



- a. Notice the repetition in this melodic passage. How does the description of each day of creation begin? How does the description of each day of creation conclude?

b. How did God accomplish each step of creation? ( See also Psalm 33:6,9)

c. In the beginning, the cosmos was without form, and it was empty. What did God create each day?

<i>Day</i>	<i>God creates and organizes</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>God creates in order to bring fullness</i>
1 vs. 3-5		4 vs. 14-19	
2 vs. 6-8		5 vs. 20-23	
3 vs. 9-13		6 vs. 24-31	

Notice that day 1 corresponds to day 4, day 2 corresponds to day 5, and day 3 corresponds to day 6. God not only shapes the cosmos; He also fills it.

Created	Filled
Day 1 	Day 4 
Day 2 	Day 5 
Day 3 	Day 6 

d. What is God's evaluation after each step of His creation?

e. How is man different from all prior created things? (Genesis 1:26)



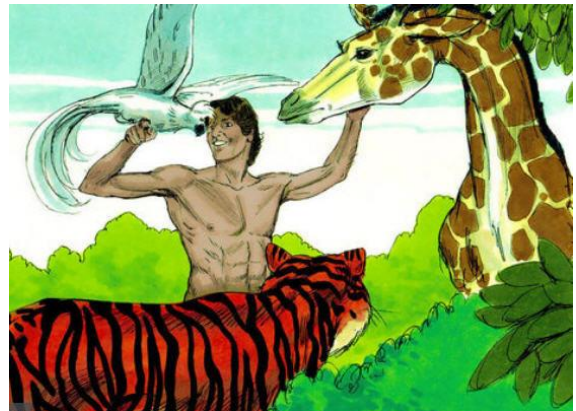
f. *For personal reflection:* When we look into a mirror, we see the image of our face. That image is not our face, but it reveals what our face looks like. Genesis 1:26 declares that God created man in God's image. Let's explore that concept:

i. How was man created to resemble God? Are there capabilities and characteristics that humanity has that other creatures do not have?

ii. How was man created to represent God? Are there responsibilities that we have as representatives of God in our conduct and in our behavior? How is this a challenge for us?

iii. How was man created to enjoy relationship with God? How does the testimony of the Bible demonstrate that man has the privilege of knowing and loving God—a privilege that other creatures do not have?

g. *For personal reflection:* You have been created in God's image. How does this fact inform your understanding of your worth, your life purpose and your responsibility? What difference should this make in your life?



h. How has God celebrated the completion of His process of creation? (Genesis 2:1-3)

### 3. Read Genesis 2:4-25 *God's Presence is with His people*

- a. When God created man, He placed him in a lush and fruitful garden, the Garden of Eden. The term *Eden* means *delight*. What do you see in the description of the garden that confirms its beauty and abundance? (Genesis 2:8-14)

God placed the man in the garden “to work it and keep it.” The term *work* refers to cultivation of the garden; the term *keep* refers to guarding this sacred space. The man’s role is to be a guardian as well as a gardener.

- b. What provision did God give for the man’s need to eat? (Genesis 2:16)
- c. What restriction did God impose? What would be the consequence of disobedience? (Genesis 2:16-17)
- d. Although God had proclaimed that His creation was very good; nevertheless, there was one essential thing missing. What was not yet good about God’s creation? (Genesis 2:18)
- e. How did God fashion a helper for Adam? (Genesis 2:21-22)



- f. What was Adam’s joyful reaction when he saw the woman? (Gen. 2:23)

The woman does not yet have a personal name; she is called “woman” to emphasize that she alone is a counterpart for man.

- g. Although God created male and female animals, birds and fish, there is something very different in God's description of His design for man and woman. As God brought the woman to the man, God established the framework for marriage. What do you learn about marriage from Genesis 2:24-25?
- h. *For personal reflection:* Read Psalm 8. In this psalm, David observes the created order and celebrates the majesty of God. As you contemplate the beauty and complexity of creation, what can you infer about the character and power of God?



My prayer:

*Father, I realize that  
everything that is precious to me  
has been designed and provided by Your loving hand.  
I worship You, heavenly Father,  
for Your eternal power and Your divine nature.*

***God's Glorious Creation***  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 1-2*





## Man's Fall and God's Promise

### Lesson 2 - Genesis 3

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1*

*“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” Genesis 2:15*

*“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Genesis 2:25*



At the end of Genesis chapter 2, God's people (Adam and his wife) are in God's sacred space (the Garden of Eden) enjoying God's presence and blessing. The Hebrew word that describes the beauty of this state of being is *shalom*. In the Bible, *shalom* refers to peace, security, human flourishing, and fulfillment. In the Garden of Eden, the man and the woman experienced the *shalom* that we were created by God to enjoy.

In the beginning, life in the garden was characterized by *harmony*.

- Man enjoyed *harmony* with God: God was present and walked with man
- Man enjoyed *harmony* with nature: plants and animals flourished under man's benevolent stewardship
- Man enjoyed *harmony* with his fellow man: Adam and his wife enjoyed a "one flesh" relationship of openness and trust
- Man lived in *harmony* with himself: life was purposeful and there was no shame, guilt, or regret

God created a good world; He did not create a broken world. And yet, we can easily see that our world today is broken. The sequence of events that occur in chapter 3 reveal how flourishing has given way to futility, and shalom has been spoiled by shame.

1. Read Genesis 3:1-7 *Man's disobedience destroys what was once good*

There is an intruder in the garden. He is described as a serpent, and he is the adversary of God and of God's people.

- a. What is the serpent's devious goal in his verbal exchange with the woman?

- b. How did the serpent dispute the command of God? (Gen. 3:4)



- c. How did the serpent cast doubt on the goodness of God? (Genesis 3:5)

- d. How did the serpent entice the woman to be dissatisfied with what God had provided? (Gen. 3:5)

- e. ***For personal reflection:*** In our 21<sup>st</sup> century American culture, there are arguments against God's goodness that seem to derive directly from the serpent's dialogue with the woman. How may we be equipped so that we will withstand the anti-God persuasion that we and our families will face as we interact with an unbelieving world?

- f. What three characteristics of the fruit enticed the woman so that she took the fruit and ate from it? (Gen. 3:6)

- g. An aspect of the art of Hebrew narrative literature is that sometimes crucial information is withheld until the end of the narrative arc. That seems to be the case here. Where was Adam during this conversation? (see Gen. 3:6) How does this fact change your perception of the event?
- h. In Genesis 2:15, God had given to Adam the responsibility to cultivate and to guard the garden. How was Adam's silent compliance an abdication of his responsibility?
- i. What did Adam do when his wife gave him some of the fruit? (Gen. 3:6)
- j. What was the immediate impact of their disobedience? (Gen. 3:7)
- k. ***For personal reflection:*** Adam and his wife took for themselves something that seemed to be good – but something that God had withheld from them. How may we be vulnerable to sinning in this way?



How does 1 Timothy 6:6-8 provide helpful instruction to us?

2. Read Genesis 3:8-13 ***Distrust, denial, and fear follow disobedience***
- a. When the man and the woman heard the sound of God's presence in the Garden, they tried to hide from Him. How does God's conversation with them demonstrate God's grace and mercy?

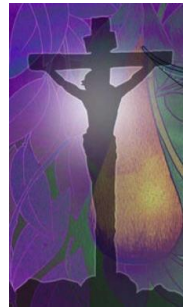
- b. How does their response to God's questions demonstrate how broken they have become? What did they fail to do in their answers to God?

### 3. Read Genesis 3:14-19 *God curses the serpent and the ground*

God pronounces a curse on the serpent – the creature that represents the devil in Satan's war against God and God's people. The curse proclaims the defeat of Satan through mortal conflict with an offspring of the woman.

Genesis 3:15 is the first proclamation of the gospel. God reveals that there will be continuing warfare between humanity and the agents of Satan – a warfare that will be decided by a future human warrior who will conquer Satan, death, and sin. As information about this warrior unfolds in the books of the Old Testament, we come to realize that the warrior is Jesus. Jesus will defeat Satan through His sinless life, death, and resurrection.

- a. How does the promise of Genesis 3:15 testify to the grace of God? What will be the staggering cost for God to fulfill this promise?



- b. How is life going to be different for the woman as a result of the disastrous corruption of mankind in the fall? (Genesis 3:16)

Note: The warning of pain in childbearing refers to the emotional pain and grief that will be the consequence of bearing sin-infected offspring in a sin-infected world. Within a couple of decades, Eve will grieve as she buries her younger son – murdered by the hand of her older son.

- c. How is life going to be different for the man as a result of the devastation wrought by the fall? (Genesis 3:17-19)

4. Read Genesis 3:20-24 *Sinful man may not dwell in God's sanctuary*

a. What new provision did God provide for Adam and Eve? (Genesis 3:21)

b. *For personal reflection:* Look back to the first of this lesson, where you will see the four-fold character of the harmony that man enjoyed in the Garden. How did the fall of man destroy this harmony?

i. How has man's harmony with God been damaged?

ii. How has man's harmony with nature been damaged?

iii. How has man's harmony with his wife been damaged?

iv. How has man's harmony with himself been damaged?

c. God sent Adam and Eve away from the Garden of Eden. What tree must no longer be accessible to sinful man? (Genesis 3:22)



d. Read Revelation 22:1-5. How does this future provision for God's people of faith remind you of the Garden of Eden? What will be restored in this future Kingdom?

My prayer:

*Father, I come before you in sorrow.  
I recognize the sin in my own heart,  
and I am grateful for your grace in sending your Son  
so that I may dwell in Your presence forever.*





*Man's Fall and God's Promise*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 3*



## *Cain and Abel – the First Murder*

### *Lesson 3 - Genesis 4*

Our last lesson portrayed the story of humiliation and hope – the *humiliation* of the man's disobedience and the God-given *hope* of victory to come. The fall of Adam and Eve resulted in their exile from God's sanctuary Garden, but the promise of a coming *snake-crusher* offers hope that there will be redemption and restoration in the future.

#### 1. Read Genesis 4:1-5 *The first seed of the woman fails to honor God*

- a. In the aftermath of Adam and Eve's sin, God gave the promise that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the tempter-serpent. What did Eve say when Cain was born? (Gen. 4:1) What might she have hoped this child would mean for their future?

To an outside observer, both Cain and Abel seem to be followers of God.

- They were raised in the same family of faith
- They had the same knowledge of God's glory and grace
- They both brought offerings to God in order to honor Him

- b. An offering to God is to be an expression of worship from the heart. When Cain and his brother Abel brought offerings to God, God was pleased with Abel and his offering but not pleased with Cain and his offering. It is not simply the gift God sees, but also the giver. What does Cain's hot anger reveal about his heart attitude toward God? (Gen. 4:5)

- c. What would have been a better response from Cain?



- d. **Read Hebrews 11:4** The author of Hebrews commends Abel's *faith* as being the source of Abel's better offering. Both Cain and Abel knew that God exists; both Cain and Abel knew that God is Creator and LORD. How would you explain that somehow Abel's *faith* was better (or more true) than Cain's? How do you see flawed faith demonstrated in Cain's view of God and in his expectations of God?

When our understanding of God is flawed, then our thoughts of Him will be unworthy of Him, and our response to Him will be inappropriate. When our beliefs about God are mistaken, then our expectations of Him will be wrong.

- e. ***For personal reflection:*** How may we develop a richer faith and a more worthy understanding of who God is? Are there disciplines that will help us? Are there relationships we should cultivate? Are there resources that are crucial to informing our faith in God?

2. **Read Genesis 4:6-9** *The seed of the woman commits the first murder*

- a. How is God's admonition to Cain a demonstration of grace? (Gen. 4:6-7)

In Genesis 4:7, sin is described metaphorically as a predatory animal, crouching with focused evil intent. We are to understand that sin is not merely a decision we make; rather, sin is a force that has a deadly life of its own. As it makes headway in your life, it will grow in power over you.



b. *For personal reflection:* What does the image of sin as a predator (Gen. 4:7) teach you about the danger of treating sin lightly?

c. How did Cain respond to God's admonition? (Gen. 4:8)



d. God is omnipresent; He knows what Cain has done. Why did God ask Cain where his brother was? What opportunity was God giving to Cain? (Gen. 4:9)

e. What does Cain's response to God's question reveal about Cain's heart and his character? (Gen. 4:9)

3. Read Gen. 4:10-16 *The seed of the woman is now the seed of the serpent*

a. What does Genesis 4:10 reveal about the heart of God?

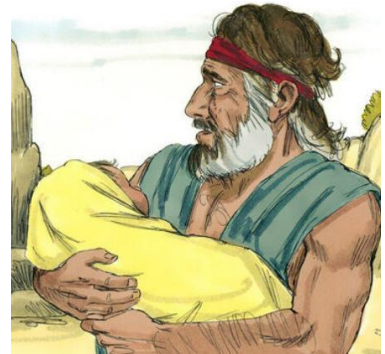
b. What punishment does God impose on Cain? (Gen. 4:12)



c. What protection does God provide for Cain? (Gen. 4:15)

4. Read Genesis 4:25-26 *God revives the line of the seed of the woman*

- a. In Genesis 3:15, God promised that one day a seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. Abel has died and Cain has been banished. How does God provide for His promise of victory over Satan to still be fulfilled? (Gen. 4:25-26)



- b. ***For personal reflection:*** What aspects of God's character and purpose have you learned from the account of Cain and Abel?

My prayer:

*Father, I want to be a person who knows You better  
so that I may worship You more deeply  
and trust You completely.*

*Open my eyes to see Your grace so that I may rest in Your love.*

***Cain and Abel – the First Murder***  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 4*



## *God's Flood and Noah's Rescue*

### *Lesson 4 - Genesis 6-8*

In our last lesson, we studied the sad story of the exile of Cain, and of God's provision of another son, Seth, to the family of Adam and Eve. Chapter 5 of Genesis describes the generations that follow Cain's line, and the generations that follow the line of Seth.

Although we would hope that there would be communities of righteousness among all of these descendants; although we would hope that we would find mercy and kindness flourishing throughout subsequent generations – sadly, that is not what happened. Instead, the earth becomes filled with violence.

#### **1. Read Genesis 6:5-22 *God will cleanse the earth of its wickedness***

- a. What is God's stunning assessment of the character and conduct of mankind in Noah's day? (Genesis 6:5, 11-12)
- b. God decided to send a flood to rid the earth of violence and wickedness. What did God command Noah to do? (Genesis 6:14-17)

- c. What evidence of *faith* do you see in Noah's life and in his attitude toward God? (Genesis 6:22)



- d. What intriguing promise did God make to Noah in Genesis 6:18?
- e. How do you see God's amazing grace in His plan to cleanse the earth?

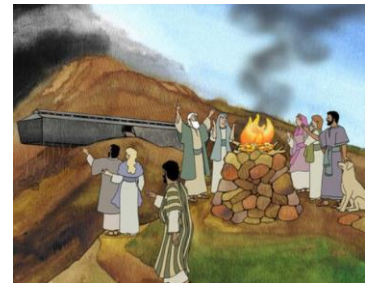
2. Read Genesis 7:1-8:22 *God saves Noah and his family through judgment*

- a. How does the flood demonstrate God's justice and also God's mercy?



In the judgment of the flood, the wicked are swept away, but the faithful who take refuge in the ark are lifted up to salvation in a new world.

- b. What is the first thing Noah did after leaving the ark? (Gen. 8:20)



- c. ***For personal reflection:*** Notice the extravagance of Noah's offering. His offering is an expression of worship, gratitude, and dedication. Consider that we have a tendency to take our salvation for granted. Perhaps we're simply too busy and too distracted to adequately contemplate the salvation we have freely received. Take a moment to come before God and thank Him for His mercy and His lovingkindness toward you.
- d. What is God's description of human nature going forward after the flood has swept away all but one family? (Gen. 8:21)
- e. Mankind is still corrupted by a sinful nature; nevertheless, God in His grace gave an important promise in Genesis 8:21-22. What is this promise, and why is this especially important for Noah and his descendants as they cultivate crops and raise livestock?

f. What other spiritual being is still at work in opposition to God's good purposes for mankind? (Genesis 3:14-15 and Genesis 4:7)

g. The sickness of sin and death has not been solved. What will it take to deal finally and decisively with man's sin problem — what has God promised to provide? (see Genesis 3:15 and the box on p. 10)

3. Read Genesis 9:1-19 *God makes a covenant with all living creatures*

a. Noah and his family emerge from the ark for a new beginning as a new humanity. What is God's good purpose for Noah and his descendants? (see Genesis 9:1 and Genesis 9:7)



b. How does the relationship between man and animals change after the flood? (Gen. 9:2-4)

c. How does God emphasize the value and sanctity of human life? (9:5-6)

d. Notice the repetition of the word **covenant** in Genesis 9:8-17. The term **covenant** refers to a solemn, unbreakable oath. It's a binding promise. How many times does the term **covenant** appear in this section?

e. What covenant promise does God make with Noah and all living creatures? (Genesis 9:11-17)

- f. What sign does God provide to be a reminder of this everlasting promise?



To us, the rainbow seems like a lovely ornamental arch, but the original readers of this story would have understood the bow as being a battle bow — a deadly weapon. God has set His battle bow in the sky — pointed not at earth, but into the heavens — signifying that God's judgment against sin has been set aside, and God's mercy and grace will bring blessing and a second chance for mankind.

- g. Look up Hebrews 11:7, and fill in the spaces below:

*By faith Noah, when warned by God about things not yet seen, in \_\_\_\_\_ built an ark to save his family. By his \_\_\_\_\_ he condemned the world and became heir of the \_\_\_\_\_ that comes by faith.*

- h. ***For personal reflection:*** Noah responded to God in “*reverent fear*.” Does that description connect with you at all? What would our lives look like if there were a sense of *reverent fear* in our thinking about God?

My prayer:

*I want to see You and know You.  
I want to trust You as Noah did.  
I want to serve You and please You for all of my life.  
Amen.*



*God's Flood and Noah's Rescue*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 6-8*



## *God's Covenant with Abraham*

### *Lesson 5 - Genesis 12:1-9 and Genesis 15*

The flood has subsided. Life continues. Sin and death still rule in the lives of men. Generations come and go. The Bible lists ten generations from Adam to Noah, and then ten generations from Noah to Abraham. We pick up the story of God with Abraham.

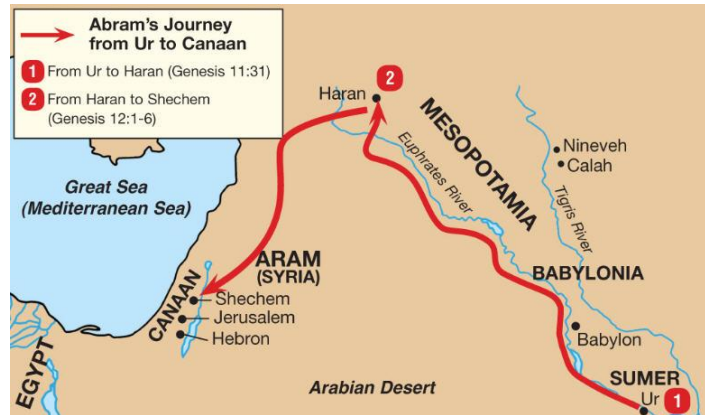
Abraham was originally named *Abram*; he was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. Abram lived in the city of Ur in the region of Babylonia in modern-day Iraq. Abram and his family worshiped pagan gods.

#### 1. Read Genesis 12:1-9 *God calls Abram and offers a promise*

God's covenant promise to Abraham is the theological center of the Old Testament. It reveals the foundational elements of God's unstoppable plan to conquer sin and death through a chosen people who will bring blessing to all peoples on earth. This promise finds its fulfillment ultimately through Jesus and the salvation Jesus brings.

- a. When God appeared to Abram, what did God command Abram to do? (Genesis 12:1)
  
- b. God announced His plan for Abram in Genesis 12:2-3. What seven-fold promise did God make to Abram?
  - 1) I will \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) I will \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) I will \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) So that you will \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) I will \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) Whoever \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) And in you all \_\_\_\_\_

- c. Abram was advanced in years, very prosperous, and well-established in a thoroughly pagan world. Even so, how did Abram respond to God's call? (Genesis 12:4-6)



- d. **For personal reflection:** Abram had no Bible for reference. He had no community support for faith in God. What do you think he experienced in his encounter with God that enabled him to so radically change his life? Is there something that he was able to see about God that we may fail (or refuse) to see? How are we able to come to know the character and glory of God?
- e. What reassurance did God give to Abram on his journey, and how did Abram respond? (Genesis 12:7-8)
- f. **For personal reflection:** God appeared to Abram and told him what God planned for his future and what He wanted Abram to do. Why do you suppose that hardly ever happens in our lives today?

Abram flourished in the land of Canaan for many years. Both Abram and his nephew Lot became rich in livestock as well as silver and gold. In the course of time, their flocks grew so large that the land could not support them both. There was competition between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen for the best pastures for grazing, so Abram and Lot agreed to separate. Abram settled near Hebron (in the Promised Land), and Lot and his herdsmen left the hill country of Canaan and moved to the fertile Jordan River valley near the city of Sodom. (Genesis 13:2-18)

Abram's flocks continued to multiply, and his influence in the region grew. Abram employed many herdsmen, as well as hundreds of trained men who were responsible for digging wells, planting trees, building structures, and protecting Abram's assets.

In the course of time, Abram received a report that his nephew Lot had been taken captive during a military raid on the city of Sodom by an alliance of tribal chieftains. Abram assembled his men, pursued the invaders, defeated them in battle, and rescued Lot. It was an arduous military expedition, and Abram was likely quite fearful that he would now be a target for retribution. How could he protect his family from future skirmishes with nearby tribes? (Genesis 14:1-24)

## 2. Read Genesis 15:1-6 *Abram believes God's promise*

a. After Abram returned to Hebron, God appeared to him in a vision. What specific assurance of protection and blessing did God provide to Abram? (Genesis 15:1)

b. What complaint did Abram make? (Genesis 15:2-3)

c. What promise did God then make to Abram regarding Abram's offspring? (Genesis 15:4-5)



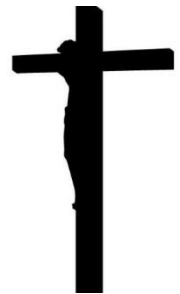
d. The promise of offspring for Abram seemed impossible in view of the advanced age of both Abram and Sarai. Even so, the God of the universe had made Himself known to this man. God had appeared to Abram and God had promised an uncountable number of descendants. What was Abram's response to this incredible promise? (Genesis 15:6)

e. How did God respond to Abram's faith? (Genesis 15:6)

f. Read Galatians 3:6-9 Abram had only a very limited understanding of God's grace and God's good purposes. We have much more information than Abram did. How are we called to respond to the knowledge we have about God?

g. *For personal reflection:* What challenges do we face as we seek to trust God and believe in His good purposes?

h. Read John 3:16-17 and Romans 5:8 How is our Christian faith grounded in more complete revelation than Abram's was?



### 3. Read Genesis 15:7-21 *God guarantees His promises by a covenant*

A *covenant* is a solemn, unbreakable oath. It is a legally binding contract enacted by two parties who agree to the terms.

a. God formalized His promises to Abram in a ceremony that established a *covenant* between God and Abram. How did Abram set the stage for the covenant ceremony? (Genesis 15:9-11)

This procedure seems gruesome to us, but it was a custom of the ancient world. It was a dramatic enactment of the gravity of the covenant promises. The placement of the slaughtered animals creates an aisle. When a person walks down the aisle between the severed bodies, he is saying "*if I fail to keep this covenant, then God is to take my life as the lives of these animals have been taken.*"

b. What terrifying atmospheric condition preceded the appearance of God? (Gen. 15:12)

- c. God had promised that Abram's offspring would possess the land, but what would happen first? What shocking prophecy did God proclaim in Genesis 15:13-16?
- d. The first readers of the book of Genesis were the people of Israel who had been delivered after 400 years of slavery in Egypt. They were traveling in the wilderness toward the Promised Land. How do you think this prophecy would have inspired awe and reverence for God?

- e. How did God ratify the covenant with Abram? (Gen. 15:17-21)



- f. How did God describe the promised land in Genesis 15:18?

- g. God has been faithful throughout the course of history — bringing benefits far beyond anything that Abram could have imagined. Turn ahead to the book of 1 Kings. How does the writer of the book of Kings describe the nation of Israel during the reign of Solomon? (1 Kings 4;20-21)

- h. ***For personal reflection:*** From the line of Abraham we can trace the lives of Moses the Lawgiver, of David the King of Israel, of Elijah the Prophet, and of Jesus the Savior and the Son of God. Truly Abraham is the father of kings, including the King of Kings. Through the line of this ancient nomadic shepherd, God is continuing to bring the blessing of salvation to all nations, even to the ends of the earth. How has this study deepened your understanding of God?

The Abrahamic Covenant is an everlasting covenant, and we as Christians are included in its blessings. The following chart shows the progress of God's fulfillment of this covenant over thousands of years of Bible history.

	Old Testament perspective	New Testament perspective	Ultimate fulfillment: eternity
Land	Israel as a nation living at peace in the Promised Land. <i>Joshua 21:43-45</i>	God's kingdom spreads to the ends of the earth as the gospel is proclaimed. <i>Acts 1:6-8</i>	God's future Kingdom fills the new heavens and new earth. <i>2 Peter 3:13</i> <i>Revelation 21:1</i>
Seed	Abraham's descendants through Jacob/Israel.	Those who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed. <i>Galatians 3:29</i>	Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. <i>Revelation 21:24-27</i>
Blessing	God's presence in the tabernacle and temple. <i>Exodus 40:34-38</i>	God's presence as the indwelling Holy Spirit. <i>Ephesians 1:13-14</i>	God will dwell with man in the New Jerusalem. <i>Revelation 21:3</i>

My prayer:

*Holy LORD, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!  
You are faithful to your promises, and I can trust You for my future..  
Help me see You more clearly and worship You more fully.  
Amen.*



***God's Covenant with Abraham***  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 12:1-9 and Genesis 15*



## *Sarah's Decision and Hagar's Rescue*

### Lesson 6 - Genesis 16

God promised Abram that his offspring would be as innumerable as the stars, but after years of waiting, Abram still had no son. Abram was 85 years old, and his wife Sarai was 75. It seemed utterly impossible that the promised seed could come from Sarai.

1. Read Genesis 16:1-6 *There is a problem, but Sarai has a solution*
  - a. Look back at God's promise to Abram in Genesis 15:4. When God promised that Abram would have a son, what detail did God *not* specify?
  - b. Who did Sarai blame for her inability to bear children? (Genesis 16:2)
  - c. Since bearing a child seemed impossible, Sarai devised her own strategy for obtaining the promised seed. What did Sarai's action demonstrate about her incorrect and inadequate understanding of God?
  - d. What solution did Sarai propose? (Gen. 16:2)



Sarai's plan was a culturally accepted practice in parts of the ancient Near East; nevertheless, the custom was *not* God's intention for marriage (see Gen. 2:24), and it would not provide the promised seed.

e. What was Abram's response to the frustration and complaint of his wife?  
(Genesis 16:2-3)

f. How did the plan of Abraham and Sarah seem to be successful?  
(Gen. 16:4)

g. How did the decisions of Abraham and Sarah add to the tension and discord in the household?  
(Gen. 16:4-5)



h. Sarai complained that "wrong" had been done to her. Who did she blame for the wrong she believed she had suffered? (Gen. 16:5)

i. ***For personal reflection:*** We can all think of times when we took matters into our own hands and made decisions we later came to regret. As you think on those times, what sorts of things should you have done to avoid making a bad decision?

j. The narrative takes a dark turn with Genesis 16:6. Consider the heartless way that Hagar has been treated from the very beginning until this moment. She is a pregnant, foreign woman who flees into the wilderness. What hope does she have for her child and for her future?

2. Read Genesis 16:7-16 *God sees Hagar and promises a lasting legacy*

- a. How does God intervene in Hagar's life?  
What does He tell her to do, and what  
promise does He make to her?

(Genesis 16:7-10)

- b. What information does God reveal  
about Hagar's son? (Genesis 16:11-12)



- c. Consider that God commanded Hagar to return to the very family that  
had abused her. How does Hagar's response demonstrate her faith and  
her new trust in the "God who sees"? (Genesis 16:13-16)

- d. What do you learn about the character of God from His treatment of  
Hagar?

- e. ***For personal reflection:*** Hagar was a servant with no rights and no  
status in Abraham's household. She was not a part of the covenant  
family. Yet she is a human being; she bears the image of God, and God  
cares intensely about how she has been treated. How should we reflect  
God's heart in our concern for those who are disadvantaged in our  
nation?

My prayer:

*Father, You are the God who sees me.  
You care for me and provide for me.  
I can trust you with my life.  
Amen.*



*Sarah's Decision and Hagar's Rescue*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 16*





## *God Judges Sodom and Rescues Lot*

### *Lesson 7 - Genesis 17-19*

#### 1. Read Genesis 17:1-27 *God designates circumcision as the sign of covenant*

Years later, when Abram was 99 years old, God appeared again to Abram to re-affirm His covenant promises of land, seed (offspring), and blessing.

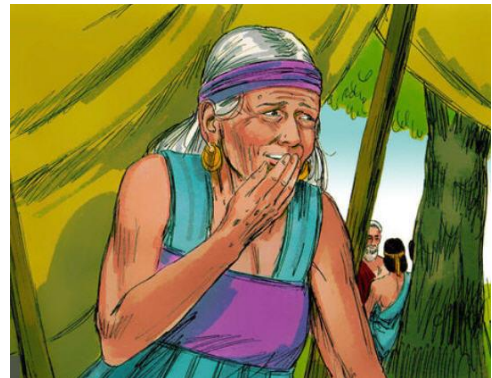
- a. What new information does God give to Abram? (Gen. 17:1-8)
  - i. About the promise of offspring?
  - ii. About the promise of land?
  - iii. About the duration of the covenant?
- b. Just as a wedding ring is the sign of the covenant of marriage; even so, there is usually a sign given to denote a Biblical covenant. What does God ordain as the sign of the covenant with Abraham? (Gen. 17:9-11)
- c. God gives Abram and Sarai new names — they are to be called Abraham and Sarah. What wonderful promise does God make regarding Sarah—and what is Abraham's response? (17:16-17)
- d. What are God's good purposes for Isaac and for Ishmael? (Gen. 17:19-21)
- e. How does Abraham respond in faith to God's latest revelation about the covenant? (Genesis 17:22-27)



## 2. Read Genesis 18:1-15 *God brings His message of blessing to Sarah*

- a. As Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent one day, three mysterious visitors arrived. Hospitality was a compelling obligation in the ancient world, so Abraham organized the provision of refreshment and an extravagant meal for the visitors. (Genesis 18:1-8)

The text initially offers no clue that any one of the visitors was distinguishable from the others, but then in verse 10, one of them revealed something that only God could know, and only God had the authority to say. This man is an appearance of the LORD. What did God proclaim in Sarah's hearing about His plan for Sarah's future? (Gen. 18:10)



- b. What was Sarah's silent response, and what did her response reveal about her belief? (Gen. 18:12)
- c. In the ancient world it would have been inappropriate for a man to speak directly to a woman who was not in his clan. God continued to address Abraham, but His message was for Sarah. How did God gently rebuke Sarah and affirm His glorious plans for her? (Gen. 18:13-14)
- d. ***For personal reflection:*** We are privileged to live in a time and in a country where women are regarded with honor in their own right, but that was not the case in the ancient world. In Sarah's day, a woman's value was determined by how many sons she could produce. What do you learn about God from this account of His tenderness toward Sarah and His kindness to affirm His covenant plans to her? Can you think of other accounts in the Bible where God has used people of low regard in the culture to accomplish great things for His Kingdom?

3. Read Genesis 18:16-33 *Abraham appeals for justice and mercy*

- a. God chose to reveal to Abraham His plan to judge the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. What lesson does God intend for Abraham to learn regarding sin and righteousness? (see Genesis 18:19)
- b. What has provoked God's concern about the wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah? (Genesis 18:20)
- c. How would it be a failure of justice if God simply overlooked or tolerated the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah?
- d. Abraham poses a philosophical question to God in Gen. 18:23. "*Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?*" How would it be unjust if God destroyed righteous people along with the wicked?

Abraham interceded for Sodom, even though Sodom was the enemy of God's people Israel. Centuries later, Jesus interceded for His enemies: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

Through a sequence of questions, Abraham explored the boundaries of how many righteous people would be sufficient to cause God to set aside His judgment and spare these cities. Abraham was not bargaining with God; rather, he was affirming the principle of God's justice: God will not punish the righteous along with the wicked.

- e. If God finds ten righteous people in Sodom, what will He do? (Gen. 18:32)
- f. Abraham did not pursue the line of questioning further, but the reader is left to wonder...what if there is just one? Will God hold back His judgment if there is *one* righteous person? How does righteous life of Jesus provide an answer to that question?

#### 4. Read Genesis 19:1-29 *God destroys Sodom and rescues Lot*

The two angels who were sent into Sodom encountered Abraham's nephew Lot, who was sitting in the gate of the city. Lot persuaded them to spend the night in Lot's home and enjoy his hospitality.

- a. That night a violent mob of men surrounded Lot's home.
  - i. Who participated in the assault on Lot's home? (Gen. 19:4)
  - ii. What did the mob demand? (Gen. 19:5)
  - iii. What was Lot's proposal to satisfy the mob's lust? (Gen. 19:8)
  - iv. How did the men of Sodom react to Lot's pleas? (Gen. 19:9)
  - v. How did the angels save Lot and neutralize the mob? (Gen. 19:10-11)
- b. What do you learn about Lot's character from his actions that night?
- c. How were Lot and his wife less than cooperative with their rescue? (Gen. 19:15-26)



- d. How does Lot's rescue demonstrate the awe-inspiring *mercy* of God?

My Prayer:

*Father, You are the God of lovingkindness and mercy.  
Thank You for sending your Son to rescue us from sin and judgment.  
Amen.*

*God Judges Sodom and Rescues Lot*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 17-19*



## *Abraham Offers His Beloved Son, Isaac*

### *Lesson 8 - Genesis 21-22*

#### 1. Read Genesis 21:1-21 *Isaac is born and Ishmael departs*

- a. How did God prove faithful to His promise to Abraham? (Gen. 21:1-2)
- b. How was Abraham faithfully obedient to God? (Gen. 21:3-4)
- c. What tension was evident in the household between Sarah and Ishmael? (Gen. 21:8-10)
- d. Sarah demanded that Abraham send Hagar and Ismael away. What was Abraham's reaction to Sarah's demand? (Gen. 21:11)
- e. We are surprised to read that God told Abraham to comply with Sarah's request. Why did God allow this cruel eviction to occur? (Gen. 21:13, 20)

When disaster happens, we have no idea what God is doing, yet we hold firm to the confidence that God is in control and God is good.

On that terrible day when Jesus suffered and died, those who mourned at the foot of the cross could not have imagined what good could ever come of this. They would have had no idea that Jesus' horrible death was the means by which the power of sin and death was broken, and eternal life was secured for all who place their trust in the risen Christ. The cross seemed to be defeat, but it was instead a glorious victory.

f. ***For personal reflection:*** Each one of us has dealt with terrible sorrow or deep disappointment. As we continue our lives in this fallen world, there will be more pain and loss to come. How can what we know about God strengthen us to endure suffering and emerge with confidence and joy?

g. Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away, and they wandered in the wilderness until their provisions were depleted. How did God rescue them and provide for them? (Gen. 21:17-21)



h. God cares about the poor, the needy, the immigrant, and the outcast. Can you think of other examples from the Bible of God's mercy in rescuing the helpless?

## 2. Read Genesis 22:1-18: *Abraham demonstrates his faith and trust in God*

We come this week to the most shocking and riveting event in Abraham's life. The Bible calls it a test. God tests Abraham at this point. The test is not whether Abraham will obey God; the test is more about ***why*** Abraham obeys God. Does Abraham obey God because that's the behavior that is most advantageous for Abraham, or does Abraham obey God because he surrenders everything in view of the grace and goodness of God?

a. What did God tell Abraham to do? (Genesis 22:1-2)

The broad concept of *sacrifice* is something of great value that is fully surrendered to God for God's good purposes. A *burnt offering* is an offering – usually a lamb – that is burned on an altar as an act of worship.



- b. How did Abraham respond to God's terrifying command? (Gen. 22:3-5)

As Abraham trudged up the mountain with his beloved son, what did he know about God? What do we know about God? Check all that apply.

- ☐ God has formally committed Himself to fulfill His promises to Abraham – Genesis 15:17-18
  - ☐ God has promised that His covenant will be accomplished through Isaac – Genesis 17:19
  - ☐ God is merciful. He sees the plight of the outcast and hears their cries of despair – Genesis 21:17-20
  - ☐ God governs the course of history and the fate of nations – Genesis 15:13-14
  - ☐ God judges the wicked, but delivers the righteous – Genesis 19:29
  - ☐ God protects His people; He is their shield – Genesis 15:1
  - ☐ God is able to bring life out of death - Hebrews 11:11-12,17-19
  - ☐ God takes no pleasure in human sacrifice – Gen. 9:5-6, Ezekiel 18:32
- c. Read Hebrews 11:17-19 along with Genesis 22:7-8. How is Abraham's faith in God's promise demonstrated by his words and actions?

- d. When they arrived at the appointed place, what did Abraham do to prepare the sacrificial offering? (Genesis 22:9-10)



- e. ***For deeper thought and personal reflection:*** Isaac was the most precious element in Abraham's life. Isaac was the means by which God's covenant promises would be realized. Abraham did not know what God would do. He did not know how this day would end. Even so, Abraham's willingness to surrender his son was sincere and unwavering. What is your thinking about how Abraham was able to offer his beloved son to the God of the covenant? How would you describe Abraham's love for God? What did he believe about God?

- f. On the mountain, God provided a substitute sacrifice for the son of promise. What was God's proclamation about Abraham's reverence and wholehearted devotion to God? (Genesis 22:12)



- g. ***For personal reflection:*** Read 1 John 4:9-10 and Romans 5:6-8. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, whom he loved, as an offering of love for God. Centuries later, God demonstrated His own love for us by sacrificing His only son Jesus, whom He loved, so that we may receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

In our study, we have agonized with Abraham as he contemplated sacrificing his son. We have felt the crushing loss that it would be for him. Now take a moment to consider the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf and the overwhelming love of God that provided it for us.

Take a moment to offer this prayer of gratitude to God:

*Father God,  
Now I know that You love me,  
because You did not withhold Your Son, Your only Son, from me.  
Father, shape my heart to love You more.*

*Abraham Offers His Beloved Son, Isaac*  
*Lecture Notes 8 - Genesis 21-22*



## *Isaac Marries Rebekah*

### *Lesson 9 - Genesis 24-26*

In our study thus far we've seen tragedy and triumph. We've seen the tragedy of the fall — that God created a perfect universe, but man's rebellion corrupted our world with sin and death. We've seen God's prophecy of triumph — that victory over sin and death will be achieved by a future warrior who will defeat God's enemy and restore perfection and joy.

In Genesis 15, God made a promise that He will bring blessing to all nations through the descendants of one man — Abraham. The promise seems precarious, tied as it is to the decisions and character of a flawed man and his wavering faith, but God demonstrates His power to bring about His good purposes even when the people of faith behave badly. The fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham will come in the Person of our Savior, Jesus.

#### 1. Read Genesis 24 *God provides His chosen bride for Isaac*

- a. In keeping with the God's covenant promise to Abraham, God continued to bless Abraham in all things. (24:1) God had promised that Abraham would have many descendants, and it was time for Isaac to find a bride. Where did Abraham send his servant to get a wife for Isaac? (Gen. 24:1-4)

- b. Abraham had two major concerns that he emphasized in his instructions to his servant. (Gen. 24:3-7) What are these concerns, and why are these concerns important in the continuation of God's covenant promises through Isaac?



- c. Abraham's faithful servant carried a tremendous responsibility. The woman he must find for Isaac will be the matriarch of the line of promise, and she must be from Abraham's family (Gen.24:3). What did the servant ask of God in order to know God's choice for Isaac's wife? (Gen. 24:12-14)

A camel that has gone a few days without water can drink as much as twenty-five gallons. Abraham's servant had brought ten camels with him. It was absurd that any young girl would have offered to draw water for ten camels. The sign the servant asked for would be a striking indication of God's provision in answer to his prayer.

- d. When Rebekah appeared and began to water his camels, what was the servant's initial response? (Gen. 24:21)

- e. What additional information was needed in order to be confident that this young girl was the wife that God had chosen? (Gen. 24:24)

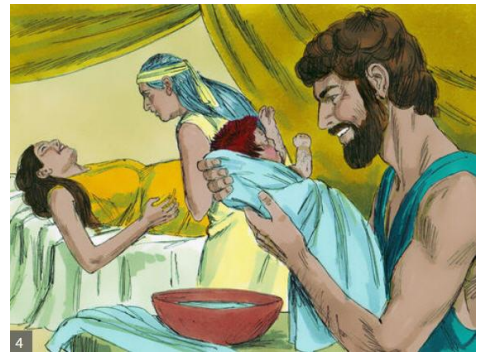


- f. What was the servant's response to God's gracious and swift answer to his prayer? (Gen. 24:26-27)
- g. **For personal reflection:** It is often only in retrospect that we can see how God has been shaping our lives, answering our prayers, and providing what we need. Think back over the events of your life history. Take a moment to thank God for His steadfast love in your life.
- h. What does the text emphasize repeatedly about Rebekah's lineage? (Gen. 24:15,24,48) Why do you think this is important? (See Gen. 9:25-27)

- i. ***For personal reflection:*** We often live our lives worried about so many things. How does our study of Genesis this year give you confidence about God's control over the course of history? Perhaps there is anxiety you are carrying today about situations you cannot control. Take a moment to thank God for the fact that He is at work. He is able to accomplish His good purposes. You can trust Him for your life.

## 2. Read Genesis 25:19-28 *God provides sons for Isaac*

- a. After twenty years of infertility, God answered Isaac's prayers and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. It was a difficult pregnancy. What did God reveal to Rebekah about her pregnancy? (Gen. 25:23)



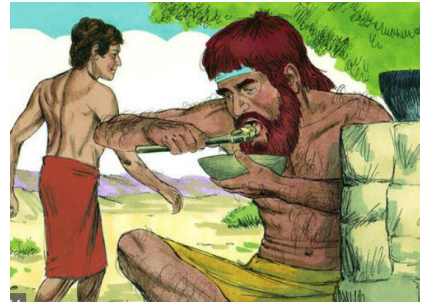
- b. Which of the twins was first-born? How are the twins different from one another? (Gen. 25:25-27)

In the ancient world, the law of primogeniture determined that the first-born son received a double share of the inheritance, as well as leadership of the family after the father's death. The other sons would remain on the land and work together in cultivating the crops and caring for the animals. The first-born son was to lead and to provide for the rest of the family.

- c. How does the ancient law of primogeniture conflict with the prophecy that God gave to Rebekah in Genesis 25:23?
- d. What unhealthy dynamic developed in this family? How could this be an obstacle to the fulfillment of the covenant? (Gen. 25:27-28)

3. Read Genesis 25:29-34 *Esau has contempt for his birthright and privilege*

- a. One day Esau came in from working in the field and found his brother cooking stew. Esau asked for stew; Jacob demanded that Esau sell him his birthright. What does this interaction reveal about the relationship between the brothers?



- b. What does it reveal about Esau's priorities?
- c. What does it reveal about Jacob's character?
- d. What statement is given in Genesis 25:34 that summarizes Esau's commitment to the covenant and to the God of the covenant? (Gen. 25:34)

4. Read Genesis 26:1-6, 12-25 *God confirms His covenant with Isaac*

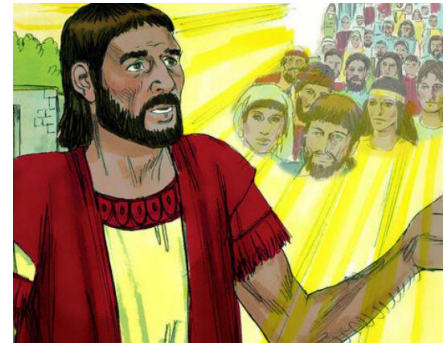
During a time of famine, Isaac and his family headed toward Egypt, where the fertile Nile River valley was a promising place for grazing sheep and cattle. God appeared to Isaac and told him not to go to Egypt, but to remain in Gerar, in the territory of the Philistines.

- a. What promise did God make to Isaac? Notice the familiar elements of land, offspring (seed), and blessing. (Genesis 26:3-5)
- Land -
  - Offspring -
  - Blessing -



- b. Isaac obeyed God and remained for a time in Gerar. How did God cause Isaac to prosper during famine? (Gen. 26:12-14)
- c. How did Isaac's disputes with the herdsmen of Gerar result in his returning to the land of Canaan (to Beersheba)? (Gen. 26:15-22)

- d. Once Isaac was back in the Promised Land, that very night God appeared to Isaac. What promise did God make to Isaac that night? (Gen. 26:24)



- e. How did Isaac respond? (Gen. 26:24-25)
- f. ***For personal reflection:*** Over 2000 years before the time of Christ, God was molding and shaping the events of history to ensure that the promised offspring of Abraham – Jesus – would be born in the promised land and from the promised lineage. If God can do that, then surely He can manage the concerns of today. Are there issues in your life that you can entrust to Him today?

My prayer:

*Father, You are my Rock and my salvation.  
Calm my fears and turn my heart toward You.  
I worship You, Holy Father, and trust You for my future.*



*Isaac Marries Rebekah*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 24-26*



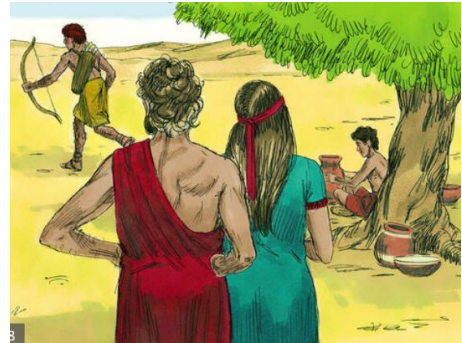
## ***Jacob Cheats Esau***

*Lesson 10 - Genesis 26:34-28:5*

**1. For review, read Genesis 25:21-28 *Jealousy corrupts the family of Isaac***

- a. Before Rebekah's twins were born, what prophecy had God spoken about the destiny of these sons? (Look back at Genesis 25:22-23)

- b. What harbinger of trouble in the family did you see in the last lesson, in Genesis 25:27-28?



- c. In our previous lesson we saw Abraham's careful planning in his provision of a bride for Isaac. Abraham was determined that Isaac not marry a Canaanite woman. In contrast, what do you observe about Esau's choices for marriage? How did Esau's marriages affect his family? (See Genesis 26:34-35)

**2. Read Genesis 27:1-40 *Rebekah and Jacob put the covenant at risk***

- a. There are other accounts in Genesis of a father's gathering all of his sons together to pronounce particular blessings on each son. In this account, only Esau is summoned to receive the blessing from Isaac. What does this reveal about Isaac's relationship with his sons? (Gen. 27:1-4)
- b. What is Rebekah's scheme to hijack the blessing? (Gen. 27:5-10)

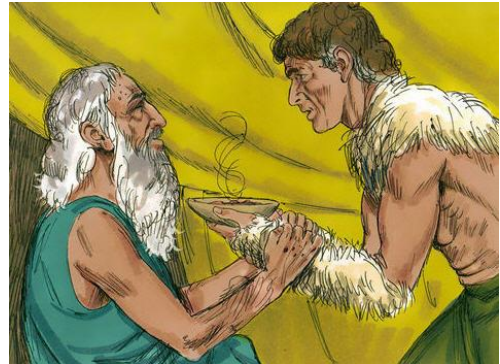
c. What is Jacob's primary concern when his mother tells him of her plan to deceive her husband and trick him into blessing Jacob rather than Esau? (Gen. 27:11-12) What does this reveal about his lack of integrity?

d. When Jacob came to his father pretending to be Esau, Isaac seemed suspicious at first. How did Jacob shamelessly lie to his father in Gen. 27:18-25?

i. In Gen. 27:19

ii. In Gen. 27:20

iii. In Gen. 27:24



The elements of Isaac's blessing include:

- Flourishing and abundance from the land (Gen.27:28)
- Sovereign rule over nations and family (Gen. 27:29)
- Blessings from God provided through this son (Gen. 27:29)

e. Jacob's deliberate deceit shocks our sense of decency. What was Isaac's reaction when he realized that he had been tricked? (Gen.27:33)

We find this confusing from our 21<sup>st</sup> century Western perspective. Why doesn't Isaac simply say, *"No way! I take it all back! This blessing was to be for Esau and I refuse to let it stand!"* Although there's no explicit explanation given about the specific power of the patriarchal blessing; nevertheless, we see that this blessing was regarded as deeply important by both father and sons. Although it is not the same as a prophetic message from God, it represents the patriarch's prayer before God for the destiny of the sons. Once spoken, this blessing cannot be revoked.

- f. As you read the account of Esau's discovery that his blessing had been given to Jacob, what is your emotional response to this tragic loss for Esau? Where do your sympathies lie? (You may have more than one person in mind). Why do you sympathize with them? (Gen. 27:34-38)

This family began so well:

- Isaac is the heir of the Abrahamic Covenant
- He had been the obedient son who climbed the altar for his father
- Rebekah had been chosen by God as the perfect wife for Isaac
- For the first 20 years they had prosperity and blessing from God
- They prayed for 20 years for a son and God gave them two

- g. Consider how Isaac's family is now so terribly divided. As you reflect on their lives, what is your best guess about areas where Isaac and Rebekah may have gone wrong? Where do their highest priorities seem to lie?
- h. Where do they seem to have neglected their responsibilities? How have they betrayed one another? How have they betrayed God?
- i. ***For personal reflection:*** In the busyness of our lives, it is easy to neglect the most important elements of life as we pursue goals that are really only secondary concerns. As you think about your own life, are there areas of crucial importance that you are neglecting? Are there changes you need to make in your schedule so that you can effectively serve your highest-priority relationships? Jot down some thoughts here.

We pray for our children every day, but sometimes we are more focused on their physical well-being than on their spiritual well-being.

Consider this adaptation of the late Dr. John Stott's personal daily prayer:

Father, I pray that this day, my children will live in Your presence  
and please You more and more.

Jesus, I pray that this day, my children will choose  
to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow You.

Holy Spirit, I pray that this day, You will fill my children with Yourself  
and cause Your fruit to ripen in them:

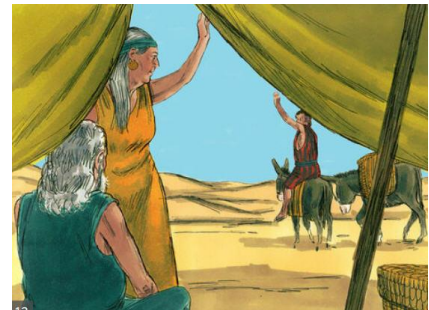
love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness,  
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Amen.

3. Read Genesis 27:41-28:5 *Jacob leaves to save his life and find a wife*

a. Why was Rebekah desperate to send Jacob away? (Gen. 27:41-43)

b. Remember the covenant promises of land, offspring, and blessing (see Gen. 26:3-5). How do the promises seem to be at risk, given Jacob's character and his situation?



c. How may Jacob's exile to Paddan Aram serve to advance the covenant promises by protecting Jacob from making an unsuitable marriage?

*Father, it gives me great comfort to know  
that Your good purposes will be accomplished  
even when I fail to follow You as I should.  
You are faithful even when I am not.*



## ***Jacob Cheats Esau***

*Lecture Notes - Genesis 26:34-28:5*



## Jacob's Dream

### Lesson 11 - Genesis 28:10-29:30

The survival of the chosen covenant family seems to be in jeopardy.

- The chosen heir of the covenant promises is being sent away from the *land* of promise.
- The chosen heir of the covenant has demonstrated no apparent faith or reliance on the God of the Covenant.
- The chosen heir of the covenant is a man of deplorable character.

#### 1. Read Genesis 28:10-17 *God affirms His covenant promises to Jacob*

- a. Jacob left his home and set out on a 550-mile journey to Rebekah's family in Aram (Syria). After a few days, Jacob stopped to sleep in a certain place and while he slept, God appeared to him in a dream. In this dream Jacob saw a stairway stretching from earth to heaven.



- What did Jacob see on the stairway? (Gen. 28:12)
- The LORD appeared above Jacob; how did God identify Himself? (Gen. 28:13)
- How did God affirm the covenant promises for Jacob? (28:13-15)
  - Land -
  - Offspring -
  - Blessing -

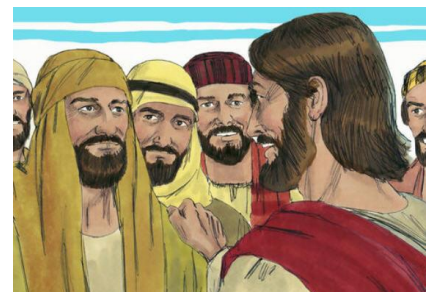
- b. What was Jacob's conclusion as he pondered the dream? (Gen. 28:16-17)

Prior to this night, Jacob seemed to have little regard for God. Even in his desperate departure, you don't see Jacob crying out to God for mercy; you don't see Jacob praying to God for help. Heaven was a closed door – irrelevant to Jacob.

Even so, God in His *grace* came to Jacob this night and gave him a vision of the heavenly realm. Jacob realized that there is a spiritual dimension he cannot see, and there is continual interaction between heaven and earth, as God's messengers come and go, carrying out the decrees of God.

- c. ***For personal reflection:*** Sometimes we are discouraged as we observe the suffering and wickedness in the world. We begin to think that God is remote. He doesn't care. He's not involved. Jacob's vision in Genesis 28:12 reveals that our thinking is wrong. If our eyes could see into the spiritual dimension, we would see that God's sovereign power is everywhere. He's working. He's on the move. He is on track to accomplish His good purposes. How does this enlarge your view of God?

- d. We may learn more about this vision of access into heaven from Jesus' conversation with Nathanael in John 1:47-51. What does Jesus say about Himself in John 1:51? What does Jesus mean by this claim? See also John 14:6.



Jacob saw the stairway and concluded that this was a sacred spot on earth—a place where one could find access to heaven. Jesus corrects that notion by proclaiming that access to heaven is not at a *place*, it is by a *Person* – the Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose for our salvation.

- e. Jacob's life had fallen apart. He had no friends and no allies. He was unprotected; he had no defenses as he traveled through wilderness. He had no resources; he was impoverished. When the LORD spoke to Jacob, He promised to be for Jacob all that he needed. How did God's promises in Gen. 28:15 address each of Jacob's needs?
  - i. Jacob had no friend or ally
  - ii. Jacob had no protection
  - iii. Jacob had no resources
- f. ***For personal reflection:*** Read Psalm 139:1-12. Jacob believed that he was alone on his journey, but he was not alone. God was with him, even though Jacob wasn't aware of it. Perhaps you have felt alone as you tackle personal challenges in your life. Take a moment to jot down a few issues that are recurring worries for you. Now think through these things with an awareness that God is with you; God loves you; and God knows exactly what you need. Will you trust Him?

2. Read Genesis 28:18-22 *Jacob acknowledges the blessing of God*

- a. What was Jacob's response to the LORD the next morning after his encounter with the God of the Covenant? (Gen. 28:18-22)
- b. Jacob's vow seems to dictate to God the terms of Jacob's commitment to Him. What does this scene tell you about Jacob's faith? What does it tell you about God and His grace? (Gen. 28:20-22)



### 3. Read Genesis 29:1-30 *Jacob marries Leah and Rachel*

- a. This account of a providential meeting at a well is reminiscent of Abraham's servant's discovery of Rebekah. How are these events similar? How are they different? (Gen. 24:10-28; Gen. 29:1-12)

- b. What contractual agreement did Jacob make with Rachel's father Laban? (Gen. 29:18-20)

- c. How did Laban trick Jacob? (Gen. 29:23-25)



- d. Jacob the deceiver has met his match in the deceptive schemes of Laban, and we may find ourselves somewhat gratified at the irony of the situation. It seems like poetic justice. List as many parallels as you can between Jacob's deception of Isaac and Laban's deception of Jacob. (Gen. 27:18-29; Gen. 29:21-25)

Jacob was a scoundrel, yet God in His *grace* chose to establish him as the patriarch of God's people Israel.

My prayer:

*Father, your grace is indeed amazing.  
Thank you for your infinite patience with me.  
Thank you that your grace is greater than all my sin.*

## ***Jacob's Dream***

*Lecture Notes - Genesis 28:10-29:30*





## *Leah and Rachel's Struggle*

### *Lesson 12 - Genesis 29-30:24*

Last week we read about Laban's deceitful treatment of Jacob. Jacob had worked seven years for the hand of Rachel. After an elaborate time of feasting and celebration, Jacob waited in his darkened tent for his bride to be delivered to him. When the heavily-veiled woman quietly entered in the dark, he assumed she was Rachel. He embraced her and slept with her, but in the light of morning he realized — behold! It was Leah!

We feel sorry for Jacob because he was cheated by Laban; nevertheless, this was a devastating and humiliating experience for Leah as well.

#### 1. Read Genesis 29:15-30 *Leah is married to a man who doesn't want her*

a. How are the two sisters described in Gen. 29:16-17?

b. Leah lived in the shadow of a strikingly beautiful younger sister. Leah's best hope for future happiness depended on her marriage. Her father Laban was wealthy; she certainly hoped that he would secure a favorable match for her.



Think about Leah's circumstances on her wedding night. What aspects of this deception were personally crushing to Leah?

#### 2. Read Genesis 29:31-35 *Leah gives birth to sons and names them*

a. Leah had just one week to be married to Jacob before he took his beloved Rachel as his second (but preferred) bride. How did God demonstrate His care for overlooked and unloved Leah? (Gen. 29:31-32)

- b. In the culture of that day, a woman's highest achievement would be to give birth to a multitude of sons. God enabled Leah to do just that. As we observe Leah's choice of names for each of her first four sons, we see her progress in her understanding and in her faith<sup>1</sup>.

Name	Meaning	Leah's thinking	Leah's desperate hope
Reuben	See! A son!	The LORD has seen my misery	Surely my husband will love me now
Simeon	Heard...	The LORD has heard that I am not loved	...my husband will love me...
Levi	Attached	My husband will become attached to me	My husband will be attached to me as the mother of three sons
Judah	Praise	<i><b>This time</b></i> I will praise the LORD	

What does this chart reveal about the progression in Leah's thinking and in her frame of mind?



- c. ***For personal reflection:*** Perhaps there have been unfulfilled longings in your life — longings that may never be realized. Make a note of any unrealized desires that may be robbing you of joy day after day. You may want to give these longings over to God to handle as He sees fit. If you change your focus from what you do ***not*** have to what you ***have***, then in the process you may be able to proclaim, with Leah, “*this time, I will praise the LORD.*”

<sup>1</sup> Alice P. Mathews, *A Woman God Can Use* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1990), 24-26

### 3. Read Genesis 30:1-13 *The sisters compete in a contest of childbearing*

- a. Rachel expressed bitter resentment over her inability to conceive a child. How did Jacob react; how did he respond to her? (Gen. 30:1-2)
- b. How did Jacob's response differ from Isaac's response to Rebekah's infertility in Genesis 25:21?
- c. What was Rachel's strategy for providing Jacob with a son? (Gen. 30:3-4)
- d. Rachel became a mother by using her handmaiden as a surrogate. Consider the following chart: how did Rachel's perspective on her sons differ from Leah's perspective on her own sons? (Gen. 30:5-8)



Name	Meaning	Rachel's thinking	Rachel's goal
Dan	Judge	God has vindicated me	To overcome the problem of infertility
Naphtali	My struggle	I have been wrestling with my sister, and now I have prevailed	To compete with her sister in producing sons

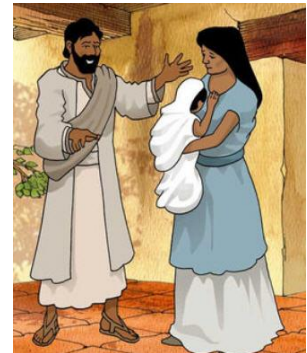
- e. Leah followed the same strategy that Rachel had adopted, and two sons were born by surrogate. What is notable about Leah's thinking?

Name	Meaning	Leah's thinking	Leah's goal
Gad	Fortune	What good fortune!	---
Asher	Happy	How happy I am!	---

4. Read Genesis 30:14-24 *God's people Israel will comprise twelve tribes*

- a. The rivalry between the two sisters intensified. When Leah obtained some mandrakes (an aphrodisiac plant) in the field, Rachel wanted the mandrakes. What bargain did Leah make? (Gen. 30:15-16)
- b. What was the result of the bargain for Leah? (Gen. 30:17)
- c. Leah named her son Issachar, which means *wages*. How did she (wrongly) interpret the significance of this precious gift from God? (Gen. 30:18) Why was she wrong? (Genesis 2:24)
- d. Leah gave birth to her sixth son, Zebulun (meaning *honor*). What was her hope with Zebulun's birth? How is Leah's hope now different from her thinking when Reuben was born? (Gen. 29:32; 30:20)

- e. Finally Rachel was able to bear a son for Jacob. She gave him the name Joseph, meaning "*may He add.*" How does this name reveal her continued state of discontent?



Rachel did give birth to one more son, but she proclaimed the child to be the "*son of her sorrow,*" and she died in childbirth. Rachel was the beautiful woman who enjoyed the undying love of her husband, but she lived her life in frustration, resentment, and bitter sorrow.

Leah was the unloved, unwanted wife, but Leah was the woman God used to bring rich blessing for Israel. Leah gave birth to Judah, from whom came Israel's greatest king, David. Also from Judah came the Lion of the tribe of Judah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Jacob's Twelve Sons

<i>Mother</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<b>Leah</b>	Reuben	See! A Son!
	Simeon	Heard
	Levi	Attached
	Judah	Praise
<b>Bilhah</b>	Dan	Judge
	Naphtali	My struggle
<b>Zilpah</b>	Gad	Fortune
	Asher	Happy
<b>Leah</b>	Issachar	Wages
	Zebulun	Honor
<b>Rachel</b>	Joseph	May He add
	Ben-oni ->	Son of my sorrow ->
	Benjamin	Son of my right hand

- f. *For personal reflection:* It's easy to allow disappointments and regrets to dominate our thinking. Our prayers may be filled with demands for what we *want* rather than gratitude for what we *have*. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:18 reveal about God's will?

Take a moment to list at least six things that you are truly grateful for. Think about how God has been the source of these good gifts, and give Him thanks for His goodness in your life.

*Father, You provide everything I need  
for life and godliness.  
Help me turn away from fear and rest in Your love.  
Amen*



*Leah and Rachel's Struggle*  
*Lecture Notes 12 - Genesis 29-30:24*





## *Jacob Wrestles with God*

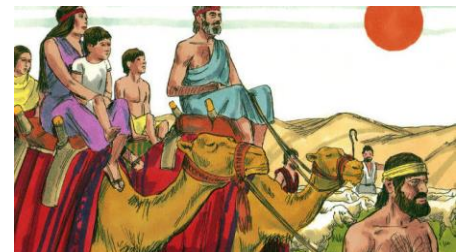
### *Lesson 13 - Genesis 31-35*

God's covenant with Abraham provided the framework for bringing salvation through a future warrior (promised in Genesis 3:15) who would crush the head of Satan and conquer sin and death. The Abrahamic Covenant was the frame of reference by which Jesus would come to give His life to bring blessing and redemption to all peoples.

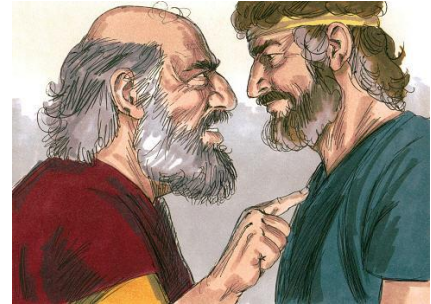
By the end of Genesis chapter 30, the covenant promises seem to be at risk. Jacob, God's covenant partner in this generation, is a man of deplorable character, a man who has no observable commitment to God. Furthermore, Jacob is living far from the land of promise, serving a polytheistic man who does not know Yahweh as LORD.

At this point in the story, God makes His next move.

1. Read Genesis 31:1-21 *God calls Jacob to leave and return to Canaan*
  - a. How has Laban been cheating Jacob and his wives? (Gen. 31:6-7, 14-16)
  - b. How has God been providing for Jacob's prosperity? (Gen. 31:5-12)
  - c. How did God identify Himself to Jacob, and what did God tell Jacob to do? (Gen. 31: 3, 13)
2. Read Genesis 31:22-47 *Jacob flees with family, possessions, and livestock*
  - a. From what you have observed about this family, why do you think Jacob chose to leave Laban surreptitiously and in haste?



- b. Laban was furious when he discovered that Jacob had tricked him and fled. Laban and his men pursued Jacob and caught up with them a few days later. How did God intervene to prevent Laban from harming Jacob? (Gen. 31:24,29)



- c. During the twenty years that Jacob suffered under Laban, Jacob encountered both blessing and discipline from the LORD. What do you think God has been teaching Jacob over these twenty years of hard work? (See Gen. 31:38-42)

- d. *For personal reflection:* Can you think of times in your life that were very difficult, but which served to grow your faith or strengthen your character? How do these experiences encourage you for the future?

- e. What was the purpose of the covenant agreement established between Jacob and Laban? (Gen. 31:44-54)

### 3. Read Genesis 32:1-21 *Jacob prepares to meet Esau*

- a. After separating from Laban, Jacob now faced the prospect of meeting Esau again — the brother he had repeatedly outsmarted and cheated. When Jacob had left Canaan twenty years before, what had been Esau's threat concerning Jacob? (See Gen. 27:41)
- b. As Jacob continued on his way, what encouragement did God provide to him? How was this reminiscent of Jacob's dream at Bethel? (Gen. 32:1-2)

- c. As Jacob came to the border of Canaan, what unnerving report did Jacob receive regarding Esau? (Gen. 32:6)
- d. In the face of this distressing report, Jacob turned to God in prayer. How does this prayer indicate a change in Jacob's self-awareness and in his understanding of God and of the covenant? (Gen. 32:9-12)
- e. What strategy did Jacob devise to appease Esau? (Gen. 32:13-21)

4. Read Genesis 32:22-32 *Jacob wrestles with a "man" at the Jabbok River*

Jacob's wrestling match with God seems incomprehensible to Western eyes, but this account would have been meaningful to ancient readers. Jacob was at the ford of the Jabbok, the gateway into the land that God has promised to His people. This land is for God's people — for those who will live under God's authority. If Jacob is to come into God's land as God's covenant partner, he must relinquish his own self-sufficiency and his self-serving perspective. He must learn to yield to God's authority.

- a. What clues do you find in this account that reveal the nature of this mysterious "man"? See Hosea 12:2-6 for more information.

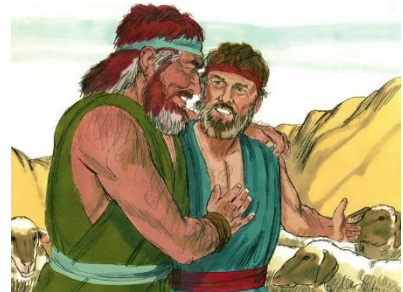


- b. After the wrestler disabled Jacob with a mere touch, what did Jacob then do? (Gen. 32:26)

- c. *For personal reflection:* It took an all-night wrestling match and a damaged hip to bring Jacob to the point of choosing to cling to God and to plead for His blessing. Like Jacob, we are often so busy with personal pursuits that we neglect investing in our relationship with God. Our priorities are askew. What changes can you make in your life to enable you to draw closer to God? Will you commit to those changes?
- d. As the sun rose that day, how was Jacob weaker? How was he stronger?
- e. The name “Jacob” (heel grabber) alludes to Jacob’s deceitful character. Now as Jacob enters the land as God’s covenant partner, God gives him a new name that signifies a change of character. What new name did God give to Jacob?

5. Read Genesis 33:1-20 *Jacob meets with Esau*

- a. What evidence do you see that Esau has forgiven Jacob? (Gen. 33:4-11)



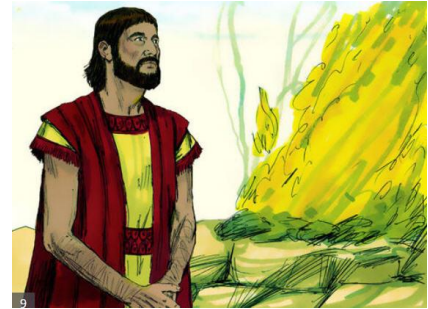
- b. After separating from Esau, Jacob and his family settled in the promised land near the city of Shechem. Why was this a surprising choice for Jacob? (see Gen. 28:20-22 and Gen. 31:13) Where would you expect him to go?
- c. What does Jacob do at Shechem to proclaim his personal commitment to God? (Gen. 33:18-20)

6. Read Genesis 35:1-29 *God ratifies His covenant with Jacob*

a. God called Jacob to move to Bethel (*the house of God*) and build an altar. What problem did Jacob have to deal with first? (Gen. 35:2-4)

b. What did Jacob proclaim about God's presence and goodness in his life? (Gen. 35:3)

c. How did God protect Jacob as his family traveled to Bethel? (Gen. 35:5)



d. ***For personal reflection:*** God is to be our shelter in time of storm and the hope that anchors our thinking. What personal habits can you adopt that will help you grow in your knowledge of God and your confidence in Him? Are there daily disciplines that you may incorporate in your life?

e. What covenant promises did God affirm at Bethel? (Gen. 35:11-12)

f. How did Rachel die? (Gen. 35:16-18) What do you see as especially poignant about her death and her life?

g. How has the story of Jacob enhanced your understanding of God? of His compassion? of His mercy? of His steadfast love?

*Father, I come before You in awe,  
grateful for Your amazing grace.  
I pray that You will shape my heart and draw me closer to You.*



*Jacob Wrestles with God*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 31-35*





## ***Joseph and His Brothers' Treachery***

### *Lesson 14 - Genesis 37 and 39*

During the Exodus years — the years of the Israelites' journey from slavery in Egypt to their entrance into the Promised Land — Moses met with God in the Tent of Meeting and recorded the first five books of the Bible. The book of Genesis was provided by God to give the nation of Israel an understanding of who God is and what it means to be the people of God. The book of Genesis reveals God's plan for reversing the fall, and it explains that God's people Israel have been chosen to produce the future Warrior/Savior who will crush the head of Satan and bring the hope of deliverance from sin and death for all peoples (Genesis 3:15).

A key focus of the book is the Abrahamic Covenant — the promise that God made with Abraham that through Abraham's descendants, God would bring blessing to all nations. The covenant promises were given to Abraham, to his son Isaac, and to Isaac's son Jacob. Now Jacob has twelve sons, and the promise now continues through the twelve sons — the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph is the chosen leader in this generation.

#### **1. Read Genesis 37:1-11 *Joseph is hated by his brothers***

a. In your study of Genesis thus far, where have you seen family dynamics that were poisoned by favoritism?

- i. Abraham favored \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Isaac favored \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. Rebekah favored \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. Jacob favored his wife \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_

b. How did Jacob demonstrate that Joseph was his favorite son? (Gen. 37:3)

- c. How did Joseph's ten older brothers react to their father's favoritism? (Gen. 37:4)

- d. How did God reveal His purposes for Joseph? (Gen. 37:5-11)



In the ancient world, age was highly respected. Sons bowed to their fathers. Younger sons bowed to older sons. Joseph's dreams of his brothers' bowing to him would have been particularly infuriating to Joseph's older brothers.

2. Read Genesis 37:12-36 *Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers*

- a. When Joseph was seventeen years old, Jacob sent Joseph to check on the welfare of his brothers who were tending the family's flocks. Joseph couldn't find his brothers. What providential event happened that enabled Joseph to find them? (Gen. 37:15-17)
- b. Joseph hiked 16-20 miles further north to find his brothers at Dothan. When the brothers saw Joseph coming toward them from a distance, what wicked plan did they devise? (Gen. 37:18-20)
- c. Reuben, the first-born son and the presumed leader, planned to rescue Joseph. What did Reuben do to deflect the brothers' murderous plot? (Gen. 37:21-22)

d. What did Reuben fail to do?

e. What did the brothers do when Joseph arrived? (Gen. 37:23-24)



f. It would have been terrifying to Joseph to have been thrown into the cold cistern. Surely he cried and pleaded with his brothers. How did the brothers respond to his cries? (Gen. 37:25a; see also Gen. 42:21)

g. Surely Joseph cried out to God to rescue him. Why do you suppose God did not rescue him?

h. How did Joseph end up in Egypt? (Gen. 37:25-28)

i. How did the brothers cover up their crime? (Gen. 37:31-34)

Notice the irony: Jacob deceived his father Isaac with the skin of a goat. Now Jacob's sons deceive him with the blood of a goat.

3. Read Genesis 39:1-6 *Joseph is promoted in Potiphar's house*

- a. Although Joseph was sold as a slave in Egypt; nevertheless, the LORD was with him. What evidence do you see of God's providence in the life of Joseph? (Gen. 39:1-6)
- b. ***For personal reflection:*** Have there been times in your life when your circumstances were very hard, but you became aware of God's presence in your life to bring blessing in the midst of suffering? Make a note of one of these times and share with your group if you feel comfortable doing so.

4. Read Genesis 39:7-23 *Joseph is falsely accused and imprisoned*

- a. Why did Joseph refuse the demands of Potiphar's wife? (Gen. 39:8-9)
- b. What was Potiphar's wife's false accusation against Joseph? (Gen. 39:16-18)

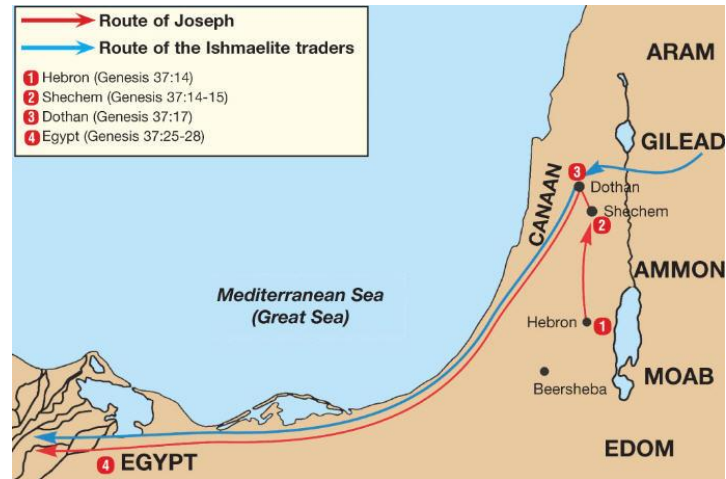


- c. What was Potiphar's reaction to her accusation? (Gen. 39:19-20)

Many scholars have argued that Potiphar's decision to send Joseph to prison was evidence that Potiphar did not believe his wife's accusation. If Potiphar had believed his wife, then Joseph would likely have been executed immediately. Instead, Potiphar sent Joseph to the king's prison where political prisoners were held and where he would be treated humanely. The action he took against Joseph was as mild as it could be and still preserve his wife's honor.

d. How did God continue to provide for Joseph and bring blessing to him in prison? (Gen. 39:21-23)

e. Joseph the Hebrew shepherd boy is now in Egypt, imprisoned in a place where the king's political prisoners are held. What improbable "coincidental" events worked together to move him from Hebron to this distant place?



f. **For personal reflection:** Although Joseph was an extraordinarily righteous and faithful man; nevertheless, he experienced terrible suffering. When his brothers threw him into the cistern, it was wrong! It was unjust! When he was sold to a particular caravan passing by, it was wrong! It was unjust! When he was falsely accused and sent to prison, it was wrong. It was unjust. Why do you suppose that God did not intervene to rescue Joseph?

*Father, I realize that You have a bigger plan that I cannot see.  
Help me to trust You and be content,  
knowing that Your steadfast love never fails.*



***Joseph and His Brothers' Treachery***  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 37 and 39*





## *Tamar's Desperate Act Against Judah*

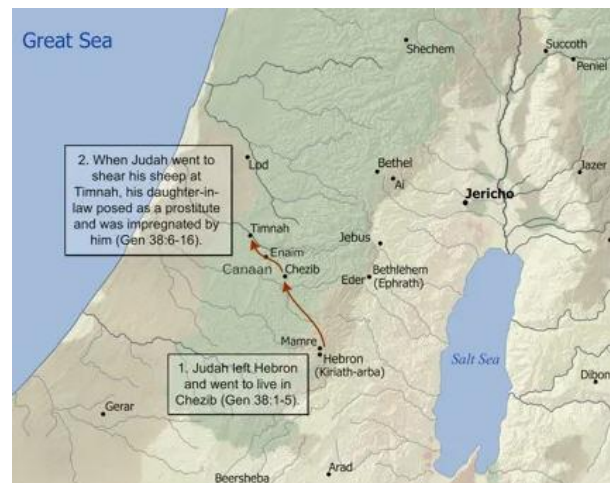
### *Lesson 15 - Genesis 38*

The book of Genesis is quite perplexing to us. Sometimes we (mistakenly) think of the Bible as merely a collection of nice stories with a moral message to convey and a historical hero to admire. Those expectations are shattered before we've read very far into the book of Genesis. Most of these main characters in Genesis are not heroes at all. For instance, Abraham makes some admirable decisions, to be sure, but in other ways he displays questionable character. Isaac is not particularly noble, and Jacob is a ruthless deceiver. It is clear that God did not bless these men because of their virtue; God blessed these men as a display of His immense mercy and His grace.

In today's lesson we explore God's work in the life of Judah, the fourth son of Leah and the designated family leader among the sons of Israel. Judah is destined to play a key role in salvation history, but first God will have to do some work to shape Judah's character.

#### 1. Read Genesis 38:1-11 *Judah abandons Tamar as he abandoned Joseph*

- a. How did Judah choose to distance himself from the family of the covenant? (Genesis 38:1-5)
- b. How did Tamar become the wife of Judah's eldest son? (Gen. 38:6)
- c. Why did Tamar's husband Er die? (Gen. 38:7)
- d. What did Judah ask his second son Onan to do? (Gen. 38:8)



In the ancient world, the continuation of the family line was very important. If a married man died without an heir, then it was the duty of the dead man's brother to marry the widow in order to enable her to produce a son. The son born of that marriage would be considered to be the offspring of the deceased husband. This is called *the law of levirate marriage*.

- e. If Tamar had conceived a son through levirate marriage to Onan, then her husband Er's birthright as the firstborn and his inheritance would have passed to Tamar's son. Onan stood to receive a larger inheritance if no son were born. Although Onan publicly seemed to comply with his duty to his brother; in private, Onan made sure that Tamar would not be able to conceive. What was God's judgment about Onan's behavior? (Gen. 38:9-10)
- f. As the patriarch of the family, Judah was responsible to provide for Tamar's well-being and her status in the community. He was required to provide for her. How does Judah shirk his responsibility? (Gen. 38:11)

The next part of the story seems really bizarre, but it makes more sense when we consider the customs of the time. The law of levirate marriage as it was practiced among the Canaanites provided for a widow to be impregnated either by a brother-in-law or by the father-in-law<sup>2</sup>. This differs from the levirate law encoded in Deuteronomy (Deut. 25:5-10), but it is the law Tamar would have known. The purpose of this law was not only to preserve the deceased man's inheritance of the family property, but also to provide a male heir who would care for his parents in their old age. As the widow of Er, Tamar had the right under Canaanite law to bear a son either by Shelah or by Judah.

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<sup>2</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001) p. 668

2. Read Genesis 38:12-23 *Tamar's desperate act preserved Judah's line*

- a. Tamar heard that her widowed father-in-law Judah would be traveling to take part in the celebration of the sheep-shearing. How did Tamar masquerade as an available prostitute? (Gen. 38:13-15)



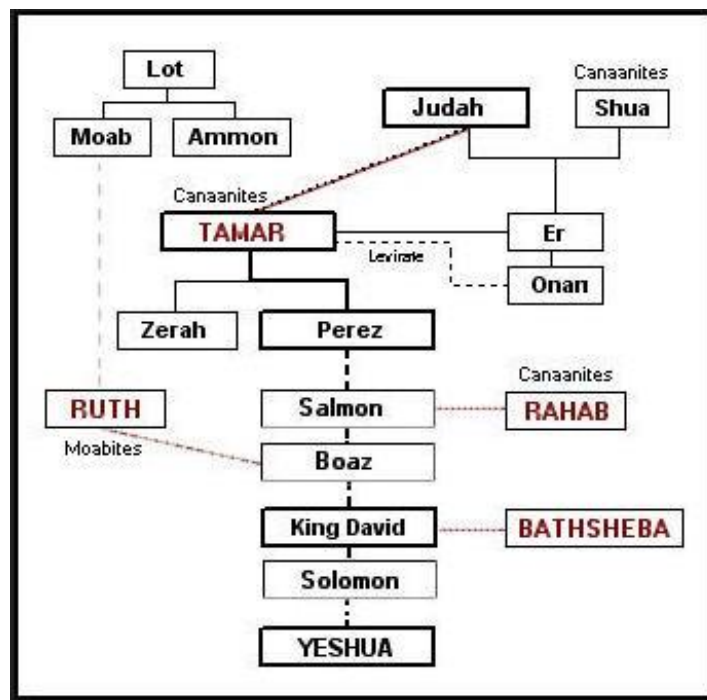
- b. How was Tamar able to document Judah's involvement in what happened? (Gen. 38:16-18)

3. Read Genesis 38:24-30 *Courageous Tamar builds up the house of Israel*

- a. Although Judah had abdicated his responsibility for Tamar, he was quick to assert his authority over her. When Judah heard that his daughter-in-law was pregnant, what was his immediate response? (Gen. 38:24)
- b. Not only did Judah immediately condemn her to death, his judgment called for the most painful, cruel death imaginable in that culture. How did Tamar discredit Judah's self-righteous judgment of her? (Gen. 38:25)
- c. What was Judah's response when he saw the evidence of the paternity of her child and his rightful place in the family of Israel?

- d. Judah has shown cruelty and callous disregard toward Joseph (Gen. 37:26), toward Jacob (Gen. 37:32), and now toward his widowed daughter-in-law Tamar. What is remarkable about the progress of Judah's thinking in just the three verses of Genesis 38:24-26? What do you see happening in Judah?
- e. ***For personal reflection:*** In a culture where women were treated as little more than property, God demonstrated that He is a God who defends the rights of women. We remember His care for Hagar. We remember his grace toward Leah. We see His provision of justice for Tamar. How does this aspect of God's goodness bring you confidence as you look ahead to your future?
- f. ***For personal reflection:*** When we read of Tamar's actions, we tend to immediately condemn her (as Judah did) for immorality. We fail to see that the law of that day gave her the right to bear a child by a member of her husband's family. Judah denied her that right, sent her away, and consigned her to a life of destitution. She was powerless, but God cares about the plight of the powerless. God brings justice and mercy to the overlooked of the culture. How does this challenge you to guard against turning a blind eye to the poor and the needy? Pray that God will give you a heart of mercy, knowing that He is a God of mercy.

- g. Tamar gave birth to twins. What was unusual about their birth? (Gen. 38:28-30) How is their birth reminiscent of a prior birth in Genesis?
- h. How is Tamar especially honored in later Israelite history? (Ruth 4:11-12)
- i. How does the genealogy of Jesus honor Tamar? (Matthew 1:3)



*Father, You are my protector and my provider.  
No power on earth can thwart Your good purposes.  
I praise You for Your goodness and Your mercy.  
Amen.*



*Tamar's Desperate Act Against Judah*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 38*





## *Joseph in Pharaoh's Court*

### *Lesson 16 - Genesis 40-41*

The crux of the book of Genesis is the Abrahamic Covenant. As a key step in God's plan to bring salvation to all nations, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising in Genesis 12, 15, and 17 that God would give to Abraham and his seed (offspring) a promised land, a multitude of descendants, and the privilege of bringing God's blessing to all nations.

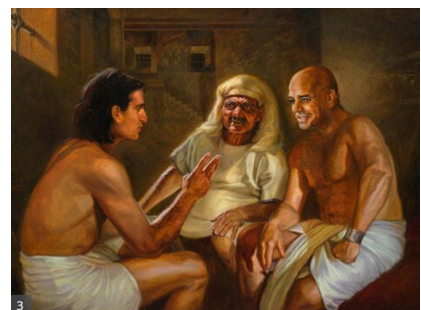
In the account of Abraham's life, there was a focus on the possession of *land*.

In the account of Jacob's life, there is a focus on the building of the *family*.

In the account of the life of Joseph, there is a focus on the *blessing* that comes to the whole world as a result of Joseph's faithfulness to God.

#### 1. Read Genesis 39:20-23; 40:1-23 *Joseph perseveres in faith*

- a. Although Joseph had been unfairly accused and unjustly imprisoned; nevertheless, Joseph experienced God's blessing in prison. How did the LORD bless Joseph? (Gen. 39:21)
- b. God's covenant with Abraham promised that Abraham's descendants would bring blessing to all nations. How did Joseph become a blessing to the keeper of the king's prison? (Gen. 39: 22-23)
- c. Describe the new inmates of the prison for whom Joseph was given responsibility. How would these two men have been influential in the land of Egypt? (Gen. 40:1-4)



- d. In the ancient Near East, dreams were considered to be messages from the gods. When both the cupbearer and the baker had disturbing dreams in prison, they were distressed; they longed for an interpreter. What does Joseph's statement in Gen. 40:8 reveal about Joseph's unwavering faith?

- e. What interpretations did God provide to Joseph for the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker? (Gen. 40: 9-13,16-19)



- f. What did Joseph ask the cupbearer to do for him when the cupbearer was restored to his position? (Gen. 40:14-15)
- g. The interpretations proved to be accurate. How would this have been an encouragement to Joseph and a confirmation of God's good purposes as revealed in Joseph's previous dreams as a teenager? (see Gen. 37:5-10)
- h. Although the interpretations were accurate, the cupbearer did not remember to intercede with Pharaoh on Joseph's behalf. This would have been a disappointment for Joseph, but how did the cupbearer's forgetfulness advance God's plan for Egypt and for Joseph? (Gen. 41:1-8)

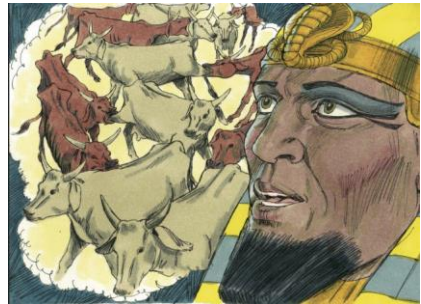
Joseph has been a man of exemplary character during his time in Egypt. One might expect that God would ensure Joseph's quick release, but that was not God's plan. God has a greater purpose for Joseph — a purpose that will be realized at a later time.

2. Read Genesis 41:1-36 *Joseph predicts famine and proposes a solution*

a. Two years later, Pharaoh dreamed disturbing dreams and he could not find anyone in his court who could interpret his dreams. How did Joseph come to Pharaoh's attention? (Gen. 41:9-13)

b. When the king asked Joseph if he could interpret dreams, Joseph's answer is notably abrupt. Why does Joseph make it clear that it is God who will interpret Pharaoh's dreams? What do you observe about Joseph's faith?

c. What were Pharaoh's dreams? (Gen. 41:17-24)



d. What is the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams? (Gen. 41:25-32)

e. How does this revelation affirm God's sovereignty over nations, over climate events, and over the destinies of empires? (Gen. 41:28, 32)

f. What do the following passages teach you about God's sovereignty over all creation?

i. Lamentations 3:37-38

ii. Matthew 10:29-31

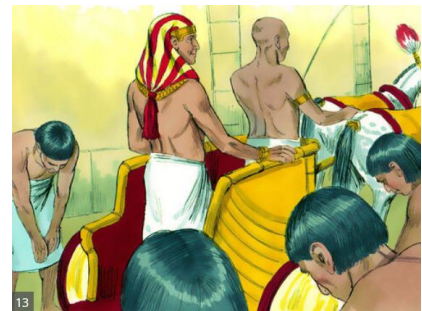
g. *For personal reflection:* There are many fearful aspects of life in this fallen world. What can you do to calm your fears when anxiety seems overwhelming?

h. What wise counsel did Joseph offer to Pharaoh? (Gen. 41:33-36)

3. Read Genesis 41:37-57 *Joseph oversees Egypt's famine survival plan*

a. Pharaoh recognized that Joseph's wisdom was supernatural; he affirmed that Joseph was empowered by God. Pharaoh decided to appoint Joseph to be in charge of Egypt's preparation for famine. Why do you think the king of a mighty nation would follow the advice of a young Hebrew slave? (see what Proverbs 21:1 has to say)

b. Describe how Pharaoh promoted and exalted Joseph. (Gen. 41:41-44)

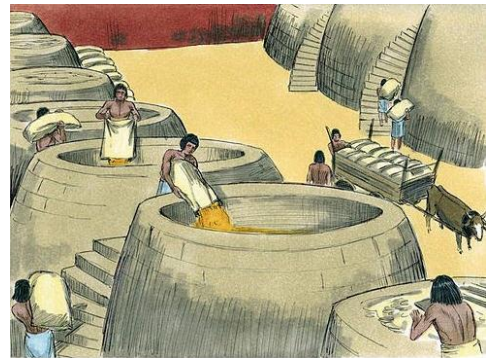


c. *For personal reflection:* God's steadfast love for Joseph was evident in the way He was protecting Joseph and providing for him during Joseph's thirteen years of slavery and separation from his family. How have you seen God's steadfast love at work in your life during times of loss and disappointment? How does this strengthen your faith in God's goodness?

- d. How did Pharaoh assimilate Joseph into Egyptian nobility? (Gen. 41:45)
- e. How do the names Joseph gave to his sons express Joseph's confidence in God's sovereignty and God's goodness? (Gen. 41:50-52)

- f. How did Joseph prepare for the coming famine? (Gen. 41:47-49)

- g. How did God bring blessing to Egypt through Joseph's wisdom and faithfulness? (Gen. 41:55-57)



- h. Joseph, the seed of Abraham, provided salvation from a devastating famine. Centuries later, Jesus, the seed of Abraham, brought a far better salvation for those who trust in Him. How did Jesus bring salvation for us? (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-10)

*Father, you sovereignly control the destinies of nations  
as you protect and provide for your covenant people.  
Help me remember that I am not adrift in a sea of chaos;  
I am firmly held in your everlasting arms.  
Amen.*



*Joseph in Pharaoh's Court*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 40-41*





## *Joseph Tests His Brothers*

### *Lesson 17 - Genesis 42-45*

In our last session we encountered a stunning demonstration of the sovereignty of God. Seventeen-year-old Joseph, a Hebrew from the hill country of Canaan, had been sold as a slave to a caravan of merchants. Thirteen years later, Joseph was made the governor of Egypt, the most powerful nation in the world.

What are the odds? The odds are miniscule, but God's plans for His people depend not on probability, but on divine providence. God sovereignly controls the rise and fall of nations in order to accomplish His purposes in salvation. God is always at work behind the scenes controlling the destinies of empires in accordance with His covenant promises and His plans for His people.

God orchestrated Pharaoh's dreams, the coming of famine, and the economy of Egypt to bring Joseph to power and to bring the family of Israel to Egypt.

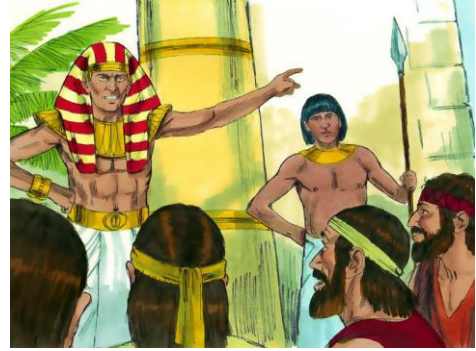
#### 1. Read Genesis 42:1-38 *God convicts the brothers of their guilt*

When the famine became severe in Canaan, Jacob sent ten of his sons to buy grain. Since Joseph was in charge of grain distribution in Egypt, it was he who sold grain to those who came to buy it.

- a. How were Joseph's prior dreams (Gen. 37:6-10) fulfilled when the sons of Jacob arrived in Egypt? (Gen. 42:6)

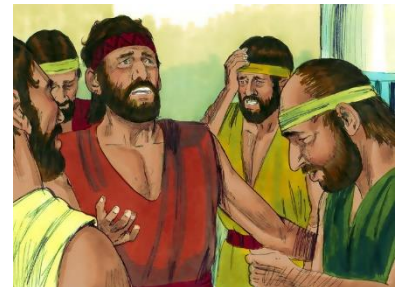


- b. Why do you think that Joseph's brothers did not recognize him? How would Joseph's appearance be very different from the Joseph they had known?



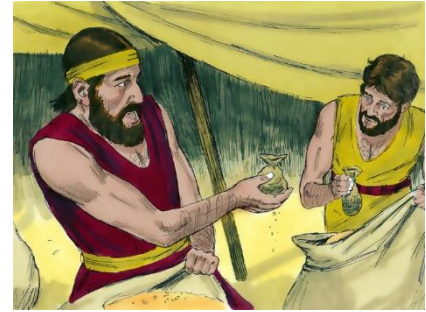
- c. How did Joseph challenge his brothers? (Gen. 42:9,12,14)
- d. Joseph's brothers came to Egypt simply to buy grain, but when they arrived, everything went terribly wrong. How did Joseph intensify the pressure on his brothers? (Gen. 42:17)
- e. What do you think Joseph planned to accomplish by challenging and testing his brothers instead of revealing himself to them immediately?

- f. After the brothers had spent three days together in prison, Joseph gave them permission to go back to Canaan, but he would keep Simeon as hostage. As the brothers lamented their predicament, how did they acknowledge their terrible guilt and remorse? (Gen. 42:21)



- g. What does the brothers' lament reveal about the current state of their hearts and their understanding of God? (Gen. 42:21-22; also Gen. 9:5-6)

- h. How did Joseph continue to add to the brothers' distress and confusion as they left Egypt with the grain they had purchased? (Gen. 42:25-28)



- i. How did the brothers acknowledge the sovereignty of God in their plight? (Gen. 42:28)

Although Joseph suffered terrible injustice during his life, he never wavered in trusting God's goodness and sovereignty.

- j. ***For personal reflection:*** We know that God is sovereign, yet evil still infects every corner of our fallen world. We know that our eternal future is secure, yet we still worry about the present. What does it mean to you to trust God in the midst of suffering and loss? How would you counsel someone who needs encouragement in this area?

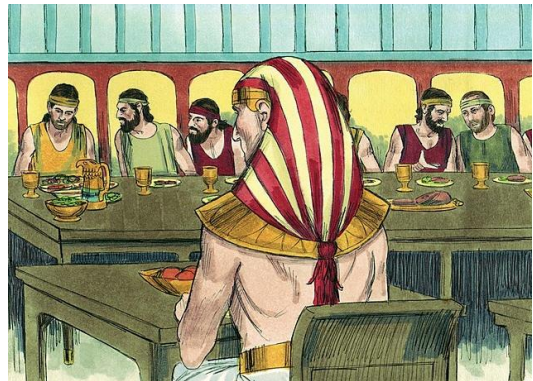
2. Read Genesis 43:1-34 *Joseph's brothers return to Egypt with Benjamin*

The famine continued to be severe, and eventually Jacob's family ran out of grain. They had no choice; they had to return to Egypt to buy grain, but they could not return without bringing Benjamin.

- a. Jacob was no longer able to shield Benjamin from exposure to danger. How did Jacob plan to incline the governor of Egypt to be merciful? (Gen. 43:11-13)
- b. What else did Jacob do? (Gen. 43:14)

- c. The brothers would have been fearful that their return to Egypt would result in their arrest, but they were shocked when they were greeted with an invitation to dine with the governor of Egypt. They assumed it was a trick. They were afraid that they were about to be assaulted and enslaved. (Gen. 43:18) How did this fear ironically correspond to what they had done to Joseph decades before? (Gen. 37:23-28)
- d. ***For personal reflection:*** It would seem impossible for this family to be reconciled, but God is able to change hearts. God is able to cleanse us of anger. God is able to prick the conscience. Are there broken relationships in your life where God may be working to bring healing? Take a moment to pray and ask God to help you be an agent of reconciliation.

- e. In the midst of a severe famine, Joseph had a feast prepared for the brothers. This was perplexing in itself, but what additional situation would have been unnerving to the brothers? (Gen. 43:33)



- f. Joseph tested the brothers by serving the favored son Benjamin with a far larger portion than the other brothers received. Why do you think Joseph did that? What response was he looking for from the brothers?

3. Read Genesis 44:1-34 *Joseph tests the character of his brothers*

Joseph tested his brothers again. He hid his personal silver cup in Benjamin's sack and sent his steward to intercept the brothers and accuse them of stealing the cup.

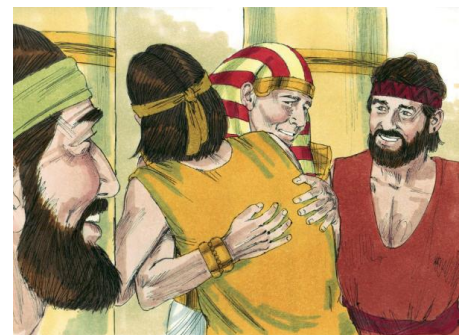
- a. The brothers were confident of their innocence, but when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, what did they conclude about this terrible turn of events? (Gen. 44:16)



- b. The brothers were innocent of stealing the cup, but in what way were they still guilty men? (Look back at Gen. 42:21-22)
- c. Judah has been possibly the worst of the brothers. It was Judah who proposed that they would gain a profit by selling Joseph into slavery. It was Judah who consigned his daughter-in-law to what would have been a life of emptiness and hopelessness. It was Judah who was quick to condemn Tamar to the most terrible death imaginable. What evidence do you see that Judah has become a changed man? (Gen. 44:33-34)

4. Read Genesis 45:1-28 *Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers*

- a. Joseph was so moved by Judah's speech that he chose this moment to reveal that he was the brother they had betrayed. How did Joseph affirm God's good purposes in what had happened to him? (Gen. 45:5-8)



- b. ***For personal reflection:*** When you have confidence that God is working in your life for good, then you will find it easier to forgive the hurts of the past. This doesn't excuse the evil that men do, but it gives us a framework for choosing to forgive others and leave judgment to God. Is there someone from your past whom you may forgive? Take a moment to pray that God will help you release any bitterness that you carry.
- c. Joseph asked his brothers to bring their families and come to live in Egypt. What did Pharaoh promise Joseph's family? (Gen. 45:16-20).
- d. ***For personal reflection:*** In Genesis 37:14, at the beginning of Joseph's story, Joseph was told to go and see to the welfare of his brothers. Over the course of the next two decades, God used Joseph not only to see to the welfare of his family, but also to see to the welfare of the world.<sup>3</sup> Joseph suffered a great deal in his life, but he came to understand that God was able to accomplish good through it.

Elisabeth Elliot, missionary and author, said this: *"It is through the deepest suffering that God has taught me the deepest lessons. Out of the deepest waters and the hottest fires have come the deepest things that I know about God. And I live with the unshakable assurance that God is in charge. He has a loving purpose, and He can transform something terrible into something wonderful. Suffering is never for nothing."*<sup>4</sup>

How does the story of Joseph help you trust in the good purposes of God?

*Father, help me trust in your good purposes.  
Help me draw closer to you when hard times come.  
Enable me to serve you with joy and hope.*

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<sup>3</sup> Walton, *NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, 696

<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never for Nothing* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 16

*Joseph Tests His Brothers*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 42-45*





## ***Joseph's Family Reunion***

### *Lesson 18 - Genesis 46-50*

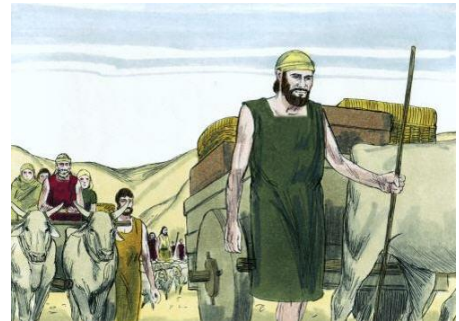
The book of Genesis was written by Moses to the generation of Israelites who had been delivered from 400 years of slavery in Egypt and who were about to enter the Promised Land.

The book of Genesis was written to reveal the glory of the creator God, to explain who the Israelites were as a people, and to proclaim God's promises of salvation and blessing for all nations.

#### **1. Read Genesis 46:1-7, 26-30 *God affirms His covenant promises to Israel***

- a. How did Jacob seek the blessing of God as he began his journey to Egypt? (Gen. 46:1)
- b. How did God confirm His continued faithfulness to Jacob? What new information did God reveal? (Gen. 46:2-4)

- c. How many were the family of Jacob who migrated to the land of Goshen in Egypt? (Gen. 46:27)



#### **2. Read Genesis 47:1-31 *Joseph settled his family in the land of Goshen***

- a. How did Joseph provide for the welfare of his family? (Gen. 47:1-12,27)
- b. How did Joseph provide for the welfare of Egypt? (Gen. 47:13-24)

- c. How did the people of Egypt regard the policies of Joseph? (Gen. 47:25)

In God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:3), God promised that through Abraham and his offspring all families on earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3) We see this happening in Egypt as Joseph provides bread for all nations during a severe famine. We see this happening today as Jesus, the offspring of Abraham, provides the spiritual bread of life — the offer of salvation — for all the world.

- d. How did the status of the Israelites during the famine differ from that of the rest of the population of Egypt? (Gen. 47:11-2; Gen. 47:27)

**3. Read Genesis 48:1-22 *Israel blesses Joseph's sons***

- a. How did Jacob promote Ephraim and Manasseh in the family? (Gen. 48:3-5)
- b. Why do you think this was important in view of Joseph's sons' upbringing? (Gen. 41:45 and 41:51-52)
- c. What was surprising about Jacob's blessing for Ephraim and Manasseh? (Gen. 48:14,18-20)
- d. How did Jacob's blessing proclaim his faith, his gratitude to God, and his understanding of God's work in his life? (Gen. 48:15-16)



#### 4. Read Genesis 49:1-28 *Israel blesses the twelve tribes*

Jacob's final blessing for his sons was considered to be a prophetic oracle. It revealed aspects of the destinies of the sons of Israel and their tribes. The future of each tribe will be shaped by the actions and the character of the tribal patriarchs as well as by the grace and provision of God. The most notable prophecies regard Joseph and Judah.

- a. Israel's prophecy reveals special prominence for Judah. (Gen. 49:8-12)
  - i. How is Judah portrayed as a leader? (Gen. 49:8)
  - ii. How is Judah linked to a powerful animal? (Gen. 49:9)
  - iii. How is Judah linked to kingship? (Gen. 49:10)
  - iv. Where does the royal line of Judah culminate? (Matthew 1:1-16)
  - v. How is Jesus described in Revelation 5:5?
- b. How is Israel's prophetic blessing for Joseph especially favorable? (Gen. 49:22-26)



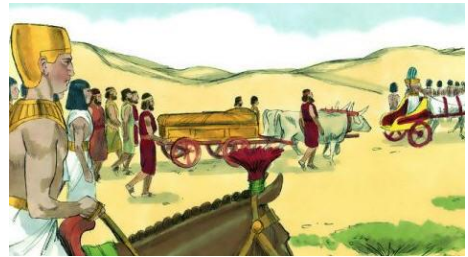
Judah is in the royal line of Christ. Joseph is a “type” of Christ; his life prefigures many aspects of the life and work of Christ.

5. Read Genesis 49:29-50:14 *Israel was buried with honor in Canaan*

a. As Jacob was preparing to die, what did he ask his sons to do for him? (Gen. 49:29-32)

b. Why was this important to Jacob? (Gen. 15:18-21, Gen. 17:8)

c. How was Israel honored by his family and by the people of Egypt? (Gen. 50:2-10)



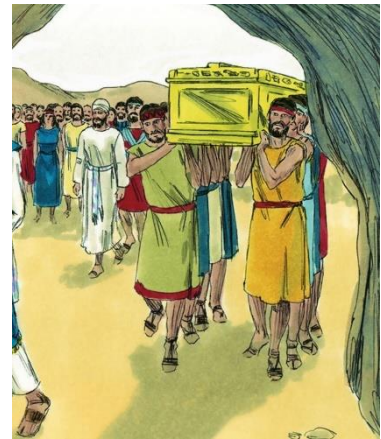
6. Read Genesis 50:15-26 *Joseph affirmed his heart of forgiveness and faith*

a. Why were Joseph's brothers fearful after the death and burial of their father? (Gen. 50:15)

b. Joseph assured them that he had fully forgiven them. Why would it have been wrong for Joseph to withhold forgiveness? (Gen. 50:19)

c. ***For personal reflection:*** Just as Joseph forgave his brothers; even so, God in Christ has forgiven you. What was the cost to God for the gift of forgiveness you have received? (See Romans 5:6-8) How does this motivate you to choose to forgive those who have wronged you?

- d. How did Joseph's view of God's sovereignty give him a framework for understanding how God used even his brothers' evil deeds to bring about God's own good purposes? (Gen. 50:20)
- e. ***For personal reflection:*** How does your understanding of God's sovereignty help you when you experience painful losses in your life? How do you know that you can trust God for your future? How have you learned to be confident in God? What can you do to deepen that confidence?
- f. God used the injustice Joseph suffered to bring about the saving of many lives. Centuries later, a greater salvation was accomplished through the suffering of Jesus on the cross. Describe in your own words how Jesus' death and resurrection brought salvation and blessing for God's people of faith.
- g. When Joseph was about to die, he asked his brothers to bury his bones in the promised land. How were Joseph's wishes fulfilled hundreds of years later? (See Exodus 13:19 and Joshua 24:32)



*Father, Your plan is perfect; Your grace is amazing;  
Your Kingdom will come.  
Enable me to trust You and serve You all my days.  
Amen*



*Joseph's Family Reunion*  
*Lecture Notes - Genesis 46-50*

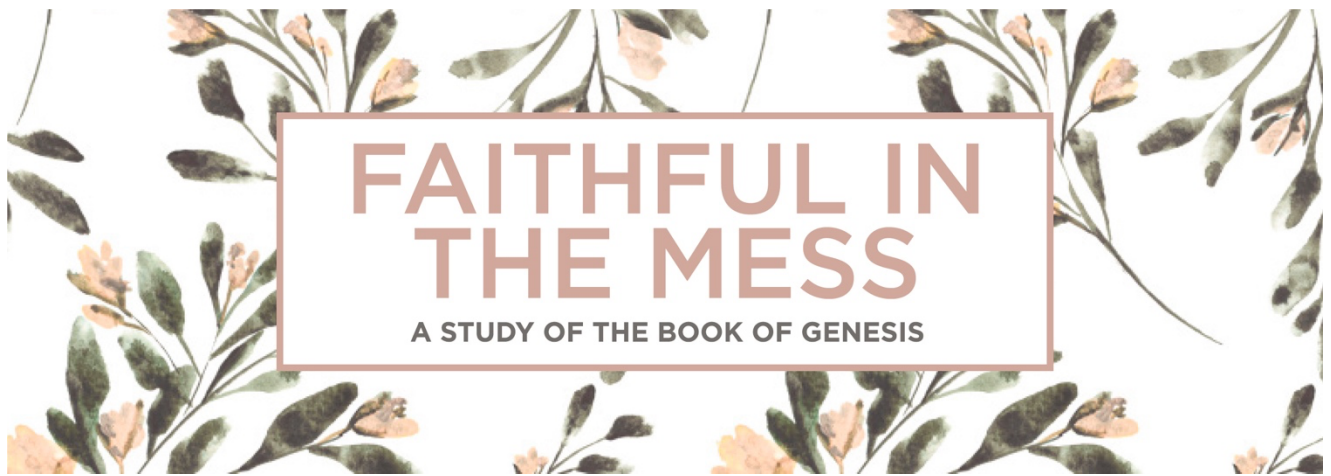






# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES





### *Small Group Member Agreement*

**Confidentiality** – What’s said here, stays here. I will not repeat what others say unless given permission.

**Openness** – I will strive to reveal who I am – my hopes, hurts, joys, and struggles – as well as I am able. I will help others by risking to be known and telling what is real to me rather than by repeating something I heard elsewhere.

**Sensitivity** – I will share only my part in issues that involve others. For example, if I am in conflict with a spouse or friend, I will focus on what I did, thought, or said that contributed to the conflict. I will refrain from gossiping or “slamming” others.

**Courtesy** – I want everyone to share. I will keep others in mind, allowing time for each person to speak. I will limit my sharing and will not interrupt when another group member is speaking.

**Acceptance** – I realize that we are all works in process. We are all at different places in our spiritual journey, come from different backgrounds, and the Holy Spirit works in us in different ways. I will not be judgmental or offer unsolicited advice.

**Prayer** – I will pray for the other members of this group and rejoice in the confidence that they are praying for me.

**Commitment** – I will make a diligent and sincere effort to do my homework & participate in the discussion each week and will make group attendance a priority. I understand that the more that I invest in these areas, the more I and others will benefit from the Study.

**Topics** — I understand that we are all created uniquely, and therefore, do not think the same or agree on everything. I will help my group to focus on the unity we have in the Body of Christ and avoid topics that fuel division such as politics, vaccines, masks, other denominations and pastors, etc.

**Accountability** – In all of these commitments I invite my fellow group members to hold me accountable, as I will do for them.



## Daily Time with God Journaling Sheet

This page is provided to help you track your daily time with God. Each day as you read a portion of God's letter to you (the Bible), ask Him to show you something special for that day.

Some people find it helpful to look for...

S- a SIN to avoid

P- a PROMISE to claim

E- an EXAMPLE to follow

C- a COMMAND to obey

K- KNOWLEDGE to apply

Or, you may see something else.

*(You may not see all of these in a passage)*

Record what God shows you each day followed by your response to Him.

This page has space for 7 days (one week) of Quiet Time records.

Date:                      Passage:

What God showed me:

My Response:

Date:                      Passage:

What God showed me:

My Response:

Date:                      Passage:

What God showed me:

My Response:

Date:

Passage:

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My Response:

Date:

Passage:

What God showed me:

My Response:

Date:

Passage:

What God showed me:

My Response:

## Get to Know Your Teaching Team

### Kim Gardiner

**Who are your people?** Husband, Eric, two girls, Hailey (14) & Emma (12)

**What's your background?** BA in Bible/Theology from Moody Bible Institute

**What do you enjoy?** connecting with friends or family, being outdoors, and too much chocolate



### Heather Van Stavern

**Who are your people?** Brad, Jade (20), Chance (17), Dax (15), black lab named Shipley

**What's your background?** BS in Communication from Abilene Christian University

**What do you enjoy?** Exercise, Coffee, Mexican food (ahem-the reason I like exercise), snow skiing



### Cheryl Sneeringer

**Who are your people?** Husband of 54 years – Jim, two adult sons, Luke and Caleb, beloved daughter-in-law, Meagan

**What's your background?** PhD in computer science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and MA in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary

**What do you enjoy?** Reading and eating chocolate



