

The background is a complex, multi-layered composition. It features a central diamond-shaped window that reveals a landscape scene. Above the horizon in this scene is a bright sun with a jagged, golden-yellow outline. Below the horizon, there are horizontal bands of color representing a field or water, transitioning from green to orange to blue. The entire scene is set against a backdrop of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various colors like blue, green, and purple, creating a textured, watercolor-like effect.

GENESIS
IN JANUARY

Joyce Corder

GENESIS IN JANUARY

A Devotional

by Joyce Corder

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Genesis in January

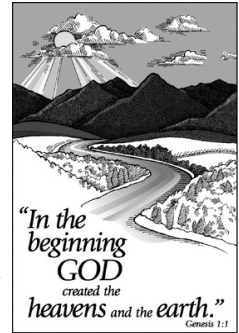
Genesis means "beginning" and January signals the start of a new year. In Ohio, January means more time to sit and read in a cozy chair with a warm blanket! We will not have a lesson for every chapter in the Book of Genesis this month. So we will just discuss the "stories," leave out the "begats," and enjoy the beginning of God's wonderful work. Of course, you are always welcome to launch out on your own and read it all!

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DAY 1

In the Beginning
(Read Genesis 1:1-31)



- Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*
- 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*
- 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*
- 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*
- 1 Peter 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;*
- 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*
- 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,*
- 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

What better place to start than the beginning. It is the beginning of a new year, and we have a fresh calendar to fill. What will we fill it with? God did some pre-planning before He "created the heaven and the earth." First Peter 1:20 tells us that the plan of salvation was already in place "before the foundation of the world," before God ever started to create. We should take some time and do some pre-planning as well for the year He has given to us.

God provided everything that man needed to survive on this earth, and as He surveyed it, He said, "It is good." He was pleased with His accomplishments. He blessed the man and woman, but He also gave them a responsibility to look after the world He had created. We, too, have responsibilities.

As you look back over last year's accomplishments, are you pleased? What do you want to accomplish for God this year? Do you need to be saved? Do not put it off; start seeking God's face now, or the year will slip away, and you will still be unsaved. Do you need to "subdue" the earth? By that, I mean keep your anger under God's control? Or submit your emotions to God's will? Do you need to tell others of God's creating power so they can have a new heart created within them? Take this time to set your goals and write them down so you can refer back to them during the year. Then, be sure to pray for God to direct you so that every day can be used to His glory, and He can say, "It is good."

I hope one of your goals will be to read from God's Word daily. God's Word "created the heaven and the earth," and it will create in you a desire to know God better, learn more of His will for your life, and learn how you can please Him. Just as a baby desires milk to grow and be healthy, you need God's Word to grow spiritually and have spiritual health (1 Peter 2:2).

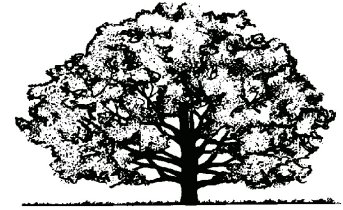
"In the beginning God . . ." Start each new day with God. Try to read at least one verse you can refer back to during your day, pray for God to direct you, find time during your day to spend some quality time with the One who loves you more than you love yourself—your creator, keeper, and guide. When you look back at the end of the year, you will be glad you did.

Set at least 3 goals that you want to accomplish this year. _____

Write 3 things you are thankful for today. _____

Reading the Bible and praying go together. Use this spot to write down people you want to pray for and situations you need God to work out. At the end of the month, it will be good to look back at your list and see how God has worked through your prayers.

Choices, Choices!
(Read Genesis 3:1-24)



Genesis 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

24 So he [God] drove out the man; and he [God] placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Just as with every good thing, Adam and Eve had rules and responsibilities. Without rules, we have chaos. Without responsibility, we have ruin and decay. As this year begins, let us look at our own responsibilities and see where we can be wiser and ask God for His direction in every choice we make.

In Genesis, Chapter 2, we can read that God made a garden for His creation to live in and gave them everything they needed. He made the rule that they should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This rule was not to cheat them out of a good thing but to protect them. Without the knowledge of evil, they were innocent and free from guilt and sin. Obedience to this rule would not only show their love and respect for God but also keep them in the image and likeness of God. But "the devil," as it says in John 8:44, "was a murderer [and liar] from the beginning" of time, and he convinced Adam and Eve to choose just one little disobedient act. God wants us to serve Him because we love Him, not because we do not have any other options. So, He gave Adam and Eve the choice to obey and be blessed or disobey and be cursed. We still have that choice to make today.

God speaks to us today as He did with Adam in the garden, asking, "Where art thou?" Before Adam sinned, he enjoyed the visits from God. But after he had disobeyed, there was a fear of meeting God. When we have sin in our lives, we do not want to be around the church or someone who is living a holy life because it brings condemnation to us. It reminds us of God's anger and the curse of sin we live under, so we try to hide from God. Just as God knew where Adam was, He also knows just where to find us, and He gives us the opportunity to confess our sins to Him.

God will not dwell where sin is because He is holy. When we allow sin to enter our heart, God will no longer dwell with us. We are separated from His love, mercy, and blessings. But, thank God, that is not the end of the story! Genesis 3:24 tells us He set "Cherubims" and "a flaming sword ... to keep the way of the tree of life." The plan of salvation was already laid out, and when the time was right, the way to the tree of life (which is Jesus Christ) was opened up for us to come back to that beautiful fellowship with God in the pleasant garden where all our needs are supplied.

Life is full of choices, but the most important one of all is our choice to obey God. Just as Eve was powerless against Satan in the Garden of Eden, we cannot in ourselves resist the temptations of the devil. We MUST have the Spirit and power of God within us daily to be overcomers.

Where are you? Are you trying to hide from God, or have you acknowledged your sin and asked for His forgiveness and desire to walk in obedience to God's laws? "Choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

Did you make good choices today? Is there anything you wish you could "do over"? _____

When you pray, ask God to help you tomorrow
to choose His ways and not your own.
Pray for at least one friend and ask God to help them
choose to serve God.

DAY 3

Will Your Sacrifice Be Acceptable to God? (Read Genesis 4:1-16)

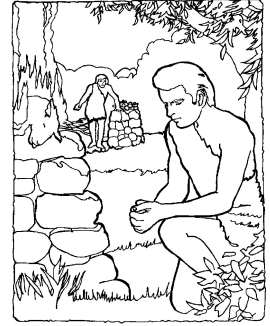
Genesis 4:3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.



Because of sin, Adam and Eve had to leave the presence of the Lord and begin life elsewhere. They had children, and life fell into a routine for them. Since Christ had not come to redeem the world from sin, Adam and Eve did the best they could, they sacrificed what they had to the Lord, thus acknowledging Him as their God. They passed their desire to worship God on to their children, so that when Cain and Able became men, they began sacrificing to God for themselves. We also must pass on to our children the need to worship. We can only do this by our example.

The word *offering* means "a gift or voluntary sacrifice." To sacrifice is to give willingly something of value to honor another. God deserves the best that we have to offer. Verse 4 says that Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock." Acknowledge God by giving Him the firstfruits, whether it is money, time, or talents. God accepted Abel's sacrifice because God can see the heart of man, and He knew Abel truly honored God by putting Him first. Abel was righteous and faithful, as it tells us in the following Scriptures.

- 1 John 3:11-12 – "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."
- Hebrews 11:4 – "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

On the other hand, Cain offered "in process of time." He did not bring the best, and he did not feel any urgency to honor God. He had jealousy and murder in his heart. Verse 7 tells us that if we do not do well, "sin lieth at the door." God gave him an opportunity to confess his sin when He asked about his brother. But Cain refused to acknowledge his sin and was driven out from the presence of God.

God will not accept our offering if we will not confess and forsake our sins. For our offering to be accepted, we have to be righteous before God. We must give Him our best, honor Him as the most important person in our life. If you do well, God will accept your offering.

In the Old Testament, God required a literal sacrifice. In these New Testament times, He is asking us to bring a living sacrifice—ourselves, our time, and our resources. Romans 12:1-2 says: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

What can you offer God? Remember, He created everything, even you. _____

Pray for God to help you give yourself to His service.
Pray for someone who is sick.

DAY 4

Following God's Plan
(Read Genesis 6:5-22)



Genesis 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

The Bible mentions many generations between Cain and Noah. People gradually got farther and farther from God until Chapter 6, verse 5, says that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The devil's job is to keep our thoughts taken up with things of this world and evil. We, as Christians, have to be cautious about what we allow in our minds. We must turn from things that will pull us away from God and dwell on the things that will help us draw closer to Him.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Out of millions of people, God saw Noah doing what was right. He was just and perfect because He walked with God. The word "perfect" troubles many people. The Hebrew word that is used in this text has several meanings, such as "integrity, without blemish, complete, sincerity, undefiled, upright and whole." It does not mean that Noah made no mistakes, but it means that his actions were acceptable with God. We may think we are insignificant and God will not care about what happens to us but that is just what the devil wants us to think. God is taking note of all we do, and we, too, can find grace in the eyes of the Lord, just as Noah.

Noah walked with God. When you walk with someone you stay close to each other. It is a natural thing to talk as you walk together. God wants us to walk with Him, stay close enough that He can converse with us. God has plans He wants to tell us about. He told Noah about the wickedness in the world. He talked about His plan of deliverance for Noah and his family. He told him in great detail what the ark should look like and how he was to build it. We, too, need to know how God feels about our world, His plan of salvation, and how we are to build our lives. The Bible is our blueprint. If we live exactly to the blueprint, we will sail above the flood of sin and wickedness.

God has very detailed plans for us, just as He had for building the ark. What if Noah decided that putting pitch on the inside was just too messy and was a waste of time and material? When a log floating alongside the ark scraped the pitch off the outside, they would have sprung a leak! Or, what if he changed the dimensions and made it 5 stories high instead of 3 and 100 cubits long instead of 300? It would have fallen over as soon as there was enough water to raise it off the ground! Sometimes we think we can guide our own lives, but we usually make a mess of things. If we will walk with God and talk often, He will guide us though the daily struggles of life. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (verse 22).

What did you learn that you did not already know about Noah? _____

What does it mean to "find grace in the eyes of the Lord"? _____

**Pray for someone who is "out of the ark of safety";
in other words, someone who is not saved.**

DAY 5

The Everlasting Covenant
(Read Genesis 7:1-24; 8:1-22; 9:1-17)



Genesis 7:16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

Genesis 9:9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

When God makes a promise or a threat, you can be sure that it will happen. He told Noah to build the ark because He was going to destroy everything with a flood of water. Noah believed God and went to work. It did not start to rain the next day or the next month. Even after Noah and all the animals were loaded on the ark, it did not rain for seven days! But when God shut the door, it was too late to enter the ark, too late to escape the wrath of God. The rains came on the eighth day, and the fountains of the deep poured out their abundant store. People believed God then, but it was too late; God had shut the door. When you have obeyed God, you can be confident that He will protect you. He will shut you in a safe place and shut out the floods of unbelief and wickedness.

From the time it started to rain until Noah left the ark was a whole year (Genesis 7:11; Genesis 8:14). I am sure there were many scary moments and discouraging times. But Noah knew he had done exactly what God had told him, and he could rest calmly on God's promise that he would not be destroyed. We are in a world governed by time, but God is in eternity where there is no time. We look at a trial that lasts a year as a very long, tedious time. God views it as a small thing, compared to eternity. We get anxious when God does not change our situation immediately, but His promises are sure and true for ever.

Genesis 9:12 talks about the covenant being "for perpetual generations." God only can guarantee everlasting or lasting without end. This is an ongoing promise God made with mankind. He promised to never again destroy the world with a flood. We know that He has kept His promise. But the Bible talks about an even greater covenant. Ezekiel 37:26-27 says: "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Also, in Hebrews 13:20-21 we read, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever." Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He gave His blood so you and I could have salvation from our sins and enter into a contract, or covenant, with God. Our part of the contract is that we will allow Him to rule over our lives and He will be to us a king, protecting and guiding us through this life to an everlasting home in Heaven with Him. Every time we see a rainbow, it should remind us of how faithful God is to keep ALL of His promises.

Do you keep your promises to your friends, family, and God? God takes promises, or vows, very seriously. What is a promise, or vow, that you have made to God? _____

Find a promise in the Bible and write it down; make it yours. God always keeps His promises. _____

Pray for our country and leaders.

**Building Altars in Your Life
(Read Genesis 12:1-9; 13:5-18)**

Genesis 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

Genesis 13:18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.



Abraham had obeyed God and moved away from the city of Haran. God blessed him for his obedience, and he had become wealthy. In Sichem, on the plain of Moreh, the Lord appeared unto Abram, and he built an altar, a place of sacrifice and worship to the Lord. He traveled on to a mountain close to Bethel and built another altar. When he moved to the plain of Mamre, which is also called Hebron, again, he built an altar.

Why would Abram build all those altars? There are many Scriptures that say, "God said to Abraham" or "Abraham answered God and said." James 2:23 says, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." Abraham had a special relationship with God. He believed everything God told him, and he obeyed completely. In Galatians 3:8-9 he is called "faithful Abraham." Just as good friends do, God and Abraham talked often and openly with each other and had complete trust in one another.

We, too, can have that kind of relationship with God if we will keep communication open and honest. In Abraham's day, there were not churches on every street corner. He had to make the effort to find God on his own; so he built an altar everywhere he lived. We have it so easy today. The preacher finds the message, someone else prays, the choir sings, and all we have to do is sit like "a bump on a log" and we say we have been to church; our duty is finished. Not so! When we come to church, we need to come to worship God. That takes effort. Our heart must be in tune with the Spirit of God, we must listen for God to speak to us, and we need to be ready to follow the leading of His Holy Spirit before we can truly say we have worshiped in an acceptable manner. It is not a ceremony or form that makes our church attendance pleasing to God but the attitude of our heart. Attending worship services is important, but it will not do us much good if we do not enter worship with a pure heart, willing to hear and obey God.

It is important to attend church regularly to receive spiritual instruction and encouragement, but it is even more important to meet with God on a daily, personal basis. You must know Him for yourself. Make your place of communication with God, or to say it another way, make your altar a favorite resort. Adam walked with God in the cool of the day. Jesus would get away from the crowds sometimes early in the morning or even all night. He would go to the mountain to be alone with God and find direction.

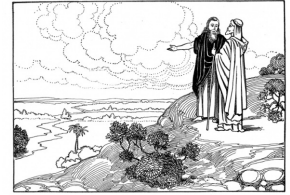
Have a definite place in your life where you can say, "I met God here today." It will be a place you will desire to return to often.

Do you have a definite place to read your Bible and pray? Where is it? _____

As you read these lessons, ask God to help you apply them to your life and make you a better Christian.
Have a personal conversation with God today.

Pray for God's direction in your life.

Pitching Your Tent Toward Sodom
(Read Genesis 11:27; 12:4; 13:1-13; 18:1-8, 16-22)



Genesis 11:27 Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

Genesis 12:4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Genesis 13:11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

Lot was Abraham's nephew, his deceased brother Haran's son. Since Abraham did not have any children, he took Lot to raise. As Abraham obeyed God and God blessed him and his wealth grew, Lot also became prosperous. There came a time when there was not enough pasture for all the flocks, and the herdsmen began to argue about who should get the best pasture for the week. Abraham did not want any strife in his family; so he told Lot they must separate. Abraham let Lot choose. He said, in essence: "If you go right, I'll go left. If you go north, I'll go south." Lot should have honored his uncle by giving him first choice, but instead he took the selfish route and snatched up the well-watered plain of Jordan. It was a good land, and his flocks would, no doubt, thrive there.

Just as Lot, we cannot live on our parents' spiritual experience all of our lives. There is a time when we must take responsibility for our own relationship with God and choose which direction we will go. Will we build altars as Abraham did or pitch our tent toward the world like Lot?

At first, Lot stayed on the plains, but the city of Sodom began attracting his attention. It was, no doubt, more comfortable in the city with more conveniences, and since he did not have Uncle Abraham to protect him, he needed a place that was safe and secure. Besides there were people in the city which offered opportunities and companionship! The world has many attractions for us today. The Bible says, "Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom." He did not just jump right into the worldly attractions that Sodom offered, but little by little he convinced himself that Uncle Abraham's old-fashioned ways were outdated and Sodom was okay. We can get used to sin and darkness until it looks just as good as righteousness and light. One little social drink will not hurt, a little smoke now and then, one hit of drugs at parties, and the world and sin will have you hooked.

Moving closer to the world is never a good idea. We need to stay close to God and keep His commandments in mind. The devil is sly! He does not say, "If you try this sin, you will lose your salvation and joy." Or, "If you do this, you will wind up in jail." Or, "If you take this, you will become addicted." He just says, "Try it, it will not hurt you." "Just a little," are the devil's favorite words. It only takes one sin to keep you out of Heaven!

The story of Lot tells us of the destruction of Sodom. He lost all of his wealth, his wife, and part of his family, and he almost lost his own life. So, it did not do him any good to seek the comforts of sinful ways. We must always be on our guard against the devil's sly tactics to steal our salvation, for in the end if we seek the world, we will lose everything good God has given us. Are you "pitching your tent" or leaning toward things that will draw you away from Christ? Or are you, like Abraham, walking with God away from sin?

What are things that will pull you away from Christ, things that attract your attention? _____

What can you do to prevent being lured into worldly attractions? _____

Pray for God to always keep you close to Him.

DAY 8

Sin Consumes Those Who Stay Close to It
(Read Genesis 19:1-26)



Genesis 13:13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly....

Genesis 19:15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

I believe Lot knew Sodom was a wicked city; yet, he chose to live there because it was an easier way. The devil likes to tempt us with an easier way. Standing for right is not always popular or well accepted. You cannot "go with the flow" and still stand for Christ's way; they are usually opposite.

God can keep us in any situation, but when we put ourselves in a position where we can be tempted to go back into the sins that God delivered us from, we are not wise. Second Timothy 2:22-23 says: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes." When Joseph found himself in a tempting situation in Genesis 39:12, he ran. There is no need to stay where sin is. When we are children of the light, we want to walk in the light or stay in the light. But children of the darkness love darkness because their deeds are evil and they avoid the light.

Joshua 6:18 talks about keeping yourself "from the accursed thing." God will not jerk a cigarette out of your mouth; you have to keep yourself from picking it up. God will give you the grace or strength to leave it alone, but He will not force you to stop smoking. We must remove ourselves from sinful situations. Do not go in the liquor store or bar. If you are tempted with smoking, avoid the checkout with all the cigarettes; do not go to the store where you always bought them. A new life will require putting away some old habits and starting new ones.

Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire and brimstone. Everything and everyone around them were also destroyed because of their wickedness. If we choose to live with sin, God will, sooner or later, allow us to be destroyed. God is merciful and gives us an opportunity to escape, just as He did with Lot and his family. But if we act like Lot's sons-in-law and refuse to give heed to the warnings, we will be consumed just as they were. Consider Lot's wife who was on her way to salvation when she chose to look back to the old life. She turned into a pillar of salt and was lost because of her disobedience.

Sin can be likened to fire. It begins with a small spark but ignites everything that comes in contact with it. Fire will reduce large logs to a pile of cinders. Sin will reduce a soul to death and destruction. The habits of life will consume a healthy body and leave it ravaged with disease. First Thessalonians 5:22 says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." God wants a holy people. We should stay as far from sin as we can get. Sin will consume those who choose to live in it.

Is there anything in your life you should avoid? Something that will lead you to sin? _____

What sins in Sodom were so attractive? _____

Pray for God to keep you from all sin.

The Son of Promise and the Son of Bondage
 (Read Genesis 21:1-21)



If you look at this chapter as just a story, it will seem like a very unchristian thing to do. If you look at it in the light of the whole Bible, it shows us deep truths. We call this a type or a literal circumstance that shows us a spiritual meaning.

Sarah allowed her humanity and logical thinking to cause her to get ahead of God and doubt His promise. Genesis 18:10 reads, "And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him." Many years before this, God had made another promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2. He said, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." Sarah knew these promises, but she could not humanly understand how this could happen because she was already around 78 and Abraham was close to 87! Hagar was Sarah's bondmaid, an Egyptian woman who was possibly a gift from Pharaoh. She was to serve Sarah for life. So, she gave Hagar to Abraham to be his wife and bear him children, because she was younger and Sarah could see no other way.



Hagar and Abraham had a son named Ishmael. After his birth Hagar taunted Sarah because Sarah could not have children, and now Hagar's son was the heir to all Abraham's wealth; but this was not the son of God's promise. When we fail to wait on God, we also will get in God's way of performing His perfect will. It will give the devil ways that he can torment us. But God keeps His promises. "In due time" Sarah had a son, and his name was Isaac, the son of promise.

Sarah told Abraham that Hagar and Ishmael had to go. It hurt him, but he packed provisions to last them until they reached the next town and sent them away. Unfortunately, they got lost and ran out of food and water. The KJV translation makes it sound like Ishmael was a little toddler, but he was at least 12 years old and more likely between 15 and 18.

Galatians 4:21-31 explains the type. Galatians 4:23-26 tells us: "But he who was of the bondwoman [Ishmael] was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman [Isaac] was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Revelation 21:2 says, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The church is referred to as the bride of Christ and the new Jerusalem. Revelation 21:9 says, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." We know the Lamb is Christ and the Lamb's wife is the Church of God.

Hagar was a type of bondage, or sin, and the Old Testament law, which could never make a person completely free from sin. Animal sacrifices could never take away the sin from God's sight. Sarah is the type of the freedom from sin we have in the New Testament and the promises God has made to His people. We read in Hebrews 10:1, 9-10: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect... Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first [the Old Testament law signified by Hagar and Ishmael], that he may establish the second [the New Testament signified by Sarah and Isaac]. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Thank God we are under the new and better covenant, which gives us the privilege to live free from the bondage of sin.

What did you learn from this lesson? _____

Pray for God to help you understand His Word.

DAY 10

Sacrifices—Abraham's, God's, and Ours (Read Genesis 22:1-19)



Genesis 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

A test is given in school to evaluate the progress of each student, to see if they have learned the material that is needed to go on to greater knowledge. In verse 1 of Chapter 22, the word "tempt" means to test, try, or prove. God knows exactly where we are, but He needs to show us how He sees us. Abraham passed this test of faith with great success. When God asks us to sacrifice or give up the things dear to us, He has a plan that will work for our good. In this case, God wanted to show future generations a likeness of the lamb that would be provided as a sacrifice for our sin.

Abraham knew Isaac was the son God had promised him. Genesis 17:19 says, "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." He knew God had power to raise Isaac from the dead. In Genesis 22:5 Abraham told his servants, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." He knew God was just and righteous. He trusted God with everything, even the things he loved the most in this life. Because he trusted God completely, he rose early and set off to accomplish the deed God had requested. He did not procrastinate, he did not question God, but he just simply obeyed. If we can learn to obey quickly and completely, we will be successful in our Christian life.

Verse 8 says that "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." We know that in verse 13, Abraham saw "a ram caught in a thicket" and sacrificed it instead of Isaac; but there is a deeper truth to be discovered as well. In the New Testament, Jesus is called "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The burnt offering was made to atone for sin. Jesus is our atonement for sin. He is the lamb that was offered in our place. Jesus is the lamb that God provided for the sacrifice to atone for our sins.

Genesis 22:18 says that in Abraham's children "all the nations of the earth [shall] be blessed." Every nationality can be saved through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary. In John 3:16 Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Since God was willing to sacrifice His only Son, and Jesus was willing to be that sacrifice so you and I could be saved from sin, should we be less willing to sacrifice our own will and our own way that we might help others find this wonderful salvation? How can I give less than my all to Him?

Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son.

God was willing to sacrifice His Son.

What are we willing to sacrifice for God?

Pray for your friends to see Jesus in you.

A Love Story
(Read Genesis 24:1-67)



Genesis 24:7 The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

27 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

God told Abraham many years before Isaac was born that He would make him a great nation and he and his family would inherit the land of Canaan. Lot's children had taken husbands and wives from the city of Sodom, and they had been destroyed. Abraham wanted Isaac to have a companion who would worship the Lord God and not bring the heathen idols into their home. Abraham trusted God to supply the need Isaac had for a wife.

God has a plan for us as well, but we must seek for it. We must believe God's promise to supply all of our needs, and we must trust Him with every part of our lives. God does not want us to find a companion from just anywhere. Just as with Lot, if we marry someone who does not worship God, it will be a constant struggle and true worship will be difficult. Because of that, possibly our family may not choose to worship the true God and be lost.

Pray that God will guide you to the companion He wants you to have. Isaac did not see anyone he could marry, but God knew exactly where to find her! The servant, in verse 8, was told to not take Isaac back where he was from; keep living in the Promised Land. We must never go back to our sinful past to find a companion. God will bring the right person to the Promised Land for you. The servant, no doubt, traveled many days and was praying all the way that he would find the right person for Isaac to marry. You also need to pray earnestly that God will lead you to the person who is right for you.

This love story begins with God's love for Abraham. Then, Abraham loved God so much that he willingly obeyed His call to come to a special place. Together they went through good times and bad times, trusting each other. God gave Abraham a son named Isaac, whom Abraham loved dearly, but never more than God. Because Abraham was faithful in his worship to God, his servants also loved God. When the servant brought the God-given woman to Isaac, Isaac fell in love on the spot. God's love story carried on through generations.

First John 4:7-12, 16 says: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God ... for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [atonement] for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another ... If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.... God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." This same sweet love story goes on yet today. When we love God and He loves us, He will guide us into more and more love.

Did you learn anything new from this lesson? _____

Can you trust God to find a companion for you just as Abraham trusted his servant?

Pray for God to guide your life as He guided the servant.

Do Not Sell Your Birthright!
(Read Genesis 25:19-34)



Genesis 25:23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

32 And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

Exodus 13:14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:

15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.

Esau said in verse 32, "What profit shall this birthright do to me?" The birthright carried with it an inheritance of a double portion of the father's wealth, and the claim to the priesthood for the family or the spiritual leader. Esau did not value his birthright. He did not care about being a spiritual leader or even about the family fortune or representing the father's name. He was only looking at the present moment; he was hungry, very hungry.

Exodus 13:14-15 is an example of the importance of the firstborn son. When the death angel passed through Egypt, all the firstborn sons were killed except the Lord redeemed (or bought back) the firstborn sons of Israel. They were redeemed by the blood of a lamb that was smeared on the door post, which is symbolic of the blood of our lamb, Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from the destruction of sin and eternal damnation.

The devil would like us to devalue the inheritance we have received through Jesus Christ. Romans 8:14-17 says: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Jesus is the firstborn of the Father—we are joint heirs with Christ! Hebrews 5:5-6 tells us that Christ was made our "high priest." At Christ's death, the veil in the temple was torn in half, making the way for us to come into the presence of God where only the high priest could go under the Old Testament Law. Philippians 4:19 says He will supply all our needs! What an inheritance! Christ will make us spiritual leaders to our family and friends so that we can lead them to this wonderful salvation. The devil wants you to see only the immediate trial and blind you to the wonderful inheritance that is so rich. Do not be as foolish as Esau and sell your birthright for something as small as a bowl of soup that has no lasting value.

What are the advantages of a birthright? _____

We are heirs with Christ. What advantages do we have? _____

Pray for your family.

**Do Not Leave God's Promised Land
(Read Genesis 26:1-35)**

Genesis 26:2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

3 I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

28 And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee.



Isaac was doing fine. He had a pretty wife, nice family, increased wealth, and then there was a famine. Famine is a time of hunger, usually because of a lack of rain, poor growing season, or disaster of some sort. Life is full of ups and downs, good times and trouble. When we get saved, we should not expect to float to Heaven on a soft cushion of ease, because we will surely be disappointed!

During these times of famine, it was common for families or tribes to move to another country where there was food. Isaac packed up his family and started looking for better pasture. God is always watching out for His children, even when hardships come our way. He saw that Isaac was tempted to leave the very inheritance that God had given Abraham his father and move to Egypt, which is symbolic of a sinful life. It is true that there was a famine in Canaan or the Promised Land but going back into sin is certainly not the answer. God has promised He would never leave or forsake us, but we have to endure some hardships and trust His guiding hand.

God reminded Isaac of the promises He had made to Abraham and had passed on to generations following. In verse 4 God said, "... in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "All nations" includes you and me, but how are we blessed in Abraham? It was through faithful Abraham's children that Jesus Christ was born bringing salvation to all mankind. That is an awesome promise!

Isaac listened to God and stayed in the Promised Land, and God blessed him abundantly. Verse 12 says that Isaac "sowed ... and received [reaped] an hundredfold [or 100 percent]." God rewarded his obedience, and He will reward our obedience as well. Trials do not last forever, although sometimes it seems they will never end. But if we do the sowing, God will do the blessing! Verse 28 tells us that when King Abimelech paid Isaac a visit, he could see that God was blessing Isaac. Sometimes we feel like we are just not accomplishing anything for the Lord, that we are not the witness that we would like to be. But if we will be obedient to God, His blessings will be obvious to those around us, and we can show them the blessing an obedient life will bring.

The last two verses in this chapter are a quick reminder to us that God wants us to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39), or marry the one He chooses for us. Abraham did not want Isaac to marry someone from the heathens in Canaan. It was a "grief of mind" to Isaac when his son Esau married a Hittite woman. As we go farther into the Book of Genesis, we will find that God tells His people to drive out the Hittites along with the other nations dwelling in Canaan. Do not leave God's Promised Land, even to find a companion; God knows who will help you grow spiritually and who will make living for God very difficult.

What was God's promise to Abraham? _____

Why should we stay with the truth today? _____

Pray for God's guidance.

Jacob Gets the Blessing
(Read Genesis 27:1 – 28:9)



Genesis 27:36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

Genesis 28:3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

4 And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Esau is much like people today; he wanted the material blessings without the responsibilities. Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." When we desire spiritual blessings God will see that we get them. Esau was not interested in the spiritual blessing when he sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup; he despised it (Genesis, Chapter 25). The birthright would have made him the spiritual leader of the family. He was now looking for the material things, the power to rule over people, the things he had disdained earlier. God looks at our heart. He knew what was in Esau's heart, things such as, murder, hate, and disregard for spiritual responsibilities. Be careful what you allow your heart to seek after. Luke 12:34 says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

It would not be right for us to be as devious as Rebekah. She remembered what God had said to her when the twins were born. God told her in Genesis 25:23 that "the elder shall serve the younger." God has ways of bringing His will to pass and really does not need our help, but we get in His way sometimes. The law of sowing and reaping was as true in their day as it is in ours. Jacob was sent away, and we will find that he also was tricked. Rebekah never got to see him again because she died before he returned many years later.

Isaac reminded Jacob of the blessing God had given to Abraham many years before, that he would inherit the land of Canaan and be a mighty people. Canaan is symbolic of our Christian life where we can have the blessings of God on our lives and enjoy the milk and honey of the Word and Spirit guiding us through this strange land to our Heavenly home. If you will seek the Lord with your whole heart, He said He would be found of you (Jeremiah 29:13). Finding Jesus is the greatest blessing anyone can ever have! Speaking of that, Jacob received the blessing God gave to Abraham. Genesis 18:18 says that in him (Abraham) shall all the nations of the world be blessed. That blessing came through Jacob's son Judah as the child named Jesus Christ.

Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. What are people selling their spiritual blessings for today? _____

Esau said in Genesis 27:36 that Jacob "took away my birthright" when really he sold it. How do people today "sell" their souls? _____

Pray for your family.

**The Door of Heaven
(Read Genesis 28:10-22)**



Genesis 28: 17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Have you ever been in a place where you just felt like God was hovering over you? I hope so; it is a wonderful place to be! Here we find Jacob leaving family, friends, and everything familiar to him and traveling toward his maternal grandfather's home (Genesis 28:2). At the end of a long, tiring day, Jacob found a place to camp and used a rock for his pillow. When Jacob awoke, he realized he had dreamed about a ladder from Heaven to earth with angels going up and down. God spoke to Jacob and renewed the covenant He had made with Abraham years before (Genesis 13:14-16). God had also spoken to Isaac with the same promise (Genesis 26:2-5). Possibly, this was the first time God had spoken directly to Jacob, and it made him afraid.

When God speaks to us, we never forget it! Wherever we hear His voice, it is the house of God, and where we accept Him as our Lord, it is the gate of Heaven. When God first came to me, I also was afraid because of sin in my heart and life. But coming to the gate of Heaven changed my life. Like Jacob, I set a memorial, not a physical pile of rocks, but in my mind, a definite place where I met God and where God and I made a covenant. When Jacob poured oil on his memorial stone, it was an act of consecration, or setting that place apart to the worship of God. We will also want to consecrate ourselves to God. We will not pour oil on a literal rock, but we should give ourselves, body, soul and spirit to God's service.

The name *Bethel* means "the house of God." Abraham built an altar and worshiped God there (Genesis 12:8; 13:3-4). It was here that Jacob made a vow to God. What he was saying, in essence, was, "If God will be with me, He shall be my God." It would be many years before he came back to this place, but he had the assurance that God would guide him in his long journey. He accepted this promise on faith. We also have to trust God to guide us and then make our vow to follow His guiding hand.

At the end of Jacob's vow, he promised to give back to God the tenth of all that God had given him. *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament* says: "The honored guest is treated as one of the family. Ten is the symbolic number of the whole family: a tenth is a share of the whole. The Lord of all receives one share as an acknowledgment of His sovereign right to all." We also should honor God by giving a tenth of our earnings in tithes to God.

Describe your gate of Heaven, or the time and place you made a covenant with God. _____

Find a special place where you and God can talk.

Pray for God to be very close to you today.

Blessings Fulfilled
(Read Genesis 28:1-15; 29:31-35; 30:1-24)



Genesis 28:3 (Isaac speaking to Jacob) And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

4 And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

13 (The Lord speaking to Jacob) And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

As we move on through the Book of Genesis, we will find Isaac's blessing and God's promise is fulfilled. Jacob obeyed Isaac's request that he take a wife of Laban's family. Obeying the people God has given us, such as parents, pastors, and teachers, has great benefit. They are watching for our soul and have greater insight than we do.

As you read in Genesis, Chapters 29-30, and then in Exodus 1:1-7, you will see that Jacob had twelve children who multiplied and became a multitude of people called the children of Israel. God does not just make idle conversation. Everything He says, He means. Jacob did not see the Lord's words fulfilled the next day or even the next year. Abraham did not see the promise in his lifetime, but that did not mean God had forgotten or that it would not come true. God works in His time and in His own way. Do not get weary waiting on God's promises to be fulfilled. They are more sure than the sunrise! All through the Old Testament, we read of people waiting for the promised Messiah, and when every prophecy was fulfilled, Christ was born. Genesis 28:14 says, "... and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Galatians 3:14 says, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." "All the families of the earth" include you and me!

Just as God's promise was passed from Abraham to Isaac and then on to Jacob, Jacob passed it on to his children. We need to pass our blessings on as well. An old poem says,

*We are not storerooms but channels;
 We are not cisterns but springs,
 Passing our benefits onward,
 Fitting our blessings with wings.*

Author unknown

As God blesses us with truth and understanding, we should be willing to tell others of the great treasures God has given us. There are many promises in the Word of God, and we can take each one of them as our own. Do not be afraid to stand on God's promises. They are true because He is true. It is always safe to trust God. Promises are to be kept, and God always keeps His. As a child of God, you must keep your promises also, whether you make them to God or to your fellow man. Keep your promises.

Find a promise in the Bible, and make it yours. Write it down, and read it frequently. _____

Memorize poem in this lesson.

Love at First Sight
(Read Genesis, Chapters 28 and 29)



Genesis 28:1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

8 And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

9 Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

Genesis 29:11 And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

As in Lesson 11, we find a Godly man looking for a wife. At this time Canaan was still filled with idol worshipers, and Jacob's father said do not marry someone who does not serve our God. So Isaac sent him off to his uncle Laban's house. If we look at Genesis 19:14, we find that Lot went to his sons-in-law to warn them of the destruction that was to come on the city. They disregarded his plea and were consumed in Sodom's destruction. Be very careful of the person you date because you might fall in love with them, and God would not be pleased with a marriage to a person who does not love God's ways. Philippians 4:19 tells us, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

God promised Jacob He would go with him and keep him in all places that he went, and Jacob trusted God, as we also should trust His promises. Daddy Isaac had said to take a wife of Uncle Laban's daughters. Do you think Jacob could have had a few worries about the things we worry about? "Will she be ugly? Will God really ask me to marry someone I do not even like?" God knows exactly what and who we need. We cannot see the future, but God can, and He has a beautiful plan for our life. Do not mess it up!

Esau, who felt he had been cheated out of the birthright and the blessing, decided to try to fix things up with his father. So, he went to the sons of Ishmael to get a wife. Ishmael was Abraham's son, but he was not the son of promise. This is like doing some or part of what your parents told you to do, but not doing exactly what they said. Partial obedience is complete disobedience. Someone who is a good person, has good morals, but just does not serve God as God requires in the Bible will not please "the Father." Only complete obedience will please God.

Thus, Jacob dedicated his life to God at Bethel and headed on his way with God's promise to bless his life. When he got close to Haran, he found shepherds waiting to water their sheep. He asked them about Uncle Laban's family, and they told him everyone was well. "As a matter of fact, here comes daughter Rachel right now!" Wow! It is great when God answers your prayer right away! It does not always happen like that, but Jacob must have needed some reassuring. He was so excited that he disregarded all the local customs and watered Rachael's sheep before anyone else had a chance to complain.

Think about this: a total stranger comes dashing up to you, waters your sheep when it is not even your turn, kisses you, and then breaks down in tears! He finally gets control of himself enough to tell you he is related. I would say, he took her breath away! She did what every good girl should do; she ran home and told Daddy!

When given a chance, Jacob asked her dad if he could marry her. He did not have any money. So, he worked seven years for the privilege of marrying Rachael. Genesis 29:20 says, "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." He loved her until death parted them. That is the kind of love God will give to you if you will be patient and wait for His direction. Hebrews 6:10 talks about the labor of love. Working for God is definitely a labor of love. When you love what you are doing and who you are working for, time flies by, and you enjoy it more than anything else.

Have you dedicated your life to God as Jacob did?

Can you improve on your obedience to God, your parents, and others who have authority over you? What steps can you take to be better? _____

Pray for God to send you the perfect companion.

Sowing and Reaping
(Read Genesis 29:15-30)



Genesis 29:15 And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?

18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast.

23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

25 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

26 And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

27 Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

Do you remember in Genesis, Chapter 25, when Esau sold Jacob his birthright? Esau was careless about important things, and Jacob was an opportunist. Jacob saw a good deal and took advantage of a hard circumstance. In Genesis, Chapter 27, Jacob's mother Rebekah told him how to get the blessing from his blind father Isaac. He tricked Esau and Isaac and was given the blessing. This made Esau extremely angry. No one likes to be tricked! God already had a plan for Jacob, and he could have let God work it out instead of using his own tactics.

Remember the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It is not just a good idea; it is Bible! Matthew 7:12 tells us, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." If you do not want people to cheat you, be sure you are honest in all your transactions. If you do not want people to gossip about you, be sure you are not a gossip.

Galatians 6:7 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In our Scripture today Jacob found out what it felt like to be tricked. Jacob did not reap exactly what he sowed, but the principle is there. Jacob never cheated anyone out of their wife, but he did use trickery to get what he wanted.

We may ask the question, "Why did this happen to me?" If you look back at your own actions, you may find similar situations where you were not right. On down in Chapter 30, you will find where Laban and his sons kept changing Jacob's wages. Jacob could have gotten mean and ugly, but he was learning to trust God with his problems. So, he kept talking to God. God took care of increasing Jacob's wealth.

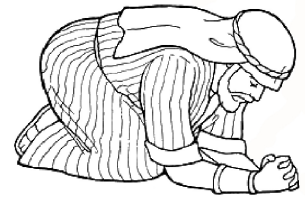
If you happen to get tricked, be sure to keep the right attitude and allow God to work things out for you. Romans 12:19 says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." God has the best ways to take care of problems.

How can you handle situations where you are being tricked or cheated? _____

What does "sowing and reaping" mean to you? _____

Pray for those who despitely use you and persecute you
(Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:28).

Making Peace
(Read Genesis 32:1-23)



Genesis 32:4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

Genesis 33:3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

When Jacob left home, his brother Esau was furious with him for his trickery and vowed to kill him after Isaac died (Genesis 27:41). Jacob did not take this lightly. His brother was a good hunter and with all Jacob's wives, animals, and servants he would be easy prey. But God had told him to return to Canaan. When God is leading you, He will also take care of you. The first verse tells us God sent angels to accompany and comfort him. It must have been comforting to know that the angels who had come to him on his way to Laban's house were still with him on his way back home. God does not leave us to take care of ourselves. He is an ever present help in the time of trouble (Psalm 46:1) and is with us in peaceful times as well.

Jacob well knew of his brother's intentions and feelings, but he desired peace. Every child of God desires peace. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." So, Jacob sent messengers to Esau to let him know he was coming and to assure him he was not in any need. Esau was well established in his own land. Further in the Scriptures, we will read about the Edomites, or the land of Edom. This was Esau's home. Jacob could have brazenly declared, "I have the birthright AND the blessing, and I am coming to take what is mine; deal with it!" But he chose the humble way. In verse 5 he said, "... that I may find grace in thy sight." If we are to make peace, we will have to be humble.

The report that came back was anything but comforting! Esau was coming, and 400 men were with him. Numbers have meant nothing to God. He can take a few and overcome many, but Jacob was very uneasy. I do not know how many servants Jacob had, but facing an angry brother with many people on his side was scary. So Jacob went to prayer. He reminded God of the command to return with the promise that He would be with him and the promise that his children would be as the sand of the sea. He asked for impossible things to happen. He was specific, and he prayed humbly. I am sure he was fervent! He believed God would take care of things, and he set to work. We can be confident also when we face trouble in our lives. When we are living in the center of God's will, we can ask largely and believe God will take care of every little detail.

Jacob began sending presents to Esau. There is an old saying that you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. If we will be kind to people and show a right and humble spirit, we will win them and solve many problems. If we choose to be harsh and boldly proclaim how right we are and how wrong they are, we will probably start a war of words and lose any opportunity to win souls for God. Jacob bowed seven times as he approached Esau, which was a sign of complete submission. Even though Jacob had the promise of God and the blessing of their father, he was able to be submissive to his brother. This is a good lesson for us. When God is guiding and blessing us, we do not have to be belligerent and aggressive. He will calm our enemies and make them our friends.

How can we handle "people problems" today? _____

If you are having problems with someone, pray and ask God how to handle the situation. He can make your enemy your forever friend.

Day 20

Wrestling (Read Genesis 32:24-28)



Genesis 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he [the man] saw that he prevailed not against him [Jacob], he [the man] touched the hollow of his [Jacob's] thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he [the man] said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he [Jacob] said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he [the man] said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he [the man] said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

When Jacob found himself in a hard circumstance, facing his brother who wanted to kill him, he turned to the Lord in prayer. He sent the wives, children, and livestock ahead of him because he needed to be alone with God. When we face life with all of its problems, we must go to God in prayer. It is good to have people pray with you, but there comes a time when you have to be alone with God. This was not a human who wrestled with Jacob. Genesis 32:30 says, "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." We may also have to wrestle all night alone with God in prayer.

When we think of wrestling, we think of fighting, struggling, trying to gain the upper hand. The end of James 5:16 says, "... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." If we are going to have our prayers be effective and gain the answers we need, we must struggle and persevere, or earnestly plead with God all night sometimes. You cannot just sit around and win a wrestling match. Be actively engaged. That is what we have to do when we pray, be actively engaged, wrestle with God, and struggle to make our petition known. Be determined to get an answer. God has given us many promises in the Bible, and you can remind God of what He has said. He will never go back on His word. We can pray with confidence because He never changes and He delights to bless His children.

Jacob's answer to prayer did not come without a price. He was crippled in his hip; verse 31 says "he halted," or limped. There are times we will pay a price for our miracles. We may have to suffer some verbal or possibly physical abuse to see a soul get saved. But whatever the cost, having God answer our prayer is well worth it.

When Jacob had prevailed, he asked for a blessing. He was asked about his name. *Jacob* means "supplanter," or heel catcher. In Genesis 25:25-26 we read of the birth of Esau and Jacob—twins but very different. "And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob" God told Jacob's mother the younger would rule the older, which was opposite from the customs of the day. In verse 28 of our text, the blessing is given: "... Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." What a change—from a supplanter to a prince!

We also can have "power with God" when we will spend the time and effort to "wrestle" with God for the answers we need. Having God answer your prayer is very exciting and will change your life. There is nothing like God taking an impossible situation and working it out in ways we cannot even imagine. Try it!

Make a time and place to be alone with God.

Use that special time to pour out your deepest troubles;

then allow time to listen for God's response.

It may be just a still, small voice that will require being very quiet.

Pray fervently and earnestly for your friend.

**Coming Again to the House of God
(Read Genesis 28:16-22; 31:1-18; 35:1-15)**



Genesis 28:16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Genesis 31:3 And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

Genesis 35:2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

3 And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

When Jacob was leaving his home and family and everything familiar to him, God came to him in a dream and made him a promise. Jacob had a personal encounter with God, just as you and I have to come face to face, so to speak, with Him. The word *Bethel* means "the house of God." Jacob called it "the gate of heaven." Wherever it is, whatever you call it, you must find that place alone with God where you and God make a covenant.

Jacob lived in Syria with his uncle Laban for twenty years (Genesis 31:38). During that time he worked and "bought" his two wives. Then he made an agreement to work for "cattle," which could have been sheep, goats, oxen, donkeys, camels, or kine. Jacob had all of these when he left Syria! He had left home with nothing and returned a rich man because of God's blessing. In verse 13 of Chapter 31, God introduced Himself as "the God of Bethel" and said it is time to go back home.

In Chapter 35, Jacob prepared to meet with God again. I am so glad that we can have God dwelling with us all the time in all places in this Gospel Day! In Jacob's day, there were certain places and certain times God would meet with His people. When Jacob left, he was alone; he now had a family that he was responsible for. He wanted his family to join him in worship. When we are responsible for others, it is our duty to bring them to the place where we met God.

Before they could meet with God, Jacob instructed everyone with him to put away strange gods, take a bath, and put on clean clothes! Some things never change. God still requires His people to be holy—clean and undefiled before they come before Him for worship. He wants us to wear our very best when we come to the house of God. It may be old and full of holes, but if it is your best, He will accept it. If not, He rejects your offering. Parents are to be sure their family comes with them to worship and are dressed appropriately and know how to act in God's presence.

In Genesis 28:20-22 Jacob made a vow, or positively promised to do specific things. It reads: "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." God had kept His part of the promise; now it was time for Jacob to do his part. When we tell God, "If You will help me, I'll praise You," we need to keep our promise. We expect God to always be there at our faintest call, but He also expects us to do our part. Jacob promised to give God a tenth of all the increase God blessed him with. We call it *tithes*; we owe God more than we could ever repay. Do not rob God of praise or tithes because He is worthy.

Where is your "Bethel," or house of God—the place you meet with God? _____

How can you rob God of praise or tithes? _____

Pray for God to meet with you today.

Young Joseph—"I Do Not Understand!"
(Read Genesis 37:1-36)



Genesis 37:7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

Jacob had twelve sons. The youngest two, Joseph and Benjamin, were Rebekah's children. By the time they were born, Jacob was growing old. Rebekah died at Benjamin's birth. So, we can understand why Jacob loved Joseph, the son of his first love. Jacob gave him a coat of many colors, which made him stand out from his peers. His brothers were older and should have had more maturity than to allow jealousy to work on them, but jealousy knows no age limits. The older brothers must have been casting a bad light on Jacob's name by their actions in the community. So, Joseph talked to Jacob about it. As you can imagine, the brothers were less than pleased.

God had chosen Joseph for a special work, and He began to communicate with him in his teenage years. Back before cell phones and the internet, people paid attention to dreams. There are several places in the Bible where God communicated future happenings to people in dreams. Joseph told his brothers about the dream of their sheaves bowing down to his sheaf. His brothers saw him as a kid with a good imagination and a big ego. When he told the whole family about the dream of the sun, moon, and stars bowing to him, even his father rebuked him, but Jacob tucked it in the back of his mind and wondered what it meant. His brothers called him the dreamer and allowed hatred to grow in their hearts.

The hatred grew until one day when Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers to be sure they were safe, they conspired to kill him on the spot. Reuben talked them out of it and was planning to send him back home later in the day, but Judah saw a caravan going to Egypt and got the idea to sell him! So nine brothers (Benjamin was not with them, and Reuben came back later to find Joseph gone) split twenty pieces of silver. This was a decision they had to live with for many, many years. One sin always leads to another; they had to lie to their father about finding Joseph's coat covered in blood. When he would not be comforted, they may have had some second thoughts, but they were in too deep to confess now! That is a lie the devil will tell you as well. It is always best to be honest and open, even about misdeeds because it just gets worse as time goes on.

We know Joseph was just a young man when he was sold into slavery in Egypt. The customs were different, the food was different, and the language was different. What extreme changes he endured, going from the favorite son to just another body to be used for undesirable tasks. I feel certain Joseph had some questions about his circumstances, such as: "Why did this happen to me? I have always tried to be good, why would God allow bad things to befall me? Will Father come and rescue me? How could my brothers do this evil deed and get by with it?" We have many questions also, but God knew exactly what was happening, and He never deserted Joseph even though it must have felt like it! God was there all the time and was preparing him for future events that Joseph could not understand. God said He will never leave nor forsake us. Trust Him; He is working on a specific plan in your life as well.

Have you ever felt like God and everybody deserted you? God will never leave you even when friends and sometimes family let you down. What are some things you need to remember to encourage yourself during hard times?

How can we know God has a plan for our life and that He will never leave us? _____

Pray for someone who is going through a hard place in their life.

**Joseph—Blessed Because of Joseph
(Read Genesis 39:1-23)**



Genesis 39:2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

Are people around you blessed because of your connection with God? Joseph went through some very difficult places, but his connection with God remained strong. He could have said: "I will not cooperate with anyone. Slavery is wrong. I have been wronged. I am going to be grouchy and contrary!" He could have, but he did not. He gave Potiphar an honest day's work, worked to the best of his abilities, and God blessed Joseph and Potiphar. Joseph won Potiphar's respect and trust by showing a good attitude. If our attitude is surly and unkind or rebellious, we will not prosper with God or man.

Joseph was left alone to manage the whole household. He did not have to be watched to be sure he would work and not take extra long breaks or extended lunch hours. Joseph did his job. He did not cheat in any way. His work ethic was exemplary. He must have learned it from his father Jacob, because his brothers were not as careful. We, as Christians, also need to be trusted by the person we must answer to. Would they be surprised if we showed up to work late, or do they just expect it? Do we turn our projects in on time, or are they always making exceptions for us? A Christian should be the best employee in the building.

Did you know sexual harassment was around in Bible times? Just when things were going great, the devil slipped a temptation into Joseph's life. He had an opportunity to do wrong. I feel certain Potiphar married a beautiful woman because his position would allow for that, and Joseph was young, good looking, and prosperous, but most of all, he was a God-fearing man. Joseph had a high regard for the God of his father Israel. He said in verse 9, "... how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He would not defraud his master, and even more importantly, he would not commit a wicked deed against God. This was not just a once-and-done temptation; she was after him daily. I am sure the trial seemed endless, but we need to take his example and stay as far away from temptation as possible. When she took hold of his coat, he left it and ran! Matthew Henry said in his commentary on these Scriptures, "It is better to lose a good coat than a good conscience." When things are going great, watch out! The devil might set you up for a great temptation, but you can stand as strong and faithful as Joseph.

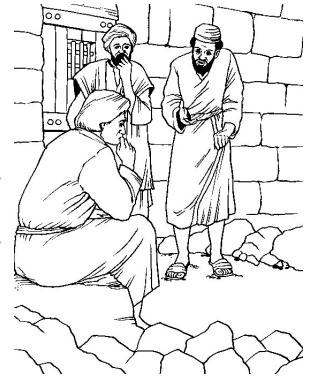
Even in the dungeon, Joseph kept his Christian attitude, and God blessed him and gave him favor with his overseer. He was trustworthy and kept Godly principles working even in the worst conditions. It is easy for us to grumble and complain and even get haughty in our attitude, but if we will allow God to work in us and through us, He will take the worst circumstances and work good for us out of them and bless those around us as well.

Are people around you blessed because of your connection with God?

Do you need to adjust your attitude, especially when things go wrong? What can you do to be a better Christian example? _____

Pray for someone who is showing a bad attitude, yourself included.

**Joseph—A God of Details
(Read Genesis 40:1-23)**



Genesis 40:2 And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

3 And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.

6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad.

14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Sometimes it is hard for us to remember that God has everything under control. Looking at Joseph's circumstances from a human point of view, there was no way out of the dungeon! There was no one to plead his case, no one to miss him, no reason to have mercy—just a life wasted. But when God is on your side, you do not need anyone else. The chief butler and the chief baker offended Pharaoh in the same day. Pharaoh must have been grouchy! We do not know how many times he got angry and just had the offender killed on the spot. But the God who watches every detail intervened that day. These two men were sent to the captain of the guard, whose name was Potiphar! If they would escape or die and Pharaoh wanted to see them, Potiphar would be in terrible trouble. So, they were put in the dungeon where Joseph was in charge. He still trusted Joseph!

As I said in an earlier lesson, dreams were very important in those days, and the God of details sent a dream to the baker and the butler on the same night. I cannot imagine anyone in a dungeon being exuberantly happy, but when Joseph made his rounds in the morning, these two men must have looked awful. Being the observant and caring person he was, he asked them what was wrong. They woefully told him they had dreamed, and there was no one to interpret. Joseph did not just brazenly jump in and say, "Hey! You are in luck because I interpret dreams!" Instead he said, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them" (verse 8). The dreams were very detailed, and God gave Joseph the interpretations. This is one of the few places we see the human side of Joseph: he asked for help in getting out of this undeserved prison. Something we should notice here is that Joseph did not withhold bad news from the baker. We must be completely honest with God's message; it might be the final warning from God to a soul who is lost. In 1 Samuel 3:15-18 young Samuel was afraid to show priest Eli what God had told him, but he did it anyway; we call him a great prophet. Be true to souls.

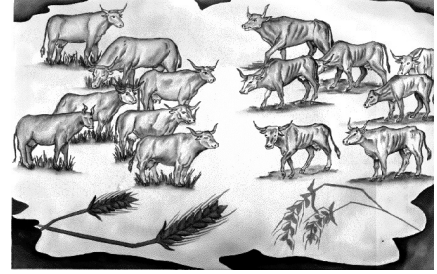
God cares about the details of our life. He cares when we are sad or bad things happen to us. He waits for us to call on Him for help because He delights to help us. He cares about the big things and the little things. God is in charge of all things. He is the master planner. Just look at the universe or the workings of the human body. It did not just happen that the butler and baker were committed to Potiphar. It was not just a coincidence that Joseph had dreams and God showed him a part of their meaning. It was not just a freak accident that Joseph ended up in Egypt and came to power shortly before a terrible famine. God sees the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9-10). We can trust Him to take care of the tiniest details of our life as well as the major issues. God's power is unlimited, and His knowledge is all-encompassing. That means He knew you and your sins when Christ was hanging on the Cross. He loved you and saw good in you. God will take care of the details of your life if you will let Him.

How has God helped you in a hard situation? Did He take care of details? _____

How can you pay attention to details in your life in a better way? _____

Ask God to take care of the details in your life.

**Joseph—God's Timing
(Read Genesis 41:1-57)**



Genesis 41:1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.

8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

9 Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

When God chooses to keep secrets, no man can understand. That is just what happened in verse 8. Pharaoh had a dream, and no one could tell him what it meant. Isaiah 55:9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." If God chooses to keep us in the dark, there is no one who can understand, and when He chooses to show us light and understanding, we will never forget it.

Second Peter 3:8-9 says: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." When God makes a promise or sends a dream, it will come to pass. Just because it does not happen overnight does not mean that God forgot; it means it is not time yet. Our time is limited, God's time is infinite; we want immediate gratification, God moves in His time. Joseph asked the butler for his help in getting out of the dungeon, and yet two long years (or 728 days) later, Joseph saw no change in his situation or future. He was in a dungeon and would not hear the news that the king had a dream until the next prisoner came down. Patience is a hard virtue to obtain. Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Joseph could have gotten a bad attitude toward God and lost hope and confidence in God, but he did not. When we do not see answers to our prayers right away, we might get pouty and accuse God of not loving us and not being faithful to His promises. If we will just stand still, we will see God move, but only in God's time, not ours.

When the butler finally remembered Joseph and mentioned him to the king, things really started to happen fast. When the king looked at Joseph, he said, "I have heard you interpret dreams." Joseph's reply in verse 16 was, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Joseph stayed humble before God and acknowledged Him in all the places he went (Proverbs 3:6). Joseph went from "zero to hero" in a day, but verse 38 tells us the secret: everyone could feel the Spirit of God working in him. We are blessed to live in a day when the Spirit of God will live in anyone who will invite Him in. Had the butler remembered sooner, Joseph would have missed this opportunity and messed up the whole plan. We must allow God to work in His time and not try to hurry things up.

Are you getting impatient to get a companion or a job or have a prayer answered? What can you do to be patient like Joseph? _____

Ask God to help you remember it is not about our timing but about His time.

**Joseph—Condemnation
(Read Genesis 42:1-38)**



Genesis 42:21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

I hope you will read the whole forty-second chapter to get all the details. The children of Israel were living with guilty consciences because of selling their brother Joseph into slavery and then lying to their father, saying they had found his coat covered with blood. Father Jacob could not be comforted, and his sons saw his grief every day. To make matters worse, there was a famine in Canaan, and they were having a hard time feeding their families and herds.

Jacob heard there was corn in Egypt, and people were traveling far to buy it. He told his sons to go buy some for the family. Benjamin was to stay home, and the other ten sons were to travel the great distance to Egypt. The distance between Jerusalem, Israel, and Cairo, Egypt, is at least 400 miles! I am not sure what city they went to in Egypt or their exact location in Canaan, but it was not a short trip any way you count it.

The sons of Israel were told they would have to see the ruler named Zaphnathpaaneah (Genesis 41:45) to buy corn. When they finally got an appointment with him, he was hard on them! Speaking through an interpreter, he told them they were nothing but spies trying to find out how bad the famine was in Egypt. They did their best to convince him they were good men, all brothers, and they had one brother yet at home and one brother was deceased. Joseph told them they would have to bring the twelfth brother to Egypt, or he would not believe they were telling the truth. He put them in custody for three days.

Joseph heard them talking when they did not think he could understand their language. They were feeling the condemnation for their sin of selling their brother and felt that God was not blessing them because of it. Condemnation means there is a verdict or sentence for breaking a law and the defendant feels the burden of his guilt.

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." I remember when the Spirit of God laid the weight of my sin on my heart. I knew I was guilty before God, and I was very sorry. The sons of Israel confessed their guilt, and so did I. It takes God showing us how very sinful we are, guilty of crucifying Christ afresh, knowing it was our sin that nailed Christ to the Cross. Numbers 32:23 says, "... be sure your sin will find you out." Condemnation leaves you with a heavy heart and a desire to be rid of the guilt of sin. In Joseph's day confession was the only relief for sin; in our day we must confess and forsake sin. Jesus Christ will cleanse our heart from sin and guilt (1 John 1:9).

Living with unforgiven sin and guilt is a hard life. Through faith in Jesus' blood we can say, as in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This means that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we no longer have to chase after the things of the world that do not satisfy and do wrong things we know we will feel guilty for, but we can live the way God wants us to live. We can have peace and joy and a clean, clear conscience, free from the condemnation of sin.

Explain how it feels when condemnation falls on you. _____

Explain how to get rid of condemnation. _____

Pray for God to bring condemnation on the people you are praying for so they can have a desire to get saved.

Joseph—Mercy
(Read Genesis 43:1-34)



Genesis 43:23 And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

28 And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

34 And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

According to Merriam-Webster.com, *mercy* means "charity, clemency, grace, leniency, a disposition to show kindness or compassion, implies compassion that forbears punishing even when justice demands it." We can see Joseph's mercy on his brothers. They deserved to starve to death in the famine or become bondservants to Joseph, but his love, compassion, and kindness are evident in our Scripture today.

The famine continued to get worse year after year, and Israel and his family were not exempt from its pain. Israel told his sons to go back to Egypt and buy more corn, but they reminded him they were not to see Zaphnathpaaneah, whom we know as Joseph, unless Benjamin was with them. Israel held out for as long as he could, but when his sons refused to go, he told them to take Benjamin and a gift, the money that was in their bags, and extra money as well. Judah promised to take care of Benjamin, and if anything happened to him, he would bear the blame forever. What a change from when Joseph begged for his life! It was Judah who came up with the bright idea to sell him into bondage.

When they got back to Egypt, Joseph sent them to his house, which was a little worrisome. They were told they would eat with Zaphnathpaaneah, second in command of all Egypt. They talked to the servant and told him they had found their money in the bags of corn when they got to the inn, but they had brought it back with gifts. The servant comforted them and told them, "... your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks" (verse 23).

Joseph seated the brothers according to their birth order and sent food to each. Typically, the eldest son should get more than the others, but Joseph sent Benjamin, the youngest, five times as much as any of the others. He was, no doubt, looking for the jealousy that had cost him his freedom, but it was not there. They had bowed to him again and done obeisance, which reminded him that God had predicted this occasion. Joseph was convinced that his brothers had truly changed.

There are a few things we need to consider in this Scripture. First, in verse 32, the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews. Egypt, a type of sin, and Israel, a type of God's people, cannot eat together. Sinners are not interested in spiritual "food"; it is foolishness to them. We cannot expect people who are not saved to understand why we are different. Next, the Israelites could not see Joseph's face without their brother Benjamin. We cannot see the face of God unless we have Jesus with us to plead for us. Last, God had mercy on us when justice said we were guilty and deserved to go to hell. We should always thank God for His mercy and longsuffering toward us when we were sinners.

What does mercy mean to you? _____

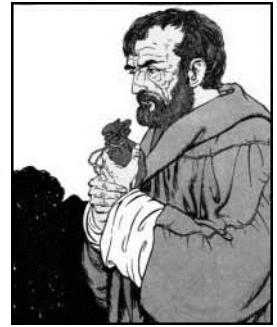
Tell of a time when God had mercy on you. _____

Thank God for His mercy to you and pray for those who need God's mercy.

Joseph—Guilty!
(Read Genesis 44:1-34)

Genesis 44:16 And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.



GUILTY! What a terrible word. One definition says it this way: "You are justly responsible for a grave breach of conduct. You have committed an offence that is subject to and deserving of penalty." The children of Israel had lived with the guilt of knowing they destroyed their brother Joseph's life. They could only imagine what might have happened to him. They believed he was dead, and it was their fault. After going to Egypt, facing the man who sold corn, not being able to communicate, and being falsely accused, they could feel more keenly what they had done, but there was no way to undo their wrong. You can say you are sorry for wrecking the car and mean it from your heart, but it does not take the dents out of the fender or pay for the damages. When you are guilty, there is a price to pay.

Now these brothers were in an awful position. The man who thought they were spies now had evidence that they stole Joseph's special silver cup. There was no use denying it, it was right there in Benjamin's sack. There were no words that could help them; there was no way out; they were guilty. They knew that God's wrath had caught up with them for their evil deed. The last part of Numbers 32:23 says, "... be sure your sin will find you out." You can cover up wrongdoing for a long time, but eventually, it will be obvious to all.

This is our position before God. When God brings conviction to our heart, there is no denying our guilt. There is nothing we can do to clear ourselves. We have no defense. We have sinned against God. He knows it, and we know it. When the guilty verdict is passed in a court of law, all that is left is judgment, or the sentence of punishment. The sons of Israel were in quite a predicament. They had told the servant if he found the cup, that person should die and the rest of them would be bondservants. The servant said that only the guilty would be a bondservant. No one else can take your guilt; you cannot blame others for what you have done. Either you are guilty, or you are not. When you stand before God in judgment, you cannot say it was someone else's fault, or if this or that would not have happened, you would not be guilty. God knows! You will have to bear the punishment for your own sins.

The servant asked the Israelites, "Why have you rewarded evil for good?" Jesus can ask us the same question. When Jesus has been so good to give us physical life and opportunity for spiritual life and we turn Him down and ignore His invitations to salvation, we are rewarding evil for all His good. God desires His goodness to lead souls to salvation, but if they refuse and reject it, He can and often brings the judgment that comes with guilt. If that is refused to the end of life, the only thing left is a sentence to eternal damnation—hell.

Joseph said that only Benjamin would be his servant, the rest were to go home to their father. Judah remembered his promise to return his younger brother and begged to take his place. Godly sorrow will make us sorry for our sin; worldly sorrow will make us sorry we got caught. God is looking for those who really feel the guilt and condemnation for their sin. They are not trying to blame someone else; they are not trying to bargain their way out of trouble but will say, "I am guilty. I deserve the punishment." Psalm 51:3 says, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." The only way to get rid of guilt is to acknowledge it to God, saying, "I have sinned, please forgive me." This is a sad lesson, but read on to the next lesson—forgiven!

Describe how it feels to be guilty. _____

Give an example of worldly sorrow. _____

Give an example of Godly sorrow. _____

If there is guilt in your life, ask God to forgive you right now. Pray for souls to find Godly sorrow so they can be saved.

**Joseph—Forgiven
(Read Genesis 45:1-28)**



Genesis 45:3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

Forgiven! What a blessed relief, the complete opposite of guilty. Jeremiah 31:34 says, "... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." To be rid of guilt is freedom. Joseph said: "Do not worry, I will take care of you, I'm not angry, I forgive you!" I am sure it was hard for the brothers to go from thinking they were in deep trouble to knowing this man who had been so rough with them was the brother they had sold into Egyptian bondage to hearing him say, "It is okay; I still love you."

Try to imagine the emotions the brothers went through. They had carried a guilty conscience for many years because of their sin. We know that the guilt continued to trouble them because of the things they said to each other when things did not go well with them in Egypt. They felt like God was bringing trouble to them because of their sin. They had hid the truth from their father and watched him grieve. They thought they would become slaves in Egypt and never see their families again, just as Joseph. Then, in a matter of minutes everything changed. Joseph, their brother, was standing in front of them saying, "I forgive you!"

This is how a sinner feels when he kneels before God and confesses all his sin. He feels so unworthy of God's love, but in a split second the blood of Jesus cleanses him from all unrighteousness and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Free from sin, free from guilt, a child of God. God says: "I love you, and I do not want you to go to Hell. I forgive you for putting Me on the Cross and for all the evil you have done." What a wonderful, indescribable feeling!

Ephesians 4:32 says, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." When it is your turn to forgive someone who has wronged you, remember to forgive just as Christ forgave you—quickly and completely. When you really forgive someone, you do not wait for them to ask for forgiveness. In your heart you forgive them, and if they ask, it is there waiting for them. When someone carries around unforgiveness, hate, and bitterness, it destroys the person carrying it while the person it is against is often not affected at all.

Everyone wants to feel forgiven, but not everyone is willing to humble themselves and ask for it. Saying, "I'm wrong, please forgive me," whether it is to a person or to God, is hard to do, but it is worth the feeling that comes with it. Romans 4:7 states, "Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

Tell how it feels to be forgiven. _____

Asking God to forgive you is good but forgiving someone who has hurt you is not always easy. Describe a situation where it would be hard to forgive. Think about how Christ suffered for sins He did not commit and yet forgave.

Read Genesis 50:15-21.

Do you think Joseph forgave them completely without harboring any hard feelings?

Ask God if you need to forgive someone or if you need to be forgiven.

**Trusting God's Promises
(Read Genesis, Chapters 46, 47, and 48)**



Genesis 46:1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

27 And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

Genesis 48:22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

In Genesis 46:1 the name *Beersheba* means "well of an oath." Years before, Abraham had dug a well. Water in the wilderness was very important. The servants of Abimelech, who was a Philistine, contested Abraham's right to the water. When confronted about the matter, Abimelech promised Abraham he would give the water rights back to him. Several times Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob used it as a place to sacrifice and seek God's face. Jacob stopped here on his way to Egypt. God told him it was okay to go to Egypt, that he would see Joseph, and God would bring his descendants back to the Promised Land. We should always check with God to be sure we are making good decisions. God said He would guide us, but if we never check with Him, we will get lost! It is great to have a GPS, but if you do not turn it on, it will not help you one bit.

Several times in the Book of Genesis, God made and renewed His promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel's descendants. It was called the Promised Land, or the land of milk and honey. Jacob, whom God renamed Israel, valued God's promises. He told his children he wanted to be buried in Canaan with his ancestors, who also believed God's promises. We, too, should trust God's promises because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). There are many promises in the Bible, and we can claim every one for our own. Matthew 28:20 promises God will be with us; you can trust Him. One estimate says there are 250 promises in the New Testament alone.

Another promise God made to Abraham was that He would make of him a great nation. If you remember, Abraham had one son, Isaac. When Jacob's family entered Egypt they numbered 70, including Joseph and his two sons. Exodus 12:37 says, "And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children." Despite the hardships Abraham's family had multiplied in 430 years from 1 to over 600,000. God keeps His promises.

Joseph suffered hardship and loss of freedom for years before God set him up as a ruler in Egypt. God does not overlook those who suffer for the sake of the Gospel. God is faithful and just; He keeps good records and pays good wages. In Joseph's case his family received twice as much inheritance as the rest of the children of Israel (Genesis 48:22). Israel had twelve sons, and each son became a tribe. When the land was divided in the Book of Numbers, you will notice there is not a tribe of Joseph but the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's two sons. That would have made thirteen tribes except the tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance of land; their inheritance was the priesthood.

There will be many places in the Bible as you study that you find the number twelve being used: the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve Apostles, and Revelation mentions twelve stars, gates, angels, foundations, and pearls.

If you have a trial, find a promise and hold on to it. God never fails.

What is your favorite promise? Do you have it memorized? _____

Why is it important to keep your promises? _____

Pray for a special soul to get saved because, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

**The Blessing of Judah
(Read Genesis 49:1-33)**

Genesis 49:8 Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

9 Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

12 His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

After seventeen years in Egypt, Jacob/Israel was about to die (Genesis 47:28-29). It was common in those times for the father to give blessings and prophesy the future of his children. So Israel's sons were called in, and he blessed them individually. I would like to spend time on what he said about Judah because from the tribe of Judah first came King David, then King Jesus.

Judah means "praise or celebrated." Judah's mother, Leah, was praising God for giving her another son. Israel took it farther, saying, "... thou art he whom thy brethren SHALL praise" As we said, King David came from the tribe of Judah. He was a very well-loved king and brought healing to the divided kingdom of Israel, thus the prophecy that, "... thy father's children [the nation of Israel] shall bow down before thee." He was a warrior and was victorious in most battles. (Read Psalm 18:39-40 for the fulfillment of Israel's words.)

Verse 9 talks about a "whelp," or cub, a lion that is "gone up," or is full and lies down, and an old lion. The tribe of Judah would be a strong leader for many years. A lion that is full will lie down and not bother prey even that is close at hand, but if he is disturbed or agitated, he will show his strength.

Verse 10 talks about the "sceptre," a "lawgiver," and "Shiloh." The "sceptre" is a stick or staff that designates authority. The Hebrew meaning of the word says it is used for punishing, writing, fighting, ruling, walking, and anything else you can do with a rod. In other books of the Bible, you find that the tribes were divided: one part was called Judah and the rest of the tribes were called Israel, not Dan or Gad or Reuben. They lost their individuality, but Judah did not. His "sceptre," or authority, remained strong. Hebrews 1:8 talks about Christ's sceptre being righteousness. He rules the nations with righteous judgment, and His authority is never ending.

Next is the lawgiver or scribe or one who decrees the law. If we are not often reminded of the laws of the land, we get careless or forget them. In Judah God set people who would remind them of the words of the law. He sent Jesus, the ultimate lawgiver who said He would give us the Holy Spirit that would teach us all things (John 14:26). Shiloh means tranquil and is also a name for Messiah, Jesus Christ. Revelation 5:5 calls Him "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David." John 12:32 says, "... if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Verses 11-12 tell us of the wealth and prosperity of Judah. Isaiah 55:1 shows us if we will lift up Christ, He will give us freely the wine of the Spirit and the milk of the Word of God.

Genesis 49:22-26 gives the blessing of Joseph. Can you identify any of the happenings in his life from the words his father spoke to him? _____

There are similarities between Joseph's life and the life of Christ. Can you think of any more?

Joseph was 30 when he started to rule; Jesus was 30 when He started His ministry.

Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver; Jesus was sold for 30.

Joseph was the savior of his people physically; Jesus is the Savior of all people spiritually.

Joseph was sold into Egypt; Jesus was taken to Egypt to hide.

Joseph forgave his brothers for their sin; Jesus forgives us for our sins.

Joseph had mercy on his brothers when they came to him for help;

Jesus has mercy on us when we seek Him in salvation.