

Explore the Bible®

DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

And he said, Let me go, for I am
dying. And he said, I will not let thee
go, except thou bless me.

And he said unto him, What shall I
bless thee with?

And he said, Ja'cob.

From Jacob to Israel

And he said, Thy name shall be called
no more Ja'cob, but Israel: for thou
hast thou power with God, and thou
hast prevailed.

And Ja'cob asked him, and said, Tell me,

I pray thee, thy name. And he said, My
name is Israel. And he blessed him there.


30 And Ja'cob called the name of the
place Pe-ni-el: for I have seen God face to face,
and my life is preserved.

31 ¶ And as he passed over to the other
side, he sent one upon him, and said, Thou
art dead.

32 Therefore the children of
Israel call the name of the place Pe-ni-el:
for they said, I have seen God face to face,
and my life is preserved.

Genesis 25–50

Chuck Kelley, General Editor

A white lamb with large, upright ears stands in a grassy field under a warm, golden light. The lamb is looking directly at the camera.

JESUS

Long ago, Jacob discovered he needed more than material wealth. He needed God to transform his life.

At a place named Bethel, God promised to bless Jacob. From a material perspective, the promise had been fulfilled. Jacob became wealthy with flocks, herds, and servants. Twenty years later, after wrestling all night with a heavenly visitor, Jacob discovered he needed more than material wealth. He needed God and God's transforming work in his life.

We, too, need God. We need His transforming work in our lives. In Jesus, we can experience life change. Jesus Christ was with God the Father before the world was created. He became human and lived among us. He lived a sinless life. He died on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins. God raised Him from the dead.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God's Son and accept Jesus' gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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ly Spirit,⁵ tasted God's good
wers of the coming age,⁶ and will
ray, because,⁷ to their own
rucifying the Son of God and
contempt.⁷ For ground that
n that has often fallen on it, and
getation useful to those who
reives a blessing from God:⁸ and
orns and thistles, it is worthless
cursed, and will be burned
⁹ Even though we are speak
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things connected with salva
not unjust; He will not forget
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» MEET THE WRITER



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A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



This study of Genesis 25–50 will explore the roots of the gospel. Earlier in Genesis, God made a covenant with Abraham. Now, the story of Abraham’s descendants unfold. Isaac, Jacob, and their children become the focal points. Sin, brokenness, and jealousy are present in abundance, making the necessity for transformation clear.

In the midst of all this brokenness, we will see God used imperfect people with imperfect lives to advance His perfect plans. We will watch how God transformed Jacob so completely he received a new name. Following Jacob’s story provides an opportunity to consider your own life story. How has faith transformed your life? Like Jacob, is there need for even further transformation? Who around you needs the transformation the gospel brings?

As we continue the journey through Genesis, notice the role of redemption in God’s plan. Joseph’s life demonstrates that difficult times are not an interruption of God’s work in us but rather a part of God’s redemption story. He is able to take those things intended for evil and redeem them for His good purposes. Both transformation and redemption are included in the story of every believer. These sessions will help you better understand your journey.

Christ came into the world to make transformation and redemption available to all who repent and believe. Special sessions will show how His birth fulfilled God’s promise to send a Messiah to save the world. We will also see why God’s work of transformation and redemption means every life is sacred. As you study Genesis 25–50, may God teach you why the gospel is such good news!

Chuck Kelley

Dr. Chuck Kelley is president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary..



INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

The Torah is the Hebrew name for the first five books of our Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Genesis is the first book of the Torah, or the books of the Law. Torah means “instruction” or “teaching.” The Greek word for the books of the Law is Pentateuch, which means “five scrolls.” Genesis is a Greek title, which means “The Beginning” or “Origin.” The Book of Genesis is the first book in the Old Testament.

Genesis is a book about God’s creation, man’s imperfection and sinful nature, and God’s plan for salvation and reconciliation. The book provides a history of the Hebrew people with stories about the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and their faith in God.

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF GENESIS AND WHEN?

Most Bible teachers believe Moses wrote the Book of Genesis around 1450 BC to 1410 BC. It was written in the Hebrew language. Moses went up to Mt. Sinai at different times. During those times God spoke to Moses. Moses wrote down all the words God told him.

WHY WAS THE BOOK OF GENESIS WRITTEN?

Moses wrote Genesis for God’s chosen people, the Israelites, to help them remember who God is, His promises, and His faithfulness. The Book of Genesis explains the beginning and how God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. During His creation, God made man and woman, Adam and Eve. Then Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God, which caused separation between people and God.

Genesis explains about the flood, and how God chose Noah to build the ark to save his family and animals. We see the story about the Tower of Babel and that God caused confusion of language and made the people scatter all over the world. The Book of Genesis shows God’s promise to Abraham to start a new nation. God also blessed Abraham with a promise of a Savior, Jesus Christ, to come from Abraham’s family line.

OUTLINE OF GENESIS

- I. Creation of Heaven and Earth (1:1–2:3)**
- II. The Human Family in and Outside the Garden (2:4–4:26)**
- III. Adam’s Family Line (5:1–6:8)**
- IV. Noah and His Family (6:9–9:29)**
- V. The Nations and the Tower of Babel (10:1–11:26)**
- VI. Father Abraham (11:27–25:11)**
- VII. Ishmael’s Family Line (25:12-18)**
- VIII. Isaac’s Family: Jacob and Esau (25:19–35:29)**
 - a. Struggle at birth and birthright (25:19-34)
 - b. Isaac’s deception and strife with the Philistines (26:1-35)
 - c. Stolen blessing and flight to Paddan-aram (27:1–28:9)
 - d. Promise of blessing at Bethel (28:10-22)
 - e. Laban deceives Jacob (29:1-30)
 - f. Birth of Jacob’s children (29:31–30:24)
 - g. Birth of Jacob’s herds (30:25-43)
 - h. Jacob deceives Laban (31:1-55)
 - i. Struggle for blessing at Peniel (32:1-32)
 - j. Jacob meets Esau and returns to Shechem (33:1-20)
 - k. Dinah, deception, and strife with the Hivites (34:1-31)
 - l. Blessing and struggle at birth (35:1-29)
- IX. Esau’s Family (36:1-8)**
- X. Esau, Father of the Edomites (36:9–37:1)**
- XI. Jacob’s Family: Joseph and His Brothers (37:2–50:26)**
 - a. The early days of Joseph (37:2-36)
 - b. Judah and Tamar (38:1-30)
 - c. Joseph in Egypt (39:1-23)
 - d. Joseph, savior of Egypt (40:1–41:57)
 - e. The brothers’ journeys to Egypt (42:1–43:34)
 - f. Joseph tests the brothers (44:1-34)
 - g. Joseph reveals his identity (45:1-28)
 - h. Jacob’s migration to Egypt (46:1-27)
 - i. Joseph, savior of the family (46:28–47:12)
 - j. Joseph’s administration in Egypt (47:13-31)
 - k. Jacob’s blessings (48:1–49:28)
 - l. The death and burial of Jacob (49:29–50:14)
 - m. The final days of Joseph (50:15-26)

WORD LIST

Abortion—killing a baby before the baby is born

Amulets—something people believe will give them power or protection from evil

Anoint—to pour oil over a person that is chosen to do a special work, for healing, or to remember

Beer-sheba [bee ehr-SHEE buh]—place where Isaac lived, Jacob left there to travel to Haran; the stopping place of Jacob on his journey to Egypt where Joseph was awaiting him

Berakhah—Hebrew word meaning blessing

Bethel—"House of God," the place where Jacob first met God

Bilhah [BIL hah]—the handmaid of Rachel; concubine to Jacob and mother of Dan and Naphtali

Conversion—to change completely

Covenant—an agreement

Deborah [DEB uh ruh]—Rebekah's nurse

Deceive—to trick, lie, pretend

Edom—the area southeast and southwest of the Dead Sea and the home of the descendants of Esau

Egypt—a land in northeastern Africa

Elizabeth—a relative of Jesus' mother, Mary, and mother of John the Baptist

Esau—the older twin born to Isaac and Rebekah

Famine—a time when there is no rain or crops, leading to starvation and hard times

Flesh—human desires and wants

Gabriel—an angel who delivers messages from God to people

Goshen [GOH shuhn]—area in Egypt occupied by the Hebrews from the time of Joseph until the exodus

Haran [HAY ran]—Abraham’s home (Gen. 11:31); the home of Rebekah’s brother, Laban; place where Jacob fled following Esau’s threat to kill him

Hebron—a city in the hill country of Judah about nineteen miles south of Jerusalem

Ishmaelites [ISH may el ights]—descendants of Ishmael (Abraham’s son by Hagar); a nomadic tribe of northern Arabia, the term “Ishmaelites” became a designation for desert tribes

Isaac—the son God promised to Abraham and Sarah

Jacob—the younger twin son born to Isaac and Rebekah, later became known as Israel

Joseph—Jacob and Rachel’s first son

Laban—Rebekah’s brother and Jacob’s uncle

Mesopotamia—a region where Laban lived

Paddan-aram [pay duhn-AY ram]—one of the principal cities of Haran; place where Jacob fled and married Rachel and Leah

Patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Peniel [PEN ih el]—place-name meaning “face of God”; location of Jacob’s wrestling match with the heavenly visitor (Gen. 32); also known as Penuel

Pharaoh—the title for the Egyptian king

Potiphar—Egyptian captain of the guard who purchased Joseph from the Midianite traders

Rebekah—Jacob’s wife and sister of Laban.

Reconciliation, Reconcile—to make a relationship right again

Sacred—holy or blessed

Sanctity—holiness of life

Shechem—a city in the hill country of Ephraim

Sovereign—someone who rules; God rules over everything

Tenth, tithe, one-tenth—giving one-tenth of your money, time, service, or what you have

Zachariah—a priest and the father of John the Baptist

Zilpah [ZIL puh]—Leah’s handmaid; concubine to Jacob and mother of Gad and Asher

BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

- ☐ 1. Genesis 25:19-26
- ☐ 2. Genesis 25:27-34
- ☐ 3. Genesis 26:1-11
- ☐ 4. Genesis 26:12-22
- ☐ 5. Genesis 26:23-35
- ☐ 6. Genesis 27:1-13
- ☐ 7. Genesis 27:14-29
- ☐ 8. Genesis 27:30-40
- ☐ 9. Genesis 27:41-46
- ☐ 10. Genesis 28:1-9
- ☐ 11. Genesis 28:10-22
- ☐ 12. Genesis 29:1-12
- ☐ 13. Genesis 29:13-20
- ☐ 14. Genesis 29:21-30
- ☐ 15. Genesis 29:31-35
- ☐ 16. Genesis 30:1-13
- ☐ 17. Genesis 30:14-24
- ☐ 18. Genesis 30:25-36
- ☐ 19. Genesis 30:37-43
- ☐ 20. Genesis 31:1-13
- ☐ 21. Genesis 31:14-21
- ☐ 22. Genesis 31:22-35
- ☐ 23. Genesis 31:36-42
- ☐ 24. Genesis 31:43-55
- ☐ 25. Genesis 32:1-12
- ☐ 26. Genesis 32:13-23
- ☐ 27. Genesis 32:24-32
- ☐ 28. Genesis 33:1-10
- ☐ 29. Genesis 33:11-20
- ☐ 30. Genesis 34:1-12
- ☐ 31. Genesis 34:13-24

MONTH 2

- ☐ 1. Genesis 34:25-31
- ☐ 2. Genesis 35:1-15
- ☐ 3. Genesis 35:16-29
- ☐ 4. Genesis 36:1-8
- ☐ 5. Genesis 36:9-43
- ☐ 6. Genesis 37:1-4
- ☐ 7. Genesis 37:5-11
- ☐ 8. Genesis 37:12-22
- ☐ 9. Genesis 37:23-36
- ☐ 10. Genesis 38:1-11
- ☐ 11. Genesis 38:12-18
- ☐ 12. Genesis 38:19-23
- ☐ 13. Genesis 38:24-30
- ☐ 14. Genesis 39:1-6
- ☐ 15. Genesis 39:7-15
- ☐ 16. Genesis 39:16-23
- ☐ 17. Genesis 40:1-8
- ☐ 18. Genesis 40:9-15
- ☐ 19. Genesis 40:16-23
- ☐ 20. Genesis 41:1-8
- ☐ 21. Genesis 41:9-14
- ☐ 22. Genesis 41:15-24
- ☐ 23. Genesis 41:25-32
- ☐ 24. Genesis 41:33-38
- ☐ 25. Genesis 41:39-45
- ☐ 26. Genesis 41:46-52
- ☐ 27. Genesis 41:53-57
- ☐ 28. Genesis 42:1-8
- ☐ 29. Genesis 42:9-17
- ☐ 30. Genesis 42:18-26
- ☐ 31. Genesis 42:27-38

MONTH 3

- ☐ 1. Genesis 43:1-10
- ☐ 2. Genesis 43:11-14
- ☐ 3. Genesis 43:15-22
- ☐ 4. Genesis 43:23-28
- ☐ 5. Genesis 43:29-34
- ☐ 6. Genesis 44:1-9
- ☐ 7. Genesis 44:10-17
- ☐ 8. Genesis 44:18-26
- ☐ 9. Genesis 44:27-34
- ☐ 10. Genesis 45:1-8
- ☐ 11. Genesis 45:9-15
- ☐ 12. Genesis 45:16-28
- ☐ 13. Genesis 46:1-7
- ☐ 14. Genesis 46:8-27
- ☐ 15. Genesis 46:28-34
- ☐ 16. Genesis 47:1-12
- ☐ 17. Genesis 47:13-17
- ☐ 18. Genesis 47:18-26
- ☐ 19. Genesis 47:27-31
- ☐ 20. Genesis 48:1-12
- ☐ 21. Genesis 48:13-22
- ☐ 22. Genesis 49:1-12
- ☐ 23. Genesis 49:13-21
- ☐ 24. Genesis 49:22-28
- ☐ 25. Genesis 49:29-33
- ☐ 26. Genesis 50:1-14
- ☐ 27. Genesis 50:15-21
- ☐ 28. Genesis 50:22-26



THE DECEPTION

No matter when God's people sin, God's plans and purposes will always succeed.

GENESIS 27:18-29

While Rebekah was pregnant with her twin sons, God told her the younger twin, Jacob, was the one He chose over the older son, Esau (Gen. 25:23). God already had plans and a purpose for Jacob's life. Rebekah believed God, but did not trust Him. When it was time for Isaac to give the blessing to their older son, Rebekah quickly came up with a plan to deceive Isaac so he would bless Jacob first. Jacob obeyed his mother and deceived Isaac to get the blessing (27:5-13).

God already has a plan and purpose for your life. Sometimes there may be a situation you think you need to fix. We need to remember that God has complete control over our lives. Whatever plans God has for us, we can trust and allow Him to take care of our situation. There may be times in your life when you mess up and sin, but God's plan for you will never be destroyed. His plan for you will always succeed.

GENESIS 27:18-29

18 Jacob went in to his father and said, “Father.” And his father said, “Yes, my son. Who are you?”

19 Jacob said to him, “**I am Esau,** **A** your first son. I have done what you told me. Now sit up and eat some meat of the animal **I hunted for you.** **B** Then bless me.” **20** But Isaac asked his son, “How did you find and kill the animal so quickly?”

Jacob answered, “Because the Lord **your God C** helped me to find it.” **21** Then Isaac said to Jacob, “**Come near D** so I can touch you, my son. Then I will know if you are really my son Esau.” **22** So

Jacob came near to Isaac his father. Isaac touched him and said, “Your voice sounds like Jacob’s voice, but your hands are hairy like the **hands of Esau.**” **E 23** Isaac did not know it was Jacob,

because his hands were hairy like Esau’s hands, so Isaac blessed him. **24** Isaac asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” Jacob answered, “Yes, I am.” **25** Then Isaac said, “Bring me the food, and I will eat it and bless you.” So Jacob gave him the food, and he ate. Jacob gave him wine, and he drank.

26 Then Isaac said to him, “My son, come near and kiss me.” **27** So Jacob went to his father and kissed him. When Isaac smelled Esau’s clothes, he blessed him and said, “The smell of my son is like the smell of the field that the Lord has blessed.

28 May God give you plenty of rain and good soil so that you will have plenty of grain and new wine.

29 May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. May you be **master F** over your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. May everyone who curses you be cursed, and **may everyone who blesses you be blessed.** **G**

a. Jacob told his father a lie. He claimed his brother’s name to get the blessing.

b. Esau was the hunter, which pleased his father. While Esau was obeying his father’s instructions, Jacob brought his mother two goats to cook for his father so he could get Isaac’s blessing.

c. Jacob did not claim God as his own until he returned to his home with his wives and children and a new name (Israel) years later.

d. Isaac was blind. He could not see whether Esau or Jacob came for the blessing.

e. Isaac used his sense of touch to know the difference between his sons. Esau was very hairy and Jacob had smooth skin.

f. Isaac’s blessing included God’s promise that the older twin would serve the younger son (Gen. 25:23).

g. God blessed Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham, when God called him to leave his home country with these same words (Gen. 12:3).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. How does favoritism cause harm in a family?
2. Who were Jacob and Esau and what kind of relationship did they have with their parents, Isaac and Rebekah?
3. What did Jacob do to his father, Isaac?
4. How were Jacob's actions selfish and sinful?
5. Why did Isaac doubt Jacob was his firstborn son, Esau?
6. How would you feel if you were Jacob? Esau? Isaac? Rebekah?
7. What was important about the blessing Isaac gave Jacob?
8. What does this story tell us about deceiving? What does God say about this?
9. When a believer sins, can God succeed in His purpose and plan for that person's life? How?
10. In what ways can a believer live a life of integrity (honesty)?

BIBLE SKILL: *Find Verses about God's Plans*

There are other verses that show that God is still working to make His plans succeed. Write what each verse means and how it relates to your life.

Psalms 139:16 _____

Proverbs 16:9 _____

Jeremiah 29:11 _____

Romans 8:28 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

As believers, we should be honest when we meet other people. We are to show a good example.

Believers need to be careful not to show favoritism toward anyone. We should treat everyone equally. Favoritism can lead us to the sin of lying to one another.

We can rejoice knowing God is still in control over everything even when we make mistakes or sin. God's plan in our life will always be successful.

Who suffers from deception? Why is it important for a believer to always live a life of honesty?

What does favoritism look like in the church or family? How can a believer avoid favoritism?

Discuss with your group the blessing Isaac gave Jacob. How do these words show that God still works in a believer's life even when he or she sins?

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your body, and two groups of people will be taken from you. One group will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

- Genesis 25:23

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 27:18-20, counting the lies Jacob told Isaac.

Jacob went to his father, pretending that he was Esau. Rebekah and Jacob took advantage of Isaac's blindness. Normally, hunting for a wild animal takes a long time. It requires time to find the animal, kill the animal, skin the animal, and cook the meat. Rebekah and Jacob had two young goats. They killed them, and skinned and cooked the meat faster than Esau could hunt a wild animal. Jacob lied about hunting. He said God blessed him to find the animal quickly. Once a lie begins, it is hard to stop and get out.

Pretending is a lie and does not please God. It is best to let God take care of the situation. Sometimes we see a situation and we think we need to fix it, but often the wiser choice is to leave it alone and let God take care of it. God is always in control and He can take care of any situation. We need to trust God and let Him do whatever He knows is best for us.

What situations have you seen that you thought needed your help to fix?

What did you learn about God being in control of any situation?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Sovereign*

God's plan and purpose for your life will always succeed because God is sovereign. God is always in control over everything that happens in the world, in heaven, and in your life. God controls the past, present, and future. We can trust God in everything, even our lives.

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 27:21-23, focusing on Jacob's appearance.

Isaac was confused about which son brought him food. The voice sounded like Jacob's voice, so Isaac asked him to come near to touch him. Esau had rough, hairy skin, but Jacob had soft, smooth skin. Rebekah helped Jacob deceive his father by putting the goat's skin on his hands and neck. Jacob also wore Esau's clothes. When Isaac touched the goat's skin, it felt like Esau's skin and he believed Jacob's deception.

We need to be careful and live a life of honesty and truthfulness. We can learn from Jacob's example as God teaches us to be honest with others. When we make a mistake by tricking someone or telling a lie, we need to say "I'm sorry" to the person we deceived. Then we can say, "I'm sorry" to God and admit that we are wrong. God will forgive us. It is hard to trust a person who is not honest and tells lies. We want others to be able to trust us.

When have you or someone else told a lie?

What did you or they have to do to be trusted again?

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 27:24-25, noticing Jacob's answers to Isaac's questions.

Rebekah cooked the same way Esau cooked Isaac's favorite food. Favoritism was a problem with Rebekah and Isaac. Rebekah loved Jacob and favored him. Isaac loved Esau and favored him. When favoritism happens, it causes problems in relationships.

Many years later, we see that Jacob copied his parents and showed favoritism with his own children. He loved his son, Joseph, more than his other sons. He treated Joseph differently and gave him special gifts that he did not give his other sons. This caused many family problems. Jacob lived many years with a broken heart thinking Joseph was dead. His other sons lived with guilt for many years for their actions against Joseph and for deceiving their father (Gen. 37:33-35).

Parents must be careful not to show favoritism to children. When one child feels his parent or both parents favor a brother or sister, different kinds of problems can happen in the family. Parents must love and treat all children equally. Believers must teach their children there is no favoritism in families because God loves us all equally.

When have you seen favoritism in a family? How can a Christian parent treat his or her children equally?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 27:26-27, looking for signs of Isaac's favoritism.

Isaac finally believed Jacob's lie because of the smell of Esau's clothing. The "smell of the field" was a pleasing smell to Isaac, because he loved Esau and favored him. Jacob knew Isaac loved Esau more because he saw Isaac's pleasure with Esau's hunting skills and outdoor life. Isaac was not successful in hiding his favoritism.

Believers must protect themselves from favoritism. When there is favoritism in church, it can be a huge problem. Pastors, teachers, leaders, or deacons must never show any favoritism. We must understand all people in church are important to God and each one is equally worthy. If favoritism takes over the church then the church will have problems.

God loves everyone equally and God does not show any favoritism. We need to do what God does by showing love equally to everyone and by treating everyone the same.

What does favoritism look like in the church? What can believers do to avoid favoritism in the church?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 27:28-29, underlining the different parts of the blessing.

Blessings are an important part of Jewish culture. The father gives blessings to his sons. Isaac thought he was talking to Esau, so he gave the blessing. The first part of the blessing is about nature and land, which meant his son would have plenty of food and good land. The second part is about having control over his brothers. The third part says anyone who is against him will be cursed and anyone who blesses him will be blessed. It's the same blessing that God said to Abraham (Gen. 12:3).

We need to remember that stealing isn't God's way. Exodus 20:15 records "You must not steal" as part of the Ten Commandments. Lying, stealing, and deceiving are sins. We, as believers, need to live a life of integrity. We need to repent and ask for forgiveness. God is always at work in and through us and He will make His plan in our lives successful.

Jacob stole Esau's blessing, but God planned to use Jacob to carry out His purpose. Jacob sinned, but God's plan was not ruined. God always carries out His own plan for His own people. No matter what, God's plan for Jacob was successful.

How does God use us even when we make mistakes? What can we learn about God from these examples?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 27:18-29. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

In what ways can you help your church to be honest with each other?

In what ways can you help avoid favoritism in the church?

How can you be an influence to others in how you live your life of integrity and love them all equally?



NOT ALONE

God shows His purpose to the person He chooses. He gives them purpose in their life journey.

GENESIS 28:10-22

When Jacob stole Esau's blessing, Esau was angry and planned to kill Jacob (27:41). Rebekah told Jacob that he must go to Haran where her brother, Laban, lived (27:42-43). Rebekah couldn't stand Esau's wives because they were Canaanite. She did not want Jacob to marry one of those women (27:46). So Isaac blessed Jacob again, sending him to Mesopotamia to marry one of Laban's daughters. Then Isaac told Jacob that God would give him many children and let him live in the land that God promised to Abraham (28:1-5).

Sometimes a sin causes a change in life. Because he sinned, Jacob had to leave home and start a new life journey. God showed Jacob His purpose for him in his journey. God told Jacob that he would never be alone. When a person makes the decision to give his or her life to God, they begin a new life journey. God promises to never leave you alone. We can trust Him to lead us in every step of our life journey.

GENESIS 28:10-22

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for **Haran**. **A**

11 When he came to a place, he spent the night there because the sun had set. He found a stone and laid his head on it to go to sleep. **12** Jacob **dreamed** **B** that there was a ladder resting on the earth and reaching up into heaven, and he saw angels of God going up and coming down the ladder. **13** Then Jacob saw the Lord standing above the ladder, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your grandfather, and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your **descendants** **C** the land on which you are now sleeping. **14** Your descendants will be as many as the dust of the earth. They will spread west and east, north and south, and all the families of the earth will be

blessed through you and your descendants. **D**

15 I am with you and will protect you everywhere you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." **16** Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, but I did not know it." **17** He was afraid and said, "This place frightens me! It is surely the house of God and the gate of heaven." **18** Jacob rose early in the morning and **took the stone** **E** he had slept on and set it up on its end. Then he poured olive oil on the top of it. **19** At first, the name of that city was Luz, but Jacob named it **Bethel**. **F** **20** Then Jacob made a promise. He said, "I want God to be with me and to protect me on this journey. I want him to give me food to eat and clothes to wear **21** so I will be able to return in peace to my father's house. If the Lord does these things, he will be my God. **22** This stone which I have set up on its end will be the house of God. And **I will give God one-tenth** **G** of all he gives me."

a. Haran is a town in northern Syria near the Euphrates River. It is the area where Rebekah grew up and where God led Abraham's servant to find her to become Isaac's wife.

b. In the Old and New Testaments, God often revealed Himself to people through dreams.

c. This is a word meaning future generations: children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and those not yet born.

d. Jesus Christ, God's Son and the Savior for all people, would be one of Jacob's descendants.

e. After waking up from his dream, Jacob used the stone he had been sleeping on as an altar to God.

f. Bethel means "house of God."

g. Jacob promised to give God one-tenth of all he would bring back with him. Abraham, Jacob's grandfather, gave an offering of one-tenth to Melchizedek, the king of Salem, who was a priest of God, many years earlier.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. How does God communicate with people today?
2. Why was Jacob on a trip to Haran?
3. What was Jacob's dream and what did it mean?
4. Describe Jacob's relationship with God.
5. What did God promise to Jacob?
6. Why did Jacob set up a memory marker by pouring oil on the stone?
7. In what ways can a believer set up a memory marker to remember what God does?
8. What did Jacob promise to God?
9. What are different commitments believers make to God today?
10. How can a believer give one-tenth to God? Why is it important to give one-tenth to God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Find Verses about God's Presence*

God promises that He will never leave us. Look at the verses below and write down what you learn.

Joshua 1:5 _____

Psalms 94:14 _____

Hebrews 13:5 _____

Deuteronomy 31:6 _____

Matthew 28:20b _____

IN MY CONTEXT

God shows His purpose to the person He chooses. Believers can trust God, knowing He is with them and guiding them. God's plans for believers will succeed.

Believers can give God respect and honor for His successful plan for their lives. They can experience joy and thankfulness as God works in them.

There will be times God will tell a believer to do some special work. Believers need to have faith to do whatever God wants them to do. They must trust and obey God as He tells them where to go.

As a group, discuss ways you are trusting God as He guides you in your life.

In what ways can you show joy and thankfulness to God for working in your life?

What special work is God calling you or your church to do? What steps of faith will be required to do this special work?

MEMORY VERSE

Your descendants will be as many as the dust of the earth. They will spread west and east, north and south, and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants.
- Genesis 28:14

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 28:10-12, highlighting what Jacob saw in his dream.

The trip from Beersheba to Haran was more than four hundred miles. It was a very long trip and took many days for Jacob to walk. Because of the long walk, he needed to stop and rest each day. This was very common in Bible days.

Jacob slept and began to dream. In the dream God caused Jacob to see heaven. There was a ladder, or a stairway, from heaven to earth. Angels were going up and down on the ladder. Angels are God's messengers that work for Him. Angels receive instructions from God in heaven and go to earth to do His will. God continues to use His angels to go back and forth, from heaven to earth and earth to heaven.

God made a way for man to connect to God through Jesus. Jesus came to earth to save us—to be the ladder from heaven to earth. We do not climb our way up to God; God, in Jesus, came down to us. Jesus said in John 1:51, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and 'angels of God going up and coming down' on the Son of Man." Now we have a connection to the Father through Jesus, His Son!

How is Jesus a ladder from heaven to us?

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 28:13-15, memorizing verse 14.

God told Jacob what would happen to his family. He told him they would live on this specific land and grow to as many as the dust of the earth, unable to be counted. You can imagine how many people were in Jacob's family. Everyone would be blessed through him, because Jesus came from Jacob's family line. God promised He would not leave Jacob and would be with him until His work was done.

You may not have dreams like Jacob had. But God does directly speak to our hearts through His Word. We can talk to God everyday. We listen

to Him by reading His Word and through His people teaching the Bible. God's Word reveals many guidelines and promises for you. God will make His purpose for your life successful. We can trust God as we grow in Him and depend on Him in every situation. One thing we know for sure is that God promises to never leave us (Deut. 31:6, Matt. 28:20b).

How does God speak to us today? How can we be more aware of His activity around us?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Omnipresent*

Omnipresent means that God is here with you at the same time He is there with another believer. God hears your prayers at the same time He hears other people's prayers. God is working in your life while He is working in someone else's life at the same time. God never leaves someone out or forgets someone. He is there with all of His believers at the same time.

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 28:16-17, underlining the words Jacob used to describe that place.

Awakened from the dream, Jacob realized that God's presence was there. Jacob felt fearful. God is the same God that belongs to Abraham, Jacob's grandfather, and Isaac, Jacob's dad. Jacob may have heard stories about how God led Abraham and how Abraham almost sacrificed his son, Isaac, Jacob's father. But this was the first time Jacob ever had personal contact with God. Jacob had a strong feeling that that place was the house of God and a gate of heaven. This made it a very special place to Jacob.

Today, God's presence appears to believers in many different ways. When you experience God's presence, it is a very special moment. You will feel awed and amazed. God will show you what He wants you to know as you study the Bible and grow in Him.

What is the connection between God's presence and His promises? How does His presence give hope?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 28:18-19, underlining the new name of the location.

Jacob named this special place with a special name. “Beth” means house. “El” means God. Bethel was about ten miles north of Jerusalem and sixty miles north of Beersheba where Jacob left his family. Jacob set up a stone as a memory marker and poured olive oil on it to anoint it. Anointing the stone showed honor to God and reminded Jacob what God revealed in the dream and his presence with God.

Today some people still use anointing oils. We have several memorial markers in our country to help remember what happened in those special places in history. You can set up a memorial marker of what God did or revealed to you. There are many different ways to set up your memorial marker. Some people make something, plant something, or write in their journal. God is always at work in and through your life. God wants us to remember the things He has shown us or done for us. It is good to remember all the things God has done.

In what ways can you set up a memorial to help you remember what God has done for you?

What has God done in your life that you need to remember and thank Him for?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 28:20-22, looking for the promise Jacob made to God.

Jacob responded to God with a promise that God would be his God. Jacob wanted God to be with him and take care of him. He promised God that he would give God one-tenth of all that he had (see also Gen. 14:20). Giving one-tenth is what we call “tithing.”

In the Bible God gives many promises to us: He said He would send His Son, Jesus, to die for us, He said He would be with us, and He said He would care for us. In turn we commit to God, promise to be faithful to God, obey all His commands, and follow Him. Knowing what God did for us and promises us, we want to promise ourselves to Him. Also, it is important that we give a tithe to God. Tithing is one of the ways we show our commitment to God.

What are the promises that God gives us through His Son? How can you demonstrate your thankfulness to Him today?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 28:10-22. Meet with one or two members of your study group to discuss ways to live what you have learned.

How can we show other believers that God communicates with us through the Bible?

In what ways can we share with other believers what God is doing in their lives?

What examples can we show as we step out in faith when God calls us to do something?



IMPERFECTION

God uses people whose lives are not perfect to make His plans successful.

GENESIS 29:16-30

Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob to Haran to meet Laban, Rebekah's brother, and to marry one of his daughters. We do not know how many days it took for Jacob to travel to Haran. When he finally arrived he met with some shepherds at a well who were watering their sheep. Jacob met Rachel because she was caring for her father's sheep (v. 1-12). Laban was excited to see Jacob, and Jacob stayed with Laban for one month until Laban asked Jacob how he wanted to be paid (v. 13-15).

We are not perfect and our lives are not perfect. We make wrong choices and wrong decisions. We make many mistakes. God knows our mistakes and bad decisions, but He can still use us. God still works with our imperfections and makes His plans succeed in our lives. God had a plan for Jacob's family and used them for His purposes even though they were sinners.

GENESIS 29:16-30

16 Now Laban had two daughters. The older was Leah, and the younger was Rachel.

17 Leah had weak eyes, **A** but Rachel was very beautiful. **18** Jacob loved Rachel, so he said to Laban, “Let me marry your younger daughter Rachel. If you will, **I will work seven years for you.**” **B** **19** Laban said, “It would be better for her to marry you than someone else, so stay here with me.” **20** So Jacob worked for Laban seven years so he could marry Rachel. But they seemed like just a few days to him because he loved Rachel very much. **21** After seven years Jacob said to Laban, “Give me Rachel so that I may marry her. The time I promised to work for you is over.” **22** So Laban gave a feast for all the people there. **23** That evening **he brought his daughter Leah to Jacob,** **C** and they had sexual relations. **24 (Laban gave his slave girl** **D** **Zilpah to his daughter to be her servant.)** **25** In the morning when Jacob saw that he had had sexual relations with Leah, he said to Laban, “What have you done to me? I worked hard for you so that I could marry Rachel! **Why did you trick me?**” **E** **26** Laban said, “In our country we do not allow the younger daughter to marry before the older daughter. **27** But **complete the full week of the marriage ceremony** **F** with Leah, and I will give you Rachel to marry also. But you must serve me another seven years.” **28** So Jacob did this, and when he had completed the week with Leah, Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. **29** (Laban gave his slave girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.) **30** So Jacob had sexual relations with Rachel also, and **Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah.** **G** Jacob worked for Laban **for another seven years.** **H**

- a. Leah was not beautiful, especially compared to Rachel.
- b. When a man wanted to marry, he usually gave a large payment to the father of the bride. Jacob was willing to earn and give Laban seven years worth of wages.
- c. It was very dark when Leah came to Jacob. She may have worn a veil over her face.
- d. It was the custom for the bride to have a slave girl to be her servant for life.
- e. Jacob was the deceiver and he tricked his own father to get a blessing earlier. Now, Laban deceived Jacob.
- f. Wedding celebrations continued for seven days. This time would also give Leah an opportunity to become pregnant.
- g. Like his parents had shown favoritism, Jacob showed favoritism between his two wives.
- h. Jacob worked a total of fourteen years for Rachel and Leah, but Laban allowed him to marry Rachel before he finished the seven years of work.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. How does God work through imperfect people?
2. What did Jacob and Laban agree would be Jacob's pay?
3. How did Jacob feel about his work?
4. How did Laban deceive Jacob?
5. How long was Jacob married to Leah when he married Rachel?
6. What is the meaning of the phrase, "you reap what you sow"?
7. How can reaping what you sow be positive? How can it be negative?
8. What is God's design for marriage for us today?
9. How should believers feel knowing that God can work in their lives even though they are not perfect?
10. In what ways can believers thank God for His faithfulness to them?

BIBLE SKILL: *List Jacob's Children*

Write the names of Jacob's children under their mother's name.

Leah (Gen. 29:32-35; 30:18-21) _____

Bilhah (Gen. 30:6-8) _____

Zilpah (Gen. 30:11-13) _____

Rachel (Gen. 30:24; 35:18) _____

IN MY CONTEXT

When work has a purpose, the worker experiences joy.

We must understand that our actions and attitudes will come back to us.
We will reap what we sow.

God is faithful. When He makes a promise, He will do it. Even when we make mistakes and miss His plan, He will be sure His plan and purpose succeed. We should be thankful for God's faithfulness.

How is God working in your life? What are you doing to learn from your past?

How can you sow good things in your life so you can reap good things?

How can you follow and obey God in your daily walk with Him?

MEMORY VERSE

Then Leah gave birth to another son. She named him Judah, because she said, "Now I will praise the LORD." Then Leah stopped having children. - Genesis 29:35

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 29:16-17, listing the differences in the two sisters.

Leah and Rachel are cousins to Jacob because Laban is Jacob's mother's brother. Scripture says, "Leah had weak eyes," but this does not mean that Leah had eye problems. It means that she wasn't beautiful. Rachel, however, was beautiful.

Some women are plain and some are beautiful. We should not pay attention to how they look. They are all beautiful to God. No matter how you look, beautiful or plain, you are still special and created beautiful by God. Psalm 139:14 says, "I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way. What you have done is wonderful. I know this very well."

As believers we should never focus on what a person looks like. We should always look at the inside the same way God looks at us. He always looks at the heart. There are beautiful people on the outside who are very ugly on the inside. There are plain people on the outside who are beautiful on the inside. We can't decide who the person is on how they look, only on what is inside.

How can you help others see that they are beautiful because they are wonderfully made?

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 29:18-20, noticing Jacob's proposal to Laban.

Jacob saw Rachel's beauty, but he didn't lust for her. He proved he loved her by his willingness to work for the right to marry her. During Bible times, a man gave money or livestock to the bride's father in exchange for his new wife. This was called a dowry. Jacob did not have any money or livestock. Jacob offered all he had for Rachel. He offered his uncle seven years of labor.

In his excitement, Jacob didn't understand Laban did not promise Rachel would be his wife at the end of seven years. Laban only said it would be better for Rachel to marry Jacob instead of some other man. Later, Jacob realized Laban became the deceiver and controlled Jacob's life for twenty years.

Although being a shepherd wasn't an easy job, Jacob patiently worked seven years to marry Rachel. Because he loved Rachel, those years seemed like only a few days to him.

Working and waiting to marry Rachel filled Jacob with joy. Joy can be found in purposeful work. Having no purpose in life leads to hopelessness, making it difficult to get out of bed and face the day. If that describes your life, seek God's help in finding your purpose. Meaningful work can make time pass quickly, and most of all, make life worth living.

How can we find joy and purpose in our work, regardless of the kind of work?

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 29:21-24, highlighting Laban's deception.

Seven years passed and it was time for Jacob and Rachel to get married. Weddings at that time were different from our weddings today. In their tradition when man and wife go into the tent and have sex, they become married. So Laban tricked Jacob and gave him Leah, not Rachel. Remember, Jacob tricked Isaac when he stole Esau's blessings. Sometimes we do something wrong and we get payback for what we did wrong.

Believers need to be careful with their attitude in what they say or do toward other people. There is a famous saying that says, "You reap what you sow." What you do will come back to you, what you say will come back to you, and whatever attitude you express will come back to you (Gal. 6:7-8). As believers, our goal is to sow God's character—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—in our everyday actions, talks, and thoughts.

What does "You reap what you sow" mean to you?

In what ways should a believer act according to this quote?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Omniscient*

God is all-knowing. He is aware and knows everything of the past, present, and future. Nothing surprises God. He knows the sufferings you are going through. God knows what you are thinking before you speak. God knows what you will do before you act in good or bad.

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 29:25-27, looking for Laban's excuse.

Jacob woke up and realized he married Leah, not Rachel. Jacob was upset that Laban tricked him. Laban never explained why he intentionally deceived Jacob. His only response was that it was local custom. Laban had many opportunities to tell Jacob before the ceremony, but he didn't. In his earlier life, Jacob repeatedly ignored family customs. He took advantage of his brother, and took the birthright tradition. He took advantage of his father's blindness, and stole the traditional blessing.

Jacob was now forced to respect family practices. If only he had learned this lesson when he was younger, he might have saved himself and those he loved from heartache.

Laban suggested Jacob finish the seven days of the wedding celebration with Leah and then marry Rachel. He would work another seven years for her. So after seven days of his first wedding celebration, Jacob married Rachel. Jacob had two wives within eight days!

As believers, we must accept the consequences of our mistakes. Even though we ask for forgiveness and God and others forgive us, we still may suffer consequences. We need to think about the possible consequences before we act or say something.

What consequences have you faced because of your mistakes? What did you learn from these experiences?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 29:28-30, focusing on Jacob's relationship with Leah and Rachel.

When Leah and Rachel married Jacob, Laban gave them each a servant girl because it was their custom. Leah's servant's name was Zilpah and Rachel's servant's name was Bilhah.

God does not give permission for a man to have several wives. When God made Adam He gave him Eve. God's plan is for one man and one woman to be together for life. Jacob already had two wives but obtained two more "wives" from the two servant women that Jacob's two wives gave to him. Even though Jacob sinned God worked in his life and used his imperfection. God kept His promise to Jacob that his future children would be like the dust of the earth. We can read on and see that God kept His promises to Jacob by giving him twelve sons and one daughter.

We can be thankful to God for His faithfulness to His promises even though we make mistakes. As we get older, we can look back and see how God kept His promises to us.

In what ways can you trust God's promises for your life? Even though you make mistakes, how can you live the way God wants you to live?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 29:16-30. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What do you like most about the work you do? How can you use your work to honor God?

What examples can we give others to show that God is still working in our imperfect lives?

How can we be positive influences to other people?



PROMISE KEPT

God's promised Messiah is Jesus Christ, His Son.

LUKE 1:26-38

After God made Adam and Eve, He told them not to eat the fruit from one tree in the garden. When they disobeyed God, their sin caused all people to be separated from God. God made a plan to send the Messiah, a promised Savior, to save people from sin and give them an eternal relationship with God.

God prepared for the future Messiah. God chose Abraham to begin the tribes of Israel. Luke 3:23-38 shows Jesus' family line: Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, Joseph, and then Jesus. It is amazing to see the family line and God's promise that He would send a Messiah through the tribe of Judah. God never forgets His promise and He saves people from eternal separation through Jesus.

The word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word "mashiach," which means "anointed one" or "chosen one." The word "Christ" comes from the Greek word "christos" which means "anointed." This term became synonymous with Messiah. This week we take time to celebrate that God kept His promise by sending us Jesus the Messiah!

LUKE 1:26-38

26 During **Elizabeth's** **A** sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel **Gabriel** **B** to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin. She was **engaged** **C** to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. **28** The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has **blessed you** **D** and is with you." **29** But Mary was **very startled** by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean. **30** The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has shown you his grace. **31** Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him **the throne of King David**, **E** his ancestor. **33** He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end." **34** Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since **I am a virgin?**" **F** **35** The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God. **36** Now Elizabeth, your relative, is also pregnant with a son though she is very old. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months. **37** God can do anything!" **38** Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away.

- a. Elizabeth was Zechariah's wife and Mary's cousin. Zachariah and Elizabeth were both from the tribe of Levi.
- b. The same angel who spoke to Zechariah in Luke 1:11-20.
- c. An engagement was as binding as marriage and would have required a divorce to be broken (Matt. 1:18-19).
- d. Mary was "graced" by God's presence and by being chosen to be the mother of Jesus.
- e. Joseph was a descendant of David, part of the tribe of Judah, the same family line as the prophesied Messiah (2 Sam. 7:13).
- f. A fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, which is quoted in Matthew's Gospel (1:23).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why did God promise us a Messiah?
2. How did God keep His promise to King David?
3. How did Mary feel about God choosing her to do His work?
4. What was God's plan for this promised baby?
5. How did Mary become pregnant without sex?
6. What made Jesus' conception different from everyone else?
7. How does God's sending Jesus affect everyone today?
8. How should we respond to God when he calls us to do His work?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Verses about the Promised Messiah*

Read these verses and write down what they say about the promised Messiah.

Genesis 28:14 _____

Genesis 49:10 _____

Isaiah 7:14 _____

Isaiah 9:6 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

Zechariah 9:9 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

God made a promise in the beginning that He would send a Messiah because of Adam and Eve's fall into sin (Gen. 3:15). Then God took action to make the plan for the future Messiah to come in His time.

God told His promise to several prophets. God never forgets His promises. God sent His Son, Jesus, to the world at the right time.

Because God did what He promised, we can trust God and His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins.

We can trust God and accept His Word. We can obey Him with willing hearts to do whatever He wants us to do.

What are some of God's promises that have been completed?

How do you feel about God keeping His promise to send the Messiah?

What can you do to commit yourself to God and His work today?

What are some problems that cause believers not to do God's work? How can we encourage each other to obey Him?

MEMORY VERSE

He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end. - Luke 1:33

DAY ONE

Read Luke 1:26-29, noticing how Mary was addressed.

Luke 3:23-38 records the family line of Mary. Matthew 1:1-16 records the family line of Joseph. Both Mary and Joseph are from the line of King David. Joseph came from King Solomon (King David's son) and Mary came from Nathan (King David's other son). God chose Mary and Joseph to become parents of the Messiah.

Gabriel is an angel. Angels are God's messengers. God sent Gabriel to give a message to Mary of what God was going to do. God kept His promise and now it was time for His promise to happen. God took the action to make a way of salvation through His Son. God always takes the action to make His plan successful and He always keeps His promises. Whatever God has planned in your life, He will take the action at the right time to make His plan successful in your life.

How have you seen God work in your life?

List some things God is doing in your life right now.

DAY TWO

Read Luke 1:30-33, memorizing verse 33.

What makes the birth of Jesus the greatest birth in the history of the world? Gabriel outlined four reasons for His greatness. First, Jesus is the Son of the Most High, meaning the Supreme God. As Mary's son, Jesus would be fully human; as the Son of Most High, Jesus would be fully God. The reason for His greatness was not because He was Mary's son, but because He was God's Son. Second, Jesus' greatness is seen in that God will give him the throne of his father David, fulfilling God's covenant of an eternal kingdom from David's family (2 Sam. 7:13-16).

Third, Jesus is great because he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, fulfilling God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). With the birth of Jesus, God would fulfill all His promises to the patriarchs of old. Fourth, Jesus is great because his kingdom will have no end (Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

What other things would you list that make Jesus great?

DAY THREE

Read Luke 1:34-35, circling Mary's question.

Mary asked only one question. Her question did not mean she doubted God. She wanted to understand. Mary asked the angel how she could get pregnant and still be a virgin. Gabriel explained she would get pregnant through God's supernatural power. There is no way for any woman to get pregnant without sex or without a doctor's help. That is why we recognize Jesus' birth as special, because He was conceived in a supernatural way.

Gabriel also explained that Jesus would be holy and be called the Son of God. This meant that Jesus would have no sin at birth because He came from God who is holy. In Matthew 16:16, Jesus asked His disciples "who do you think I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is important to recognize Jesus as the Son of God because that is who Jesus is. Believers now can have confidence knowing that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save those who follow and obey Him.

How can you show others that you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

DAY FOUR

Read Luke 1:36-37, noticing the age of Elizabeth.

Gabriel told Mary about Elizabeth. Mary knew Elizabeth because they were relatives. Elizabeth was six months pregnant at that time. Verse 26 says that Elizabeth was six months pregnant at that time. Elizabeth was old in age and past the birthing years, but God made it possible for her to become pregnant with John the Baptist. God planned to use John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus. John the Baptist had an important job to do for God.

Gabriel's news about Elizabeth helped Mary have more confidence in God's message to her. It seemed impossible for an older woman to become pregnant. It seemed impossible for a virgin to become pregnant. God can do the impossible.

Verse 37 is important to remember: "God can do anything!" Whatever is impossible with us, God can make it possible. Nothing is impossible for God. Remember Abraham's wife, Sarah, couldn't get pregnant and then God told Abraham that Sarah would get pregnant and have a son, Isaac (Gen. 17:18; 18:13-14). We can trust that God is powerful and nothing is impossible for Him.

List some things that God has made possible for you which were impossible.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Omnipotence*

God is all-powerful. God has supreme power over everything on earth and in heaven. God can do supernatural works that no one can do, such as causing Mary to become pregnant and remain a virgin. God has all the power to do whatever He decides to do. We can depend on His power.

DAY FIVE

Read Luke 1:38, underlining Mary's response.

Mary was willing to accept the responsibility of giving birth to God's son, Jesus. Mary was humble and willing to accept God's plan for her. It was a big responsibility for her, but she trusted God to help her do the job she needed to do.

Every person who gives their life to Jesus and follows and obeys Him is called His servant. God uses His servants to do special work for Him. As believers, we have a big responsibility to do what God wants us to do. The Bible has several commands that God wants us to obey. It is up to us to obey and do what God expects us to do. Sometimes His work is hard and it is easy to go away and not do the work, but that is not obeying Him. When we do not obey and do not do His work, then God goes to someone else and gets His work done. Then we miss the opportunity to be used by God. Believers, let us be humble, willing to obey Him and committing to do the work that God has planned for each of us to do.

How are obedience and humility connected? How do they work together?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Luke 1:26-38. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How has the promised Messiah influenced you today? Do you exhibit Jesus Christ in your daily life?

How can you share about God's promised Messiah with others?

How do you know that God is calling you to do a special work for Him? How should you respond?



GOING HOME!

God is with His people. He shows His people how to live.

GENESIS 31:2-16

Jacob worked hard for Laban for twenty years. God decided it was time for Jacob to go back home to the place where God made promises to Abraham and Isaac. God showed Jacob what to do in a dream. Jacob made an agreement with Laban that he would take all the sheep and goats that were streaked, speckled, or spotted and Laban would get all solid white sheep and solid black and brown goats (Gen. 30:32).

Sometimes God shows you how you can do a good job in your work. We should always do our best to do great work. Keep in mind you work more for God than for your boss and do the best you can (Col. 3:23-24). God will reward you for your hard work.

God is always with His people. God already had plans for His people and He would guide them into His plan. Believers need to listen to God, follow His leading, and obey His instruction. We can't be in His plan if we are not obeying Him. When we obey Him everyday, we will be where He wants us to be and do what He wants us to do.

GENESIS 31:2-16

2 Then Jacob noticed that Laban was not as friendly as he had been before. **3** The Lord said to Jacob, “Go back to the land **where your ancestors lived,** **A** and **I will be with you.”** **B** **4** So Jacob told Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field where he kept his flocks. **5** He said to them, “I have seen that your father is not as friendly with me as he used to be, but the **God of my father has been with me.**” **C** **6** You both know that I have worked as hard as I could for your father, **7** but he cheated me and changed my pay ten times. But **God has not allowed your father to harm me.** **D** **8** When Laban said, ‘You can have all the speckled animals as your pay,’ all the animals gave birth to speckled young ones. But when he said, ‘You can have all the streaked animals as your pay,’ all the flocks gave birth to streaked babies. **9** So God has taken the animals away from your father and has given them to me. **10** “I had a dream during the season when the flocks were mating. I saw that the only male goats who were mating were **streaked, speckled, or spotted.**” **E** **11** The angel of God spoke to me in that dream and said, ‘Jacob!’ I answered, ‘Yes!’ **12** The angel said, ‘Look! Only the streaked, speckled, or spotted male goats are mating. I have seen all the wrong things Laban has been doing to you. **13** I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, where you poured olive oil on the stone you set up on end and where you made a promise to me. Now I want you to leave here and go back to the land where you were born.’” **14 Rachel and Leah** **F** answered Jacob, “Our father has nothing to give us when he dies. **15** He has treated us like strangers. He sold us to you, and then he spent all of the money you paid for us. **16** God took all this wealth from our father, and now it belongs to us and our children. So do whatever **God has told you to do.**” **G**

- a. It was time for Jacob to return to Canaan, the land God promised Abraham.
- b. God made a similar promise to Jacob when he began his journey twenty years earlier. At that time, God promised to be with Jacob and to bring him back to Canaan.
- c. God protected Jacob from Laban.
- d. Jacob recognized God’s faithfulness to him.
- e. Streaked, speckled or spotted means the fur or wool of the goats and sheep was mixed in color. They were not solid. The animals with the mixed color and spots belonged to Jacob.
- f. Jacob discussed God’s message with both of his wives, Rachel and Leah. They were united in supporting Jacob’s decision.
- g. Jacob’s wives recognized God’s blessings on Jacob through the years, even though their father was unfair. They encouraged him to do whatever God told him to do.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What is the appeal of returning to where you grew up? What are the risks?
2. Why did God want Jacob to go back home to where his father and grandfather lived?
3. What was Laban's problem with Jacob? How do we handle a boss like this in our jobs?
4. How did Jacob give God credit for all that He had promised?
5. What was the agreement between Laban and Jacob regarding sheep and goats and the color of their wool or fur? Why did Jacob want the streaked, speckled, and spotted sheep and goats?
6. What was the importance of how God approached Jacob in his dream?
7. Why did Jacob's wives feel that their father treated them as strangers?
8. How can we know that God is directing our lives today?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Verses about God's Guidance*

Read the Scriptures and write down how God is with you and how He guides you.

Romans 8:28 _____

Proverbs 16:9 _____

Psalms 23:2-3 _____

Isaiah 58:11 _____

Jeremiah 29:11 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Some people may be against us. They may hurt us or be jealous of us. But we need to remember God is always with us and He promises to take care of us. We can be thankful for God's promises.

God knows what is best for us. We need to remember God has a plan for our lives. We can trust God to do what is best for us.

As we look back on our life experiences, we notice how God faithfully cared for us. When we remember His faithfulness, we can trust God for the future.

As a group, discuss how we can trust God when people are jealous or mean toward us?

Why is God's plan for our lives better than our plans? In what ways can we find God's plan for us?

Think back on what God has done for you. Share with your group what God has done in your life. How do the past experiences give you confidence to take action in the future?

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land where your ancestors lived, and I will be with you." - Genesis 31:3

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 31:2-3, memorizing on verse 3.

Once Jacob married Laban's daughters, his relationship with Laban changed. Laban was not being kind and friendly as he used to be. He caused stress in their relationship. Maybe you have experienced what Jacob experienced. Sometimes family members become unkind and unfriendly. When this happens to us, we need to pray and ask God to show us how we can rebuild the relationship. We need to talk with them in love, in kindness, and in a godly way. Some may misunderstand; some may not like what was done or wrong things we said that caused conflicts; some may be jealous or some may just want attention. Conflicts among family members are often harder to solve, but we need to work hard to try to solve any conflicts in the family. We also need to pray and let God show us our own wrongdoing.

Think about relationships that may cause stress in your life. What can you do to solve problems or conflicts with them? Pray about this and ask God to show you what you need to do.

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 31:4-7, focusing on how Jacob respected his wives.

Jacob worked hard for his father-in-law. Later, God showed Jacob it was time to move back to his home. Jacob called his wives and explained to them how their father treated him. A husband must take the responsibility for his own wife, and parents should be responsible for their own children. So in the same way Jacob had to take the responsibility to care for his wives and children by obeying God. God told Jacob to move back to the land where his father lived.

We obey God by taking up our responsibility to care for our own family. We can live in a healthy relationship and in a healthy environment. God will protect you and take care of you as you obey the Lord and accept your responsibilities. God never promised an easy job, but He promises to help you as you obey Him.

What responsibilities do you have? How are you honoring God by accepting your responsibilities?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Family*

God plans for one man and one woman to marry and commit to one another for life. The husband is to love his wife just as God loves the church. The wife is to submit to her husband just as the church submits to God. Children are a blessing from God. Parents are responsible to teach their children about God and how to live a life as a believer. Children are to honor and obey their parents just as believers honor and obey God.

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 31:8-9, noticing the agreement between Jacob and Laban.

Laban agreed that all speckled (mixed color, with stripes or spots in the fur) would go to Jacob as his paycheck, which meant Jacob would keep those goats and sheep with mixed colors and Laban would keep all white sheep and solid black or brown goats. More goats and sheep are born with mixed colors than are born with solid colors. God was blessing Jacob by giving him more animals than Laban.

There was a Deaf lady who worked hard for a mean boss. She did her best in her work. She did what her boss wanted her to do. After a while, her mean boss recognized her and praised her for her good work.

The mean boss protected the Deaf woman from her co-workers who mistreated her. She did her best and God blessed her in her job.

You obey God by working hard and doing your best in your job. God will be honored through your hard work. God knows the situation you are in at your work. You honor God with your work by doing your best (Col. 3:23-24).

Are you doing your very best as you are working for God in your job?

How are you honoring God by the way you work?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 31:10-13, identifying how God helped Jacob.

God approached Jacob in a dream earlier in the season of mating sheep and goats. God knew and saw all the good and bad things that were happening to Jacob. God blessed Jacob with more animals and told him to go back home to where he was born. God mostly approached people in the Old Testament through dreams and visions because they did not have a Bible during their days. God still does approach people through dreams, but the dreams must match His words in the Bible today. If dreams do not match the Scriptures then we need to be careful not to depend on the dream but only on God.

God approaches us in many different ways: mostly through the Bible, some through Bible teachers, preachers, or godly people, and sometimes through situations. God knows what is best for us. God will guide you and show you where He wants you to go and what He wants you to do. God sees all the good things and bad things that happen in your life. Believers can trust God and obey His directions. We can know that God has the best plan for our lives.

Think of ways that God communicates with you through His Word, through Bible teachers, and through situations in your life. How can we recognize God when He communicates with us?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 31:14-16, noticing who answered Jacob.

Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, were willing and ready to move with Jacob to go to the land where Jacob was born. They recognized that God had a plan for them with Jacob and that God blessed Jacob with more animals and wealth. Leah and Rachel put their faith in God and supported Jacob to do whatever God wanted him to do.

Believers can live in faith by trusting God to guide them. We can look back on all God did and trust Him to take care of us. God is always faithful to watch over us and guide us into the plan that He has for us. But if we do not obey Him and ignore His guidance, God will let us make our own choice and our bad choices will lead to problems. We need to be in right relationship with God and continue to obey Him in everything so our lives can be on the right path.

How does God's past faithfulness impact your decisions today?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 31:2-16. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How will you respond to people in your work, out in public, in your family, and in your church who are not nice to you?

In what ways can you know what God wants you to do and where He wants you to go?

Make a list of prayers that God has already answered. Look at how God protected, guided, and provided for you. Take this time to thank the Lord for all He has done.



CHANGED

God changes His people and uses them in His plan.

GENESIS 32:24-32

Jacob was traveling back home with his family, servants, and all that he owned. He sent messengers to find his brother, Esau, to tell him that he was coming home and that he hoped Esau would accept his gifts. Messengers went and came back and told Jacob that Esau was coming to see Jacob with his four-hundred men. That scared Jacob (32:3-7). Jacob was afraid for his life and for his family, so he prayed to God. He then prepared five hundred and fifty animals to give to Esau (32:13-15). Jacob was not the same man as when he deceived and stole Esau's blessings. God changed Jacob and used Jacob in His plan.

As believers, we experience many hard times, struggles, and fears like Jacob experienced. Sometimes we try to take care of the problems ourselves and forget to go to God. We need to go to God because He is in control. We should surrender our lives, our plans, and our dreams to God. We need to let Him take care of us and work in us. God can change us and use us in His plan.

GENESIS 32:24-32

24 So Jacob was alone, and **a man** ^A came and wrestled with him until the sun came up. **25** When the man saw he could not defeat Jacob, he struck Jacob's hip and **put it out of joint**. **26** Then he said to Jacob, "Let me go. The sun is coming up." But Jacob said, "I will let you go if you will bless me." **27** The man said to him, "What is your name?" And he answered, "Jacob." **28** Then the man said, "**Your name will no longer be Jacob**." ^B Your name will now be Israel, because **you have wrestled with God** ^C and with people, and you have won." **29** Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But the man said, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed Jacob there. **30** So Jacob named that place **Peniel**, ^D saying, "**I have seen God face to face, but my life was saved**." ^E **31** Then the sun rose as he was leaving that place, and Jacob was limping because of his leg. **32** So even today the people of **Israel do not eat the muscle that is on the hip joint of animals**, ^F because Jacob was touched there.

- a. The man was God or a messenger of God. Jacob believed he wrestled with God Himself.
- b. The name Jacob means 'deceiver.' God changed his name to 'Israel,' which means 'he strives with God.' Jacob had struggled with Esau and Laban, as a deceiver and as the deceived.
- c. His first experience at Bethel started his life change. This encounter with God confirmed a changed identity in Jacob. He was not the same man who left his father's home many years before.
- d. The word Peniel means 'face of God.'
- e. Before Jesus lived on earth, people were warned and believed they would die if they saw God's face (Ex. 33:23). Jacob realized his experience with God was special.
- f. Many Jewish people still do not eat meat from the hip of an animal. This has become a memory marker. It is a way to remember Jacob's experience with God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What makes change so hard?
2. Why were the man and Jacob wrestling?
3. Why did Jacob refuse to let the man go?
4. Why was the blessing so important to Jacob?
5. What name did the man give Jacob and what does that name mean?
6. What proof did Jacob have to show he was a changed person when he met his family and servants the next morning?
7. What changes do we notice in people today to show they are a new believer in God?
8. What are some ways believers wrestle with God?
9. Why do Jewish people refuse to eat the meat from an animal's hip?
10. Jacob named the place Peniel. What are things we can do to remember how God changed our lives?

BIBLE SKILL: *Matching Scripture*

Draw a line to match the Scripture to the new name given to a changed person.

Genesis 35:10

Saul became Paul

Acts 4:36

Sarai became Sarah

Genesis 17:15

Jacob became Israel

Acts 13:9

Abram became Abraham

Genesis 17:3

Joseph became Barnabus

IN MY CONTEXT

When a believer surrenders their life to God and follows and obeys Him, their life begins to change. As their life changes, they love God and seek His blessing.

As a believer grows in the Lord, he should remember how God changed him and works in his life.

What actions do you need to take to put yourself in a better position to encounter God?

Look back at your life, looking at times of greatest spiritual growth. What role did your willingness to follow God play in those times? What keeps you from fully submitting to God today?

Spend time as a group sharing about times God changed you and worked in your life. How can the group help each other remember those special times of spiritual growth?

MEMORY VERSE

Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob. Your name will now be Israel, because you have wrestled with God and with people, and you have won.” - Genesis 32:28

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 32:24, circling what the man and Jacob did.

Jacob was alone. He had taken his family and possessions across the Jabbok River earlier. Jacob was struggling with his fears and not sure what would happen to him. He was scared of what Esau may do to him and his family (32:7a). He thought Esau was going to kill him and his family. Jacob remembered God's promise that his family would grow to as many as the dust and that God would protect him (28:13-15). Jacob's fear and doubt caused Jacob to struggle. So the "man" came along and wrestled with Jacob.

All people experience fear in their lives. Fear can paralyze us. It can make us refuse to move forward and stay where we are comfortable. Fear and the unknown cause us to struggle. That is why we must go to God and remember His promises in the Bible. There are many promises in the Bible that tell us God will be with us and will guide us through difficult times. Just like Jacob remembered God's promises, we need to hold on to God's promises and trust him to protect us, be with us and guide us.

What are some fears that you struggle with right now?

How do your fears lead you to depend on God's promises?

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 32:25-26, underlining Jacob's request.

Jacob and the man wrestled all night. Jacob would not give up. He continued to struggle with the man until the man blessed him. If the man wrestling with Jacob was God or one of His representatives, how could He not defeat Jacob? Make no mistake about it; the Lord won in the match by dislocating Jacob's hip and causing a permanent limp. Jacob stubbornly held on with all of his might until the Lord ended the wrestling match with just a touch of His finger. The Lord ended the match at daybreak, knowing Jacob had an appointment with Esau on the other side of the Jabbok River that morning.

We all experience different kinds of struggles. Some of our struggles are about our wants against God's desire, our plan against God's plan, and our flesh against the Spirit. Paul explained that we struggle because the flesh wants to do what the Spirit says not to do. We want to do what the Spirit says but our flesh does not want to obey (Gal. 5:17).

As believers, we must be aware of our physical or emotional desires and the problems those desires cause between God and us. When you struggle because of your wrong desires, take a moment to surrender all to God. Give up your fleshly desires and allow God's desires to fill your life. During our struggles we need to keep our focus on God, seek His message for us in the Bible, and pray. Life is much better when we obey God every day. The Holy Spirit will give us self-control. Hold on tightly to God and don't let go until God changes you to be the person He wants you to be.

What are the struggles you have with God?

What desires do you have that conflict with God's desires?

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 32:27-29, noting Jacob's new name.

God changed Jacob's name to "Israel." "Israel" means "he struggled with God" or "God rules." This is not the first time that God changed a person's name. God changed Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah, and Jesus changed Simon to Peter. Those name changes are directly from God or Jesus Himself. Jacob's life was changing and he was no longer the old Jacob. God gave him a new name to show that Jacob was a new person from that moment on.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are told that, "If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new!" There was a Deaf man who had a sign name that showed worldly ways. He changed his sign name. When a person asked him, "Why did you change your sign name?" he said, "I am not the same person anymore. I am a new person because I gave my life to Jesus and my life

changed.” When you give your life to Jesus and commit to following and obeying Him, your life will change and you will not be the same person anymore. It is not you that changes, but God who changes you.

What are the changes you have seen in your life since you gave your life to Jesus? If you have not given your life to Jesus, what keeps you from doing so?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Conversion*

Without Jesus we are lost and can't save ourselves because of our sins. Conversion happens when we trade our old sin nature for the new nature that Jesus gives us. When we come to Jesus humbly, confess our sin, turn away from our old sinful ways and seek His ways, then the way we think and view life changes. The Holy Spirit moves into our spirit and changes our whole way of life. This change can happen only through faith in Jesus.

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 32:30, focusing on the new name of the place.

Jacob's life was changed. Jacob did not change his life; God changed his life. Jacob wanted to remember this special place because Jacob saw God and his life was saved. Jacob named this special place “Peniel.” Peniel means “The face of God.” This place was important to Jacob, so he decided to name it to remember what happened there.

As a believer, it is good to keep a reminder of what happens between God and the believer. Some people write a journal to help remember special times with God. Some people frame a special verse or a picture to remember a special place. Some people will take a rock and write a date or name to help remember a special place. It is good to have something to help remember a special time with God. If you do not have something or a journal, it is not too late. You can make a reminder to help you remember a special time or place you had with God. Take the time to thank God for saving and changing your life.

Are there any special places where God changed you? Make a list of places as you remember what God has done in your life.

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 32:31-32, underlining what Jewish people no longer ate.

Because of what happened to Jacob's hip, which caused him to limp, Jewish people do not eat meat from the animal's hip (the sciatic nerve - "gid hanasheh" in Hebrew). It is a tradition to remind them to remember what God did with Jacob.

Sometimes a believer will set up a new tradition to help themselves remember those special times or places. They pass these traditions down to their families as they retell the story. You can start a new tradition to help you remember God in special times of your life. Today is a good time to think of new beginnings and make some decision that God would want in your life.

How might believers today create a way of remembering important spiritual lessons?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 32:24-32. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How did Jesus change your life? Who noticed the change?

How could a new sign name become a reminder of how God changed your life? What new sign name could you use to show you are a new person in Christ?

What new traditions would you like to start to show the new beginnings in your life?



RECONCILIATION

Reconciled relationships are a blessing from God, but the greatest blessing is having a restored relationship with God.

GENESIS 33:1-15

Jacob was afraid of Esau. He was not sure if Esau was still angry at him for his deception or if Esau forgave him. There was no way of knowing until they met each other. Jacob wanted to obey God and move back home, but things needed to be reconciled between Esau and Jacob.

Only God can change the heart of a person to cause reconciliation. Reconciliation requires forgiveness. God wants us to have healthy relationships to show His love. Before we gave our lives to God, we were lost. We did not have any relationship with God because of our sin. But when we believe Jesus and give our lives to Him, God restores our relationship to Him. God loves you and wants to restore your relationships. More importantly, He wants a personal relationship with you and to be in your daily life.

GENESIS 33:1-15

1 Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and with him were four hundred men. **So Jacob divided his children among Leah, Rachel, and the two slave girls.** 2 Jacob put the slave girls with their children first, then Leah and her children behind them, **and Rachel and Joseph last.** 3 Jacob himself went out in front of them and **bowed down flat on the ground** 4 seven times as he was walking toward his brother. 4 But **Esau ran to meet Jacob** 5 and put his arms around him and hugged him. Then Esau kissed him, and they both cried. 5 When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he asked, “Who are these people with you?” Jacob answered, “These are the children God has given me. God has been good to me, your servant.” 6 Then the two slave girls and their children came up to Esau and bowed down flat on the earth before him. 7 Leah and her children also came up to Esau and also bowed down flat on the earth. Last of all, Joseph and Rachel came up to Esau, and they, too, bowed down flat before him. 8 Esau said, **“I saw many herds as I was coming here.** 9 Why did you bring them?” Jacob answered, “They were to please you, my master.” 9 But Esau said, “I already have enough, my brother. Keep what you have.” 10 Jacob said, “No! Please! If I have pleased you, then accept the gift I give you. I am very happy to see your face again. It is like seeing the face of God, because you have accepted me. 11 So I beg you to accept the gift I give you. God has been very good to me, and I have more than I need.” And because Jacob begged, Esau accepted the gift. 12 Then Esau said, “Let us be going. I will travel with you.” 13 But Jacob said to him, “My master, you know that the children are weak. And I must be careful with my flocks and their young ones. If I force them to go too far in one day, all the animals will die. 14 So, my master, you go on ahead of me, your servant. I will follow you slowly and let the animals and the children set the speed at which we travel. I will meet you, my master, in Edom.” 15 So Esau said, “Then let me leave some of my people with you.” “No, thank you,” said Jacob. “I only want to please you, my **master.”** 16

- a. Jacob divided his family into groups. If Esau attacked the first group, others might have time to escape and be safe. Jacob was in the front line.
- b. Jacob showed who was most important and gave them more protection by putting them at the back of the line.
- c. Lying face down is a way of showing respect and submission. Jacob did it seven times to express deep respect and honor to his brother.
- d. Esau was not angry with Jacob anymore.
- e. Jacob sent his servants with a gift of 550 animals to Esau.
- f. Jacob helped heal and reconcile his relationship with Esau by calling him “master” and humbling himself as “servant.”

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why is reconciliation so important to God and for His believers?
2. How and why did Jacob divide up his family front to back?
3. Why did Jacob bow to Esau seven times?
4. How did Esau respond to Jacob when they met face-to-face?
5. After Esau met Jacob's family, why did Esau refuse Jacob's gifts? Why did Jacob want Esau to accept his gifts?
6. What was Jacob's response when Esau told him that he would go along with Jacob back to his home in Edom? Why did Jacob refuse Esau's help?
7. How did God cause Esau's heart to change?
8. What is God's desire for every believer when there are conflicts with other believers?
9. How can believers help other believers who are angry and hurt by another person? How can believers be an example of God's desire of reconciliation?

BIBLE SKILL: *Write and Remember*

Write down the verses from this lesson and the additional verses below. Write them on sticky notes and put them somewhere in your house (refrigerator, mirror, or anywhere you see the notes). When you see them, think about what they mean and talk with God about them.

1 John 1:9

Luke 6:27

Colossians 3:13

Romans 5:8

IN MY CONTEXT

A believer should humble himself or herself when God shows him or her conflict that needs to be corrected.

It requires two people or a group to want to make a relationship work. It is important for both people to want to reconcile the relationship.

Believers should look for ways to protect against future conflicts with others.

How can you build true humility in your life? Ask God to help you.

List relationships that need to be mended. What actions do you need to take to begin to mend those relationships?

What boundaries do you need to establish to prevent unhealthy conflict? How can you set those boundaries with others?

MEMORY VERSE

“So I beg you to accept the gift I give you. God has been very good to me, and I have more than I need.” And because Jacob begged, Esau accepted the gift. - Genesis 33:11

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 33:1-4, underlining how Jacob humbled himself before Esau.

Jacob prepared his family to face Esau. Then Jacob went in front of his family and bowed down (face down with his body flat on the ground) seven times to show respect, honor, and submission. Jacob had to “swallow his pride” which means he had to forget about himself and humble himself. Jacob’s focus was on reconciling with Esau. Jacob hoped that Esau would forgive him for what he did to Esau.

We all experience hurt and rejection in our lives. When someone hurts you, it is easier to just reject that person and forget about them. Conflicts can lead to rejection and unforgiveness. We need to “swallow our pride” by humbling ourselves to go and say, “I am sorry.” Even if the other person is the one who hurt you or started the conflict, we still need to go to that person and ask if we can work this out and reconcile. This is hard to do. We need to allow God to work in our hearts to be humble and to change our attitude and our thinking.

How can you show you are humble when you meet someone whom you have hurt or who hurt you?

How does God’s Word help you know what to do to be reconciled with the other person?

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 33:5-7, noticing how Jacob’s family supported him.

Jacob and Esau were reconciled. Jacob then introduced his family, and they bowed down to show respect to Esau. There are different people that experience conflicts: parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends, long time friends, church friends, and even best friends. When conflicts happen, we can lose contact and even the relationship. But we do not know what was happening in that person’s life.

Proverbs 17:9 says, “Whoever forgives someone’s sin makes a friend, but gossiping about the sin breaks up friendship.” No one is perfect and we all make mistakes. We need to be ready to talk about the conflict and resolve the problem. Then we need to forgive. And we need never bring back the past after resolving and forgiving.

Matthew 6:15 says, “But if you don’t forgive others, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins.” This is a warning from Jesus that we must forgive. This is a requirement from the Lord for all believers. If we do not obey to forgive others, then our Father will not forgive us. But when we ask Him for forgiveness He is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9). Let us practice forgiveness to ALL people, no matter who they are or what they do.

In what ways can you offer your forgiveness to someone even if they hurt you badly? Why does God expect you to always forgive?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Reconciliation*

When we were born, we were separated from God because of our sin. Jesus paid the penalty for sin by His death on the cross and made a way for us to receive forgiveness and be reconciled to God. God’s plan was that through faith in Jesus we can be in relationship with God. Without Jesus, we can’t have a reconciled relationship with God (Rom. 5:10).

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 33:8-11, counting the number of times Jacob asked Esau to take the gifts.

Jacob gave gifts of over five-hundred animals to Esau. Esau didn’t need them because he had plenty. Jacob begged Esau to accept his gifts. In verse 10 Jacob said, “I am very happy to see your face again. It is like seeing the face of God, because you have accepted me.” When we receive or give forgiveness, we and the other person get peace, love, and joy. It is like seeing the face of God. Only God can give you peace, love, and joy

through forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is a gift of letting go of the past. Forgiveness helps you to be at peace. When Esau accepted Jacob's gifts, it gave Jacob and Esau peace.

Forgiveness isn't always easy. Some people do not want to forgive those who hurt them. It requires both parties to accept the gift of forgiveness, being willing to let go of the past and move forward to new beginnings. He who refuses the gift of forgiveness will not experience peace that God offers. But if you offer forgiveness you have done your part. God will handle the other person who refused. So if the person refused to forgive you, continue to pray for this person and continue to have a God-like attitude toward that person at all times.

How does it make you feel when someone forgives you for what you did against them? How is forgiveness like "seeing the face of God"?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 33:12-14, highlighting Jacob's request.

Esau offered to go along with Jacob on the trip back to Edom. But Jacob politely turned down the offer because God did not call Jacob to go to Edom but back to the land of his father, Isaac.

When you are reconciled it does not mean that you have the same relationship as before. Sometimes things change and you can agree to go different ways. For example: There was a man who was involved with a drinking problem. There was a conflict between him and his drinking buddy. They rejected each other. Later this man became a believer and was free from his drinking problem. He remembered the conflict he had with his drinking buddy. He went back to his friend and asked for forgiveness. They reconciled, forgave each other, and he shared with his friend about Jesus but the friend was still drinking. So he couldn't continue the relationship with him in the same way as before.

Is there some unhealthy relationship that you can't continue with? How can you be reconciled, but agree to go different ways?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 33:15, summarizing the verse.

Esau asked to leave some of his men with Jacob and Jacob politely turned down the offer. Sometimes we have to agree to disagree. Many people think that when you disagree you can't be their friend. This is not true. You can be "best friends" and still disagree. It is okay to disagree. People have their opinions and it is good to see why they feel a certain way.

Our goal as believers is to live in peace with everyone. Try to avoid conflict and listen to the other person's views, opinions, and feelings. Do your best to obey the Lord in all He says to do. Develop good relationships with all people. Our attitudes and actions should show God's love in us.

If someone disagrees with you, how can you agree to disagree and still have a good relationship? Why is it so important to be at peace with everyone, even with people who hate you or who are not believers?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 33:1-15. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Why does God require believers to forgive people who hurt them?

Why is forgiveness and reconciliation so important in the Christian life?

How can you be an example in forgiveness and reconciliation with your family, your church family and the Deaf community?



PROTECT AND SERVE

God created human beings in His image and all human life is important to Him.

GENESIS 1:27; 9:1-7; MATTHEW 5:21-22

There are many Bible verses that are clear in how we should value human life. Today there are murders, abortions, bullies, harassment, and all kinds of verbal and physical abuses. There is so much evil in this world. We need to replace evil with LOVE. Only God's LOVE can cause us to value human life and to do good to other people.

God created all human beings in His own image. God wants each of us to have the same attitude as Him by showing His love to all humans. We need to value all human life in the same way God does. We must show love, kindness, goodness, mercy, and patience to all humans in this world.

GENESIS 1:27; 9:1-7;

MATTHEW 5:21-22

Genesis 1:27 “So God **created** **A** human beings **in his image**. **B** In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.”

9:1 “Then God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Have many children; **grow in number and fill the earth**. **C** 2 Every animal on earth, every bird in the sky, every animal that crawls on the ground, and every fish in the sea **will respect and fear you**. **D** I have given them to you. 3 “Everything that moves, everything that is alive, is yours for food. Earlier I gave you the green plants, **but now I give you everything for food**. **E** 4 But you **must not eat meat that still has blood in it**, **F** because blood gives life. 5 I will demand blood for life. I will demand the life of any animal that kills a person, and I will demand the life of anyone who takes another person’s life. 6 “**Whoever kills a human being will be killed by a human being**, **G** because God made humans in his own image. 7 “As for you, Noah, I want you and your family to have many children, to grow in number on the earth, and to become many.”

Matthew 5:21 “You have heard that it was said to our people long ago, ‘You must not murder anyone. Anyone who murders another will be judged.’ 22 But I tell you, if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be judged. If you say bad things to a brother or sister, you will be judged by the council. And if you call someone a fool, you will be in danger of the fire of hell.”

- a. The Hebrew word for create is only used for God’s activity, not for human work. The word is used three times in this verse.
- b. Humans are the only part of creation that have God’s image.
- c. God blessed Adam and Eve with the same responsibility in Genesis 1:28.
- d. God ~~ad~~ manded humans will rule over the animals, as He said in Genesis 1:26.
- e. Before Noah’s time, people ate only plants. After the Flood, God permitted them to eat animals too.
- f. Some people in history thought they could make themselves stronger by eating blood. God does not allow this.
- g. When a person kills another human, they show they do not respect that person or God and His creation. God set the punishment for a murderer in Numbers 35:16.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What makes humans different from everything else on earth?
2. What did God create in His image? Why is it important to know this?
3. What instructions did God give Noah?
4. Why does God want human life protected?
5. What does God command if anyone kills a human?
6. What happens to a person who is angry with someone or calls a person a fool?
7. What can a believer do to show that they value human life?
8. In what ways can a believer help others to show that human life is very important?

BIBLE SKILL: *Verses about Human Life*

Read the verses below and write what they teach about human life.

Psalm 139:13-14 _____

Psalm 8:5-8 _____

Jeremiah 1:5 _____

John 15:12-13 _____

Ephesians 4:32 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

As believers, we must tell everyone the importance of every person's life because they were created in God's image.

We need to protect human life. We need to be a voice for those who can't speak for themselves or can't protect themselves. God uses us to help them.

All believers must respect all human life in their daily actions. We need to teach our children and other people to love, respect, and help others.

How do you value life and tell others the importance of every human life?

In what ways can you speak up to protect someone who can't speak or help themselves?

List your neighbors and co-workers. What can you do this week to show each person you listed that you value them?

MEMORY VERSE

So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female. - Genesis 1:27

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 1:27, beginning to memorize this verse.

It is important to remind ourselves that God created every person here on earth in His image. Who created the baby inside the mother? God is the Creator. God created humans so that each one of us could have a personal relationship with Him. God loves and cherishes every human.

As believers, we have the Holy Spirit living in us. Our goal is to obey God. God commands us to love all people. We need to love and value every human. Every human has a soul. Our goal is for lost souls to know God and receive the Holy Spirit. We need to show love and kindness to all people; through our actions and witness they can come to know God. If we are not nice to people and cause them to feel uncomfortable, how can they learn about God? We need to show respect and kindness to all people in our actions and in our words.

In what ways can you show God's love to all people?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Created in His Image*

God made man and woman in His own image. God made them in their unique personality and their skin color. Every human is sacred to God. Every person in every race is created by God with full dignity (honor) and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 9:1-4, comparing it with Genesis 1:28-30.

God gave instructions to Noah and his sons. Some of the instructions are the same as those He gave to Adam and Eve. But God changed some of the instructions about eating animals. One responsibility for Noah and his sons was to take care of all animals on land, in the air and sea. The second was to have many children to fill the earth. Before the flood, people only ate plant foods such as vegetables, nuts, seeds, and fruits. They couldn't eat meat. After the flood, God told people they could eat meat but the blood must be removed first.

Blood means life. All animals and human bodies have blood so they can live. In the Old Testament, God used blood for forgiveness of sin through animal sacrifice. The blood of the animal was a substitute for the sinner to receive forgiveness. Because of Jesus and the life of His blood, we who are dead to sin receive eternal life and forgiveness. Now we see why the life of the blood is very important to God. So God teaches His people not to eat blood from the meat. "No matter where you live, you must not eat blood from any bird or animal" (Lev. 7:26).

If blood means life, how do you respond to the importance of Jesus' blood shed for you on the cross?

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 9:5-7, summarizing God's instructions.

God set up an agreement with Noah and his sons that any animal or any human that killed a human would be put to death. Think of an example of a dog that attacked and killed a person. We must kill that dog because that dog tasted blood and will be likely to kill another person. It is best for that dog to die. God wants that animal, which killed a person, to die in place of the person that died. It was the same with a human who killed another human. A murderer who killed must die in place of another human who died. Anyone or any animal that takes a human life by killing him or her will have to die.

The point is that we must respect, cherish, and protect human life. We need to train and teach our children and other people how important every human life is. If other humans can't protect themselves - such as babies inside the mother's womb - then we must be a voice for them. We must find ways to help others to protect human life.

In what ways can you respect, cherish, and protect human life? In what ways can we help protect those who can't help themselves?

DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 5:21-22, circling the word "angry."

Jesus talked with people who knew the law. They knew murder was wrong. They knew the commandments God gave Moses. Jesus reminded them that they had the law and anyone who murdered would be judged. Jesus explained to all people that angry words, speaking curses, and name-calling were as bad as murder and they would be judged the same for both.

Everyone experiences anger at someone in their lives. We get angry at our family, friends, co-workers, strangers, and brothers and sisters in Christ. Anger causes us to use mean words and it also causes us to get into physical fights. We must use our self-control to control our anger (Eph. 4:26). When you become angry it is important to control your temper, your body movements, and what you say. Also it is important for your anger to go away before the day is over. Always be willing to forgive, forget, and start new.

When you become angry, do you control yourself? In what ways can you prevent your anger from being out of control?

How can we express our anger in a godly way?

DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 5:21-22, noticing the importance of words.

Words we say and sign are very important. Jesus explained that those who give insults and call names will be judged.

Ugly words, insults, name-calling, and negative words are not a part of God's language. As believers, we should never use those words. We need to start changing the way we talk by using good words, lovely words, kind words, positive words, and helpful words.

We should use "words that will help others become stronger" (Eph. 4:29). That is how we should talk. Our goal is for our words to always lift people up and never put them down. We need to teach our children and other people to talk like that. We can be an example to others by using our words wisely.

**When have you been encouraged by someone's positive words to you?
What are some positive words you can use to show respect to others?**

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 1:27; 9:1-7; Matthew 5:21-22. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

In what ways can your church show how important human life is?

What can you do when you see conflict in your church?

**How can you be an influence in your church with the way you talk?
Do you lift people up with words of encouragement, positivity, and love?**



ASSURANCE

God gives assurance to His followers. He reminds them that He is faithful and they can trust Him.

GENESIS 35:1-15

Even through hard experiences we can see God work in our lives; even in our mistakes or our children's mistakes. God always directs and leads our lives to the end. Because of this, we can know more of God and His faithfulness and can trust in His promises.

Jacob returned to his homeland and settled outside the Canaanite town of Shechem. Surrounded by wicked Canaanites, Jacob and his family strayed spiritually. After a conflict with Alamor, and in obedience to God's command, Jacob and his family moved to Bethel. Before leaving, Jacob made his family and his servants remove all idols. At Bethel, God again revealed Himself and reminded Jacob of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob built a monument to remember the event.

GENESIS 35:1-15

1 God said to Jacob, “Go to the **city of Bethel** **A** and live there. Make an altar to the God who appeared to you there when you were running away from your brother Esau.” **2** So Jacob said to his family and to all who were with him, “Put away **the foreign gods you have**, **B** and make yourselves clean, and change your clothes. **3** We will leave here and go to Bethel. There I will build an altar to God, who has helped me during my time of trouble. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.” **4** So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had, and the **earrings** **C** they were wearing, and he hid them under **the great tree** **D** near the town of **Shechem**. **E** **5** Then Jacob and his sons left there. But God caused the people in the nearby cities to be afraid, so they did not follow them. **6** And Jacob and all the people who were with him went to Luz, which is now called Bethel, in the land of Canaan. **7** There Jacob built an altar and named the place Bethel, after God, because God had appeared to him there **when he was running from his brother**. **F** **8** Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak tree at Bethel, so they named that place Oak of Crying. **9** When Jacob came back from Northwest Mesopotamia, God appeared to him again and blessed him. **10** God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will not be called Jacob any longer. **Your new name will be Israel.**” **G** So he called him Israel. **11** God said to him, “I am God Almighty. Have many children and grow in number as a nation. You will be the ancestor of many nations and kings. **12** The same land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you and your descendants.” **13** Then God left him. **14** Jacob set up a stone on edge in that place where God had talked to him, and he poured a drink offering and olive oil on it to make it special for God. **15** And Jacob named the place Bethel.

- a. See Genesis 28:19. Jacob would remember this place well. God spoke to him there.
- b. Rachel had taken her father’s gods when they left Mesopotamia (see Gen. 31:19).
- c. The earrings were part of pagan religious customs.
- d. The Hebrew word “elah” means Terebinth tree, which is part of the pistachio tree family. This tree was well known in the area.
- e. Shechem is the name of the city where they lived before (see Gen. 33:18-19).
- f. The first time Jacob met God at Bethel, he was afraid and running away from Esau after deceiving him. Jacob returns to Bethel after making peace with Esau, but more importantly because God told him to go there.
- g. God first called Jacob Israel in Genesis 32:28.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What things might a person do to get ready to worship God?
2. When God told Jacob to go to Bethel, what did Jacob remember about God and what God did for him?
3. Why did Jacob order his whole family to get rid of their idols and pagan symbols and to clean themselves?
4. What are examples of idols that people have today? What does God expect people to do with idols?
5. Why was it important for Scripture to talk about Deborah, Rebekah's nurse?
6. Why did God remind Jacob what his name was to be? What did God promise to Jacob?
7. Why was it important for Jacob to build a marker?
8. What are the promises that God gives us to help us be assured of His promises and His faithfulness?

BIBLE SKILL: *Verses about God's Assurance*

Read these verses and write down the assurance that God gives you.

1 John 5:12-13 _____

John 5:24 _____

John 10:29 _____

Romans 8:38-39 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Believers must put God first in their lives. They must get rid of things that involve other gods or idols.

God expects all believers to obey all of His commands and instructions. When we focus on God's promises by believing in Him, we will see God's faithfulness and will have assurance through knowing, believing, and trusting God.

God gives us many promises in the Bible. Our lives should show that we believe those promises. Believers should show that they only depend on God and His Word as they seek Him for anything in their lives.

Why is it important that we get rid of things that may get in the way of our relationship with God?

What are some things God has told you to do but you have either refused to do or not done? Ask Him to help you be obedient.

How can you show in your life that God's promises are true and that you depend on Him everyday?

MEMORY VERSE

God said to him, "I am God Almighty. Have many children and grow in number as a nation. You will be the ancestor of many nations and kings." - Genesis 35:11

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 35:1-4, listing the steps taken by Jacob.

It was time for a new town and a new life. Jacob commanded his whole family, his servants and his entire household, to remove all idols, including earrings. They had used earrings as amulets to protect them from evil, danger, or disease. Jacob buried all of the idols under a tree.

Any false idols or gods that we worship and bow down to need to be removed. There are some idols that we should not worship...what are they? 1) Materialism – things we love and cherish, 2) Our pride and ego – focus all about “ME,” 3) A person or group that we love so much that we can’t stop talking or thinking about them– like a famous actor, singer, or even someone at work or at church that we adore, 4) Addiction to drugs, alcohol, smoking, food, technology such as phone, computer, movies, games, and many more.

God must be the most important person in your life. Anything that you are putting before God must be removed from your life. Jacob ordered his family to clean themselves. We must pray and ask God to remove idols from our lives and to forgive us for worshiping those things.

Make a list of things that you really love. Is there anything on this list that you focus on more than God? If yes, then ask God to help you remove that thing and to help you focus on Jesus.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Repentance*

Repent means to change or turn and go in a different direction. When a person becomes a believer, he repents by turning away from sin and turning to God. Then the believer focuses on God by living the life that God wants. Believers put their faith in Jesus and make a commitment to follow and obey Him.

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 35:5-7, focusing on Jacob's actions.

Jacob and his family traveled to Bethel. God caused the people in Shechem and nearby cities to be afraid of them so they wouldn't chase them down. God protected Jacob's family and Jacob obeyed God by building an altar to Him at Bethel.

God expects believers to obey and follow His direction. When God tells us to do or go, we must listen to His leading as He shows us what to do or where to go. But at the same time we must be careful what we listen to. If your heart is not right with God then the message can be from the devil. If you are in right relationship with God, always praying and reading His Word, and the command matches Scripture then it is from God. As God directs your life, He can protect you as you continue to follow and obey Him.

Has there been a time when you ignored God and did not obey Him?

What do you need to do to obey Him now?

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 35:8, reflecting on the role of Deborah.

Rebekah was Esau and Jacob's mother. Deborah came with Rebekah when Rebekah left Mesopotamia to marry Isaac (Gen. 24:59). The Bible only mentions Deborah two times. But we know that Deborah took care of Rebekah and helped her. She probably helped take care of the twins (Esau and Jacob) and Isaac. Deborah was a great caregiver. This verse shows that there was much grief when she died, which is why they called the tree "Oak of Crying." Most believe that Jacob took Deborah into his family after his mother died.

God puts special people in our lives. They become very important to us. There is a time when they die and we grieve. In God's plan for our lives, He gives us special people from time to time, like when we were little, when we were young people, and when we were older. We can stop and think of someone special that may have passed away. We can thank God for those special people.

List some special people that God put in your life. Take the time to thank God for them. How might you honor them today?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 35:9-13, underlining the name God gave Jacob.

When God appeared to Jacob, Jacob may not have seen God face-to-face. It is more likely that he heard God's voice and sensed His presence. God changed Jacob's name to Israel and God assured Jacob of His plan for Jacob's future.

Israel is Jacob's new name. That's why the nation's name is Israel, after Jacob. Jacob's twelve sons would become the twelve tribes of Israel. God's blessing included His promised presence, protection, and provision, and a new identity for Jacob and his descendants.

We can find assurance in God by focusing on God's promises and His faithfulness to us. We can look back on the things that He has done for us. God is always faithful and taking care of us.

Write a list of things you remember that God did for you. How does God keeping His promises influence you today?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 35:14-15, focusing on Jacob's God-honoring actions.

Jacob set up a special marker to remember his experience with God. Jacob worshiped God, gave a drink offering, and poured olive oil on the rock. This marker helped Jacob to remember God's promises to him. Jacob accepted his new name, God's plan for him and his family, and moved on.

Just as Jacob used the marker in Bethel to think about God's promises, God's people need to remember God's promises found in His Word, seeking to understand and properly respond. Receiving God's assurance is the result of finding, knowing, and applying the promises of God. The greatest privilege in life is discovering and treasuring the Lord's precious promises. He is faithful when we purify ourselves, obey His directives, and remember and treasure His promises.

What are some ways people remember important spiritual commitments today? How do these compare to the actions taken by Jacob?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 35:1-15. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Have you noticed any idols in your life, your family, or in your church family? How can you remove those idols?

What assurance do you have from God in His promises and faithfulness? How can you show God working in your life as you follow and obey Him?

What has God shown you through the lesson this week?



ACCEPT IT

Even though people do evil things to you, God still has a plan for His good purpose in and through you.

GENESIS 37:5-11,19-27

Joseph was Jacob and Rachel's son. Jacob loved Joseph best and made him a robe of many colors. All of Joseph's brothers hated him because their father loved him more than them. They were jealous and hated Joseph so they made an evil plan against him to kill him, but then sold him into slavery. Joseph was gone, out of his family's life.

Sometimes people hurt us. God never makes bad things happen to us. God allows evil things to happen and He takes the opportunity to make new changes in us. We can learn from bad experiences. As believers, we go to God about our bad experiences and depend on Him to help us through our suffering.

We need to remember that God is sovereign and that He is always in control. His plan and purpose for our lives is always the best. Even through many pains and sufferings, God will guide you and help you become emotionally and mentally stronger and spiritually mature.

GENESIS 37:5-11,19-27

5 One time Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they **hated him even more.** **A** 6 Joseph said, “**Listen** **B** to the dream I had. 7 We were in the field tying bundles of wheat together. My bundle stood up, and your bundles of wheat gathered around it and bowed down to it.” 8 His brothers said, “Do you really think you will be king over us? Do you truly think you will rule over us?” His brothers **hated him** **C** even more because of his dreams and what he had said. 9 Then Joseph had **another dream,** **D** and he told his brothers about it also. He said, “Listen, I had another dream. I saw the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to me.” 10 Joseph also told his father about this dream, but his father scolded him, saying, “What kind of dream is this? Do you really believe that your mother, your brothers, and I will bow down to you?” 11 Joseph’s brothers were jealous of him, but his father thought about what all these things could mean...19 They said to each other, “**Here comes that dreamer.** **E** 20 Let’s kill him and throw his body into one of the wells. We can tell our father that a wild animal killed him. Then we will see what will become of his dreams.” 21 But **Reuben** **F** heard their plan and saved Joseph, saying, “Let’s not kill him. 22 Don’t spill any blood. Throw him into this well here in the desert, but don’t hurt him!” Reuben planned to save Joseph later and send him back to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they pulled off his robe with long sleeves 24 and threw him into the well. It was empty, and there was no water in it. 25 While Joseph was in the well, the brothers sat down to eat. When they looked up, they saw a group of **Ishmaelites** **G** traveling from Gilead to Egypt. Their camels were carrying spices, balm, and myrrh. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and hide his death? 27 Let’s sell him to these Ishmaelites. Then we will not be guilty of killing our own brother. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” And the other brothers agreed.

- a. Joseph’s brothers already hated him because of Jacob’s favoritism toward Joseph.
- b. The text does not tell us about Joseph’s attitude. He may have been unaware of the fact that his brothers already hated him and would not have wanted to hear about his dreams.
- c. Joseph’s dreams that showed his rule over his family caused his brothers to envy him more.
- d. Joseph himself later told Pharaoh that if a dream is given twice, God will certainly bring it to pass soon (Gen. 41:32). And this was before Joseph’s dreams were fulfilled.
- e. They saw Joseph coming to them. They called Joseph “the dreamer.”
- f. The oldest brother, who evidently was the only one who didn’t want to kill Joseph
- g. Ishmaelites refers to a group of travelling people. They made trades of different oils, species, and other items as they traveled.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Who gave Joseph the dreams and were his dreams true? What did Joseph do with his dreams?
2. What happened in Joseph's dreams and how were they alike?
3. How did Joseph's brothers and father, Jacob, respond to his dreams?
4. Why were Joseph's brothers jealous of him?
5. In what ways can jealousy destroy a person? How can a believer avoid jealousy in the church?
6. When the brothers saw Joseph coming to them, why did they want to kill him? What was their plan?
7. How did God's plans succeed over Joseph's brothers' plans?
8. How did Reuben save Joseph?
9. What was Judah's idea? Did the brothers go along with it?
10. When bad things happen to believers, how can they trust God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Pain and Suffering*

Read the Scriptures and write what they say about pain and suffering.

1 Peter 5:10 _____

James 1:2-4 _____

2 Timothy 3:12 _____

Romans 5:3-5 _____

John 15:18 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Believers must depend on God and His wisdom when sharing His Word and His truth with other people. We need to be prepared for some people to reject His truth.

Since God uses all of His people in His service, we need to protect ourselves from jealousy. Each person is special and is involved in His work.

Even though bad things happen God is faithful. We can thank God for being our sovereign Lord and being in control of all of our lives.

In what ways can we be prepared to share God's Word with people who will reject Him?

How can we prevent ourselves from being jealous of God's other servants?

How has God used a problem in your life for good? Who can you encourage by sharing this story with them?

MEMORY VERSE

Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, but his father thought about what all these things could mean. - Genesis 37:11

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 37:5-8, summarizing Joseph's dream.

Joseph had a dream and he shared with his brothers what he had dreamed. His brothers were disgusted with Joseph for thinking that Joseph would be king over them. Joseph's brothers already hated him and now they hated him even more.

At that time Joseph didn't realize it was God who gave him his dreams. God communicated with His people in the Old Testament in different ways, mostly through His voice and sometimes through dreams or visions. Today God speaks to us through the Bible.

We need to have the right attitude in how we share God's Word. We need to be humble as we share God's Word and allow God to teach us His ways (Ps. 25:9). We need to obey God when He tells us what to say and when to say it (Matt. 28:19-20). We need to be prepared and ready in what to say. That is why we need to study His words and He will give us wisdom (2 Tim. 3:17).

In what ways can you share God's Word with others? What can we learn from Joseph about sharing truth?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Grace*

Grace is a special love from God. God accepts us and gave us Jesus while we were still sinners undeserving of Him. We can't earn or work our way to salvation. That's why God made a way through his Son, Jesus, to die for you. We receive Jesus as a special gift, "grace" from God (Acts 15:11). Jesus offers mercy and forgiveness (Eph. 2:8-9). God changes our lives as we follow and obey Him from then on (Rom. 5:21).

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 37:9-11, noticing how His father responded.

Joseph told another dream to his brothers and told his father the dream too. This time Jacob rebuked Joseph. Interestingly, in verse 11 Jacob wondered about the dream and what it meant.

Joseph's brothers hated him even more. Whenever Joseph's brothers saw or spoke with Joseph, they saw him as an enemy. Verse 11 shows the reason for their hatred. They were jealous of him. They envied his father's love and his divine dreams. Instead of being angry with their father, or excited about Joseph's blessings, or thinking about their wrong attitudes, they jealously hated Joseph.

The Bible doesn't tell us if Joseph was selfish or prideful, as many people describe him. The timing, attitude, and tone of what we say often determine the response received. As imitators of Christ, we should use our words carefully. Only by sharing spiritual truth with wisdom, speaking the truth in love and with gentleness, can we avoid unnecessarily upsetting others, including family members.

Is jealousy always avoidable?

How can we lessen jealousy in our relationships?

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 37:19-20, underlining his brothers' nickname for Joseph.

Setting off a chain reaction of uncontrolled anger and resentment, the sight of Joseph, unprotected from his father, in this faraway land united his brothers in their hatred of him. Not knowing for sure if little brother's dreams were from God, they would make certain that they would never bow before him, even if God's plan called for Joseph to become a person of power.

It is ironic that the brothers planned a way to protect their sister's honor through revenge on the men of Shechem (34:24-29). These same brothers now plan a way to destroy their own brother. They covered up their evil action by telling their father a wild animal ate Joseph. Their hatred and jealousy caused them to carry out their plan.

Believers need to protect themselves from jealousy. We can easily become jealous when God uses another believer in His service. We may feel another believer has gifts better than ours. We must never allow jealousy to enter our thoughts and feelings.

How can our own desires impact how we view others?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 37:21-24, outlining Reuben's plan.

Rueben was Leah and Jacob's firstborn son. Rueben encouraged his brothers to change their minds about murdering Joseph. Instead, they decided to throw Joseph in the empty well and let him die of hunger. Rueben planned to come back and take Joseph back to his father. Rueben felt responsible for the action of his brothers and wanted to prevent Joseph's death.

We need to watch out for our brothers and sisters in Christ. When they become jealous or frustrated with someone, we need to help them change their thinking and encourage them to love. Think of soldiers taking care of each other at war. They watch out for each other and make sure no one hurts them. We need to be like that with our church family. We need to encourage them. Everyone is important and special.

In what ways can you help your brothers and sisters in Christ from being jealous against someone in the church?

How can you help your brothers and sisters feel special in God's work?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 37:25-27, finding the reasons the brothers agreed to follow Judah's plan.

After putting Joseph in the well, the brothers started to eat. Then they saw from a distance a group of travelers called Ishmaelites. Ishmaelites were traders. They traded different things such as oils and spices. They were traveling on the way to Egypt. Judah had an idea not to kill Joseph, but to sell Joseph into slavery instead. But God had a plan!

God always has a plan for each person's life and His plan never fails. You may think, "My life is ruined!" or "Now I will never succeed!" This is Satan's lie! Your life is never ruined as long you stay in the Lord. God has a plan for you even though you may think that it seems impossible. With God all is possible. God is sovereign and He will make His plan for your life successful. If you fall away from the Lord then you need to get back to the Lord. Only the Lord can help you and lead your life in the path where He wants. Let us thank God that He always makes His plans for His people successful!

How does knowing God is in control give a person confidence to face opposition and jealousy?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 37:5-11,19-27. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How can you show another believer how special they are in God's service?

What should your attitude be when you talk to someone about God and His truth?

How do sufferings and pain help us grow more spiritually mature?



TEMPTED

God is honored when we are faithful and obedient to Him.

GENESIS 39:3-12,19-21

Have you ever been tempted to do something wrong? Temptation is not a sin. Temptation is like a lure used in fishing. Fish are tempted with the lure. If fish do not bite the lure, the fish will be safe. If a fish bites the lure, then the fish is caught. In a similar way, when we are tempted to sin, we must make a decision. Will we bite the 'lure'? Or will we turn away and resist the lure? When we take the "bite" and do wrong, then we sin. If we decide not to do it and turn away, then we do not sin.

In Genesis 38, Judah fell into sin by committing adultery with Tamar. He did not know who she was and got her pregnant with twins. However, in chapter 39 Joseph did not sin when faced with sexual temptation. Joseph did his best to do right and honor God.

God wants us to do our best to live a life that is holy and right. God wants us to be faithful to Him and to obey Him in everything. When we do our best and do not fall into sin, we honor God.

GENESIS 39:3-12,19-21

3 Potiphar ^A saw that the Lord was with Joseph and that the Lord made **Joseph successful in everything he did.** ^B **4** So Potiphar was very happy with Joseph and allowed him to be his personal servant. **He put Joseph in charge of the house,** ^C trusting him with everything he owned. **5** When Joseph was put in charge of the house and everything Potiphar owned, **the Lord blessed the people** ^D in Potiphar's house because of Joseph. And the Lord blessed everything that belonged to Potiphar, both in the house and in the field. **6** So Potiphar left Joseph in charge of everything he owned and was not concerned about anything except the food he ate. **Now Joseph was well built and handsome.** ^E **7** After some time the wife of Joseph's master began to desire Joseph, and one day she said to him, **"Have sexual relations with me."** ^F **8** But Joseph refused and said to her, "My master trusts me with everything in his house. He has put me in charge of everything he owns. **9** There is no one in his house greater than I. He has not kept anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How can I do such an evil thing? **It is a sin against God.**" ^G **10** The woman talked to Joseph every day, but he refused to have sexual relations with her or even spend time with her. **11** One day Joseph went into the house to do his work as usual and was the only man in the house at that time. **12** His master's wife grabbed his coat and said to him, "Come and have sexual relations with me." But Joseph left his coat in her hand and ran out of the house.

19 When Joseph's master heard what his wife said Joseph had done, he became very angry. **20** So Potiphar arrested Joseph and put him into the prison where the king's prisoners were put. And Joseph stayed there in the prison. **21** But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him kindness and caused the **prison warden** ^H to like Joseph.

- a. Potiphar was one of Pharaoh's officials. He was the captain of the guard.
- b. Joseph became very skilled in his job. The Lord gave him the gift to be able to do his work well.
- c. Potiphar trusted Joseph to handle the whole house.
- d. The presence of God with Joseph blessed everyone in the house. When Jacob lived with Laban, God blessed Laban because of Jacob (Genesis 30:27).
- e. Joseph was not seventeen years old anymore and was now a grown man.
- f. Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph with adultery.
- g. Adultery would be a sin against Potiphar, but more importantly it would be sin against God.
- h. The top man who handles the prison.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why did Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his whole house?
2. Did God only bless Joseph? Did God bless someone else? Who? Why?
3. Why is it important for believers to do their best in their job?
4. Now that Joseph had grown into a handsome man, who was attracted to Joseph and what did she want from him?
5. What did Joseph say to Potiphar's wife?
6. Is it wise to be alone with the opposite sex? Why or why not?
7. How did the woman try to prove Joseph raped her?
8. What did Potiphar do to Joseph?
9. Why didn't God prevent Joseph from going to prison?
10. In what ways can a believer avoid temptation, especially sexual temptations?

BIBLE SKILL: *Look up Verses about Temptation*

Read the Scriptures and write what we should do when we face temptation.

1 Timothy 6:11-12 _____

James 4:7 _____

Matthew 26:41 _____

Romans 6:12-14 _____

Matthew 4:1-11 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Believers must be careful of how we act and of what we say. Our goal is to honor God and obey Him in everything.

Believers have the responsibility to resist sin when temptation is offered to us. We need to remember God and the joy of honoring Him.

God lives with those who seek to honor Him. God will never leave us and will always be with us.

How can you honor God in your work?

List the positives of following God's law. How can this list help you resist temptation?

How does the promise of God's presence encourage you? Who do you know that needs to be reminded of this truth?

MEMORY VERSE

But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him kindness and caused the prison warden to like Joseph. - Genesis 39:21

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 39:3-6a, underlining the word “blessed.”

Joseph was a good, hard worker. Potiphar saw how well Joseph did his job and was very pleased. Potiphar put Joseph in charge of everything he owned; only Potiphar had authority above Joseph. God blessed Joseph but God also blessed Potiphar, his home, and his field.

We should always do our very best in our work. We should be honest. In our daily work, we need to think that it is God that we’re working for (Col. 3:23). As you do your very best in your job, God will bless you, your boss, your co-workers, and the business.

How can a person honor God through their work?

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 39:6b-9, looking for Joseph’s response to Potiphar’s wife.

Potiphar’s wife was attracted to Joseph and asked him to have sex with her. We see two reasons why Joseph refused her request: 1) She belonged to Potiphar, and was not for Joseph to touch, 2) Joseph did not want to sin against God.

We need to be careful when it comes to the opposite sex. God forbids us having sex with anyone who is not our spouse. One of the Ten Commandments is “You shall not commit adultery.” Adultery means a person has sex with a married person. God wants us to be faithful to our spouse and stand against those who would not honor their marriages.

How is temptation a test of a person’s character?

How can resisting temptation develop a person’s character?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Christian and The Social Order*

All Christians are required to make the will of Christ most important in our lives and our world. We can only truly influence the world when people experience God's saving grace through Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery. Christians should seek to influence the world in righteousness, truth and brotherly love. Christians should cooperate with all men, but always act with a spirit of love, while staying loyal to Christ and His truth.

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 39:10-12, circling Joseph's reaction.

Everyday Potiphar's wife begged Joseph to have sex with her. Then one day Joseph was alone in the house with her. The wife grabbed Joseph's coat to force him, but Joseph ran out of the house.

First Corinthians 6:18 says, "So run away from sexual sin. Every other sin people do is outside their bodies, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies." Other translations use "flee," which means to run away. It is a strong word. It does not mean to walk away, turn away, or say, "well... no thank you." Don't even try to talk them out of it. It means to RUN AWAY! Any sexual temptation you face, you must RUN AWAY!

Learning from Joseph's example, immediately flee anything that might be sin. The consequences are never worth the momentary pleasure. Remaining pure is the only option that honors God and that God honors.

How does focusing on the end result help a person overcome temptation? Can deciding that one will honor God—no matter what—help to overcome temptations? Explain.

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 39:19-20, highlighting Potiphar's reaction.

When Joseph ran away, he left his coat in Potiphar's wife's hand. She used that coat to say that Joseph tried to rape her. Because Joseph refused her, lying was her revenge against him. Potiphar believed his wife and put Joseph in a prison for people who once worked for the king. It was not a regular prison where bad criminals go.

There may be times we are accused of something we didn't do. We may lose our job, get kicked out of a place of business, or even put in prison. Always remember to avoid sin and say no to sin. When temptation is there, you will know it is best to leave that place. Also avoid going to unsafe places that tend to offer temptations.

What are the dangers of taking action without knowing all the facts?

How can we gather the facts so we can take the best action?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 39:21, memorizing this verse.

God never forgot Joseph in prison. God caused the prison warden to see good in Joseph and like him. Sometimes bad things happen to you, but that doesn't mean that God has left you. God is always with people who love Him, seek His ways, and obey Him. God allows different situations to appear in our lives to help us become stronger and more dependent on Him. Through our experiences of pain, suffering, and struggles, we can help other people who go through the same pain, suffering, and struggles. For example, if a woman has been raped, she can help other women who experience rape. From our experience we can help other people with the same experience we have been through.

We have hope in God knowing that God is with us and living in us as we continue to follow and obey Him. We continue to trust God and depend on Him for everything. God loves you so much and wants you to go to Him and depend on Him.

Make a list of bad experiences you have had in your life. Do you see someone who has gone through the same experience you did? In what ways can you help this other person?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 39:3-12,19-21. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

In what ways can we do a good job in our work, home, and church?

How can we help others avoid sin?

In what ways can we honor God through obedience?



OPPORTUNITY GIVEN

God gives His followers opportunities to make a difference within His plan.

GENESIS 41:15-21,33-40

God communicated with Joseph through dreams and He also gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams. In Genesis 40 we read how Joseph, while in prison, met the king's baker and wine carrier. Both of them had a dream and Joseph interpreted what would happen. The baker would die but the wine carrier would live. Joseph asked the wine carrier to remember him when he was freed. But Joseph stayed in prison for another two years. When the king had a dream and no one was able to interpret it, the wine carrier remembered Joseph and told the king about him. God would use Joseph to make a difference.

Sometimes you may feel like you are just waiting and nothing is happening. But God doesn't forget about you. God still has a special plan for your life that will happen. God will give you opportunities. You can use that chance to make a difference in your life and for others. God is always at work and He is always making special plans for every person to do His work to make His plan successful.

GENESIS 41:15-21,33-40

15 The **king** **A** said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, but no one can explain its meaning to me. I have heard that you can explain a dream when someone tells it to you.” **16** Joseph answered the king, “I am not able to explain the meaning of dreams, **but God will do this** **B** for the king.” **17** Then the king said to Joseph, “In my dream I was standing on the bank of the **Nile River**. **C** **18** I saw seven fat and beautiful cows that came up out of the river and ate the grass. **19** Then I saw seven more cows come out of the river that were thin and lean and ugly—the worst looking cows I have seen in all the land of Egypt. **20** And these thin and ugly cows ate the first seven fat cows, **21** but after they had eaten the seven cows, no one could tell they had eaten them. They looked just as thin and ugly as they did in the beginning. Then I woke up.

33 “**So let the king choose a man** **D** who is very wise and understanding and set him over the land of Egypt. **34** And let the king also appoint officers over the land, who should take one-fifth of all the food that is grown during the seven good years. **35** They should gather all the food that is produced during the good years that are coming, and under the king’s authority they should store the grain in the cities and guard it. **36** That food should be saved to use during the seven years of hunger that will come on the land of Egypt. Then the people in Egypt will not die during the seven years of hunger.” **37** This seemed like **a very good idea** **E** to the king, and all his officers agreed. **38** And the king asked them, “Can we find a better man than Joseph to take this job? **God’s spirit is truly in him!**” **F** **39** So the king said to Joseph, “God has shown you all this. There is no one as wise and understanding as you are, so **40** I will put you in charge of my palace. All the people will obey your orders, and **only I will be greater than you.**” **G**

- a. Pharaoh is the title for the king of Egypt.
- b. Joseph knew where the interpretation would come from. He gave God the credit. God is the only one who could interpret the dream and meaning.
- c. The Nile River was very important to Egypt. The river helped Egypt not to have long famines.
- d. Not only did Joseph interpret the king’s dream, but he also explained a plan to handle the future food shortage problem.
- e. God blessed Joseph and prepared the king to accept Joseph’s plan. God’s plan always succeeds.
- f. The king could see God’s Spirit in Joseph.
- g. From the beginning, Joseph gave God glory and honor. After the king accepted the plan, the king gave Joseph’s God credit.
- h. The king was still in charge, but Joseph would be second in command over Egypt.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. How did Joseph point toward God when approached by the king?
2. Why did the king call for Joseph to explain his dream?
3. What was the king's dream about?
4. What did Joseph suggest to the king to do about the problem?
5. Why did the king appoint Joseph to handle this problem?
6. How can believers receive wisdom from God to handle difficult situations?
7. How do believers recognize that God is working with them to make a difference in a situation?
8. In what ways can believers give God the credit for His work in and through them?
9. What are the opportunities that God is offering for us to make a difference today? How has God prepared you or your church for a new opportunity?

BIBLE SKILL: *Review Verses about God's Call*

Read the Scriptures below and write down what God calls you to do.

1 Peter 1:15-16 _____

1 Peter 2:21 _____

1 Corinthians 1:9 _____

2 Timothy 1:9 _____

2 Thessalonians 2:14 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

We can always depend on God for wisdom during tough situations. When God does something, believers can tell others that it was God that did it!

God will use a believer to do His work for a special situation. A believer can see and recognize God at work in and through him or her.

God is always preparing believers with everything they need to know or do. When the time comes that God uses them, believers can trust God to work to make His plan successful.

In what ways can a believer recognize God's work? How can we let others know God is at work?

List situations in which your Bible study group has or could represent God. How can the group more clearly represent God in those situations?

Ask God to show you areas in your life where you do not have enough confidence. What steps do you need to take to increase your confidence in God?

MEMORY VERSE

Joseph answered the king, "I am not able to explain the meaning of dreams, but God will do this for the king." - Genesis 41:16

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 41:15-16, memorizing verse 16.

Joseph said, “I am not able to explain the meaning of dreams, but God will do this for the King.” This verse is an important part of the whole lesson. Joseph pointed out to the king that he himself could not interpret dreams, but that God would tell him what the dream meant.

We do not do God’s work ourselves; God gets the glory for everything. If God uses you to do something or say something, always remind others that it is from GOD.

There was a poor Deaf lady who told a friend what happened to her that day. She explained that a man was behind her in line at the gas station. She paid five dollars for gas, but the man behind her added ten dollars to her gas without her knowing. She couldn’t get the pump to start, so the same man came to her, reset it, and told her ten with his hands. She learned that he paid ten dollars. She got fifteen dollars worth of gas. After this story, her friend said, “WOW it was GOD that used that man to give you the money you needed for gas! God did the work; praise GOD!” She didn’t realize it was God until her friend pointed that it was from God.

What are ways that you can point another person to God? How can you give God all the credit for His work?

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 41:17-21, thinking about the meaning of Pharaoh’s dreams.

The king dreamed two dreams and both had the same meaning. In verses 25-32, Joseph explained the dreams meant that there would be seven good years of good crops and seven bad years of famine. Did God give that dream to the king? Yes! God does work through unbelievers and He does show Himself to them in special ways for His plan to become successful. God made a way to get Joseph to come to the king and explain the meaning of the dreams. Joseph was able to use this situation to show the king that it was God that gave him the dream and warned him about the future.

When someone comes to you about something that happens, it is important to be sensitive and see what God is doing in this situation. Then you will be able to tell this person what God is doing in his life. Maybe it is to help or to warn. Maybe this person doesn't realize that God is at work in his life and you can take the opportunity to show him that it is GOD that is working in his life. This is an opportunity to cause them to see God.

How can you be prepared and sensitive to opportunities to help people see God in what He is doing in their lives?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Stewardship*

God is the giver of all blessings. We owe all we have and are to God. Christians have a spiritual responsibility to share the gospel with the whole world. Christians serve God with their time, skills and the things they own. We need to recognize God has given these to us to use for the glory of God and to help others.

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 41:33-36, listing the steps to Joseph's plan.

After Joseph explained to the king the meaning of the dreams, Joseph said, "This shows that God has firmly decided that this will happen, and he will make it happen soon." Joseph made it clear that it was God that caused the dream and would make it reality. Joseph showed that God is in control of the earth. Joseph explained to the king how Egypt could live through those seven bad years of famine. Joseph explained what to do and encouraged the king to find the right man for the job.

There will be times when a believer or an unbeliever will come up to you with a problem. These times are opportunities for God to use you. When this happens, seek God's wisdom and show them what God wants them to do. Always put God in every situation because He is in control of all things. Pray with them and help them seek God. Go to His Word, the Bible, and seek verses that will help them. God is always working around you. God will use you to do His work in whatever ways He wants. You can recognize God putting you in the right time or at the right place. Always be ready to serve Him.

When a person comes to you about their problems, in what ways can you help them seek God to find an answer to their problems?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 41:37-38, noticing the question of the king.

We need to remember that the king of Egypt was not a believer and did not worship our God. Egypt had several gods, and Egyptians respected each other's gods. The king understood that Joseph worshiped this one God. The king noticed that Joseph's God was in Joseph. God caused the king to be interested in Joseph's ideas. Joseph's words, which pointed to God and explained the plan to save Egypt for the next seven years of famine, caused the king to see God in him.

Our lives should always point to God in everything we say or do. Other people should be able to see the Holy Spirit living in our lives. Our lives should clearly show our devotion to God as we follow Him and obey Him. We can know God is making His plan succeed. Our lives should honor God in everything we do or say.

What do people see in you? What do your actions say about how much confidence you have in God?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 41:39-40, signing Pharaoh's words to Joseph.

The king noticed the wisdom in Joseph and was impressed with his understanding. God caused the king to appoint Joseph to a high position, making him an important man in all of Egypt. God was honored through Joseph.

God had already equipped Joseph when he was working with Potiphar (Gen. 39:4). Because Joseph was trained and had experience working for Potiphar, he was able to do the job that the king gave him to do. Joseph was ready and he trusted God to do his new job well.

When we honor God in all that we say or do, God will use us in His kingdom here on earth. When you grow more in the Lord, God teaches you along the way, and prepares and equips you for a future. You can trust God as He works in and through you. If you feel that God isn't doing anything right now in your life, maybe it is time that you trust God and let Him teach you and change you. Trust God because His timing and His plans are always perfect.

In what ways has God equipped you to do His work?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 41:15-21,33-40. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How can you thank God for the opportunities He gives you?

How can we encourage each other to depend on God for His wisdom?

How do your past experiences prepare you to do what you do today?



REUNITED

God works through different situations to cause reconciliation.

GENESIS 45:1-15

As soon as Joseph started working for the king, he collected good crops during the good seven years and had plenty of crops left for the next seven years of famine. When famine came, Jacob and his sons did not have enough food. Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to get food (Gen. 42:1-3). When Joseph's brothers arrived, they came to Joseph and bowed down before him, just like in the dream Joseph told his brothers about years earlier (Gen. 37:7,9). The brothers did not recognize Joseph; it had been twenty-two years since they last saw Joseph! At first Joseph kept his identity a secret to test his brothers.

All along, God planned for Joseph to go to Egypt to save his family from famine. God knew the future and what would happen. God used Joseph for good and reconciled Joseph back to his family. God is always in control and His plan always succeeds! God does the same for all of our lives: He is in control and His plans for your life will succeed.

GENESIS 45:1-15

1 Joseph could not control himself in front of his servants any longer, so he cried out, **“Have everyone leave me.”** **A** When only the brothers were left with Joseph, he told them who he was. **2 Joseph cried** **B** so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and the people in the king’s palace heard about it. **3** He said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But the brothers could not answer him, **because they were very afraid of him.** **C** **4** So Joseph said to them, “Come close to me.” When the brothers came close to him, he said to them, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold as a slave to go to Egypt. **5** Now don’t be worried or angry with yourselves because you sold me here. **God sent me here** **D** ahead of you to save people’s lives. **6** No food has grown on the land for two years now, and there will be five more years without planting or harvest. **7** So God sent me here ahead of you to make sure you have some descendants left on earth and to keep you alive in an amazing way. **8** So it was not you who sent me here, but God. God has made me the highest officer of the king of Egypt. I am in charge of his palace, and I am the master of all the land of Egypt. **9** “So leave quickly and go to my father. Tell **him,** **E** ‘Your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all Egypt. Come down to me quickly. **10** Live in the land of **Goshen** **F** where you will be near me. Your children, your grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all that you have will also be near me. **11** I will care for you during the next five years of hunger so that you and your family and all that you have will not starve.’ **12** “Now you can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that **the one speaking to you** **G** is really Joseph. **13** So tell my father about how powerful I have become in Egypt. Tell him about everything you have seen. Now hurry and bring him back to me.” **14** Then Joseph hugged his brother Benjamin and cried, and Benjamin cried also. **15** And Joseph kissed all his brothers and cried as he hugged them. After this, **his brothers talked with him.** **H**

- a. Joseph wanted privacy for this meeting with his brothers.
- b. Joseph also cried when he saw his brother, Benjamin, in Genesis 43:30.
- c. They were likely afraid of what Joseph would do to them because they sold him to slavery. It’s also possible they thought he was a ghost.
- d. Joseph knew God used the brother’s mean acts for a good plan. He repeated this again in verses 7 and 8.
- e. Jacob was Joseph’s father, through Rachel. By this time, Jacob was 130 years old (Gen. 47:28).
- f. Goshen is the land area east of the Nile Delta in Egypt, which was not far from where Joseph lived. It was very good land.
- g. Joseph used an interpreter when he met with his brothers before.
- h. Joseph showed forgiveness, the first step toward reconciliation, which helped his brothers feel comfortable with him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why is forgiveness important?
2. Why did Joseph want everyone out of the room?
3. How did his brothers respond when Joseph told them who he was? Why did they respond that way?
4. What was the reason all of this happened to Joseph?
5. What did Joseph want his brothers to do?
6. Why is it important to God for believers to reconcile?
7. If a believer experiences abuse, pain, or emotional hurts of the past, how can they be reconciled?
8. How can past pain, hurt or suffering change a believer as they grow in Christ?
9. Even with past bad experience, how can a believer see God's purpose and His plans in their lives?

BIBLE SKILL: *Find Verses about Forgiveness*

Read the Scriptures below and write down what the Bible says about forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:32 _____

Colossians 3:13 _____

Luke 6:37 _____

1 John 1:9 _____

Luke 17:4 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

When relationships are broken between family or friends, believers should be willing to work toward reconciliation.

When reconciliation comes there may be some pain or disagreements that need to be resolved. Believers should forgive. When that happens there is mercy, peace, and love for one another.

Where reconciliation is possible, God will provide a way to make it happen for His children.

Believers can show God's mercy in forgiving those who hurt them.

In what ways can a believer resolve past mistakes, pains, or hurts?

How can a believer forgive a person who has hurt them in the past? What steps should you take to forgive anyone who hurt you in the past?

Think about times when someone forgave you. How did their forgiveness impact how you viewed them? What lessons did you learn about forgiveness?

MEMORY VERSE

"You meant to hurt me, but God turned your evil into good to save the lives of many people, which is being done." - Genesis 50:20

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 45:1-4, noting emotions expressed.

In Genesis 42-44, we see that Joseph was a little harsh toward his brothers, testing them. His brothers were afraid of Joseph because he had the power to do whatever he wanted with them. But Joseph chose to forgive them.

Our goal as believers is to be willing to seek reconciliation. Sometimes there are conflicts in families that cause problems in the relationship. Then the relationship fades away. We need to go back and try to resolve the problem and be reconciled. It takes two people to make a relationship work. If one refuses to reconcile or resolve then we can't do anything else.

There was a man who had a sister who had a lot of problems in the past. He tried to reconcile with his sister, but she refused to let him. She kept telling him to go away and not to bother her. Of course this man was hurt and wanted so badly to reconcile with his sister, but he couldn't do anything. If that is the situation then we just have to let them go, forgive them, pray for them, and love them.

Is there someone in your family that you need to forgive and love?

In what ways can you work to reconcile that broken relationship?

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 45:5-8, focusing on Joseph's words about God's work.

Joseph explained to his brothers that all that happened in his life was God's plan. If Joseph didn't go to Egypt then all his family would die of starvation. But God made a plan to save Joseph's family. Sometimes God allows bad things to happen in order for His plans to succeed. Joseph chose to forgive his brothers for selling him as a slave.

Forgiveness is easier when we understand God's bigger plan. There are some situations where reconciliation seems impossible. But God knows the situation you went through. But God wants us to forgive by letting

that person go and giving that person to God. God can heal your heart as you trust Him, depend on Him, and help others who go through the same experience.

In helping his brothers understand God's plan to provide for His people, Joseph shared the famine was far from over. At this point in Joseph's life, he would have been thirty-nine years old, meaning he had been away from his brothers for twenty-two years (37:2). While he was younger than his brothers, his understanding of God and all that God does was much deeper. Knowing the famine would last five more years, Joseph realized his family would not survive without his help. Now was a time for action and thinking long term.

How does looking at the big picture of life help a person deal with past hurts and injustices?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Forgiveness*

Forgive means to wipe the slate clean, to pardon, to cancel a debt, and to let go of past hurts. Because of our sins, Jesus went to the cross and died for us. Through Jesus' blood we can receive forgiveness. When we go to God and ask Him to forgive us, we are giving up our rights and confessing to God that we are wrong and we are sorry. God is faithful to forgive us and He remembers our sins no more (1 John 1:9; Heb. 8:12).

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 45:9-11, listing the ways Joseph would help his family.

Joseph told his brothers to move all their families and their father, Jacob, to Goshen in Egypt. Joseph assured them he would take care of them all for the next five years of famine.

Joseph had been busy since his brothers' first arrival. Not only did he test them and feed them, but he also prepared a place for them and their families, even before they repented or apologized. Reconciliation involves more than just extending forgiveness. Words are cheap. True reconciliation involves proof. Joseph proved his desire for reconciliation

by offering them a home near him. Moreover, he promised he would meet their needs for the remaining five years of famine.

Goshen, located in the northeast Egyptian Delta region, would provide pastures for the herds of Jacob. Over four hundred years later, at the time of the Exodus, the Hebrews still lived in the land provided by Joseph (Ex. 8:22; 9:26). God not only honored his covenant with Abraham by saving a remnant of Israel, the Lord fulfilled His promise of a great name by putting Jacob's son, Joseph, in a high position in Egypt.

What steps might be required after forgiving someone?

How does forgiveness lead to additional action?

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 45:12-13, comparing Joseph's dreams (Gen. 37:5-9) with his life.

Joseph was anxious to move forward and be reunited with his whole family. He was looking forward to seeing his father again. Joseph was emotional. Although Joseph's brothers mistreated him, he forgave them. He could take care of his family. Without Joseph, his family could have died during the famine, but instead, they lived and prospered.

Jesus is our best example of reconciliation. Like Joseph, Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples (Mark 14:10), falsely accused (Mark 15:3), beaten and crucified (Matthew 27:26). It was because of our sin that He accepted this. We were not in the crowd that accused and betrayed Jesus, but we are equally guilty. We are sinners and we need forgiveness and reconciliation. Jesus forgives us. Jesus reconciles us to God. Without Jesus, we would die as sinners with no hope for eternal life.

What does "reconciliation to God" mean to you? How has God offered reconciliation to you?

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 45:14-15, signing it as you read it.

Joseph kissed all his brothers as a sign of peace and reconciliation. Joseph did not have to forgive his brothers. With one word, Joseph could have had his brothers killed. But Joseph saw God's plan. He saw how God used the bad things in his life for good results. Joseph's brothers deserved to die, but he showed them mercy.

As believers we will experience evil in our lives. Bad things will come and go. We will face evil in many different ways. But we can trust God that He will watch over us. We should always have the attitude of forgiveness and love because God forgives and loves us. That should be our goal in our daily life. Romans 12:18 says, "Do your best to live in peace with everyone" and Hebrews 12:14 says, "Try to live in peace with all people, and try to live free from sin. Anyone whose life is not holy will never see the Lord." God wants us to have an attitude of forgiveness, love, and peace. If God can show us mercy, why should we be any different?

What negative things might happen if believers fail to show mercy to others?

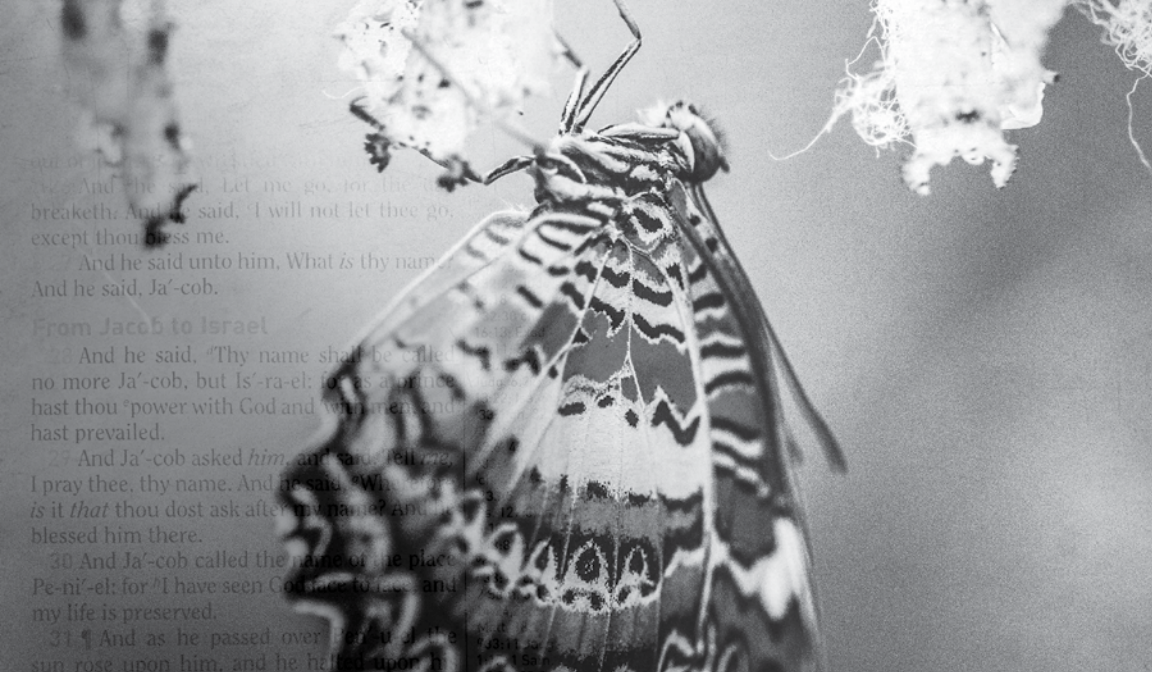
CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Genesis 45:1-15. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

In what ways can we as believers reconcile with other people who are hurt in the church? How can we bring them back and be reconciled again?

In what ways can forgiveness be practiced in your everyday life in home, church, community, and workplace?

How can you show that you trust God's sovereignty when bad things happen?



LEADER HELPS

Session title sub

As the leader of the group, you can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, and by facilitating smaller groups.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, and challenge the group to act on that passage. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you enough time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Study the Bible passage.
- Pay careful attention to the In My Context section for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.

Through the Week

- Ask God to direct your creation of the group plan.

- Create a group plan, adapting the group plans to fit the needs of your group.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Connect and Share to start your conversation.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early.
- Pray for the study and the group members.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

After the Group Study Time

- Contact all group members, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests.
- Record insights gained about teaching, group members, and Scripture.
- Do it all again.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Study

- Encourage everyone on your ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to study the Bible daily. Here are some ways to encourage your group to study the Bible daily.
- Ask them. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.”
- Tell them. Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Be an example.
- Show them. Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.

- Invite them. Call on volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they use the Daily Exploration section.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

At the end of every session, you will find a section entitled Connect and Share. This section is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly, holding each other accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Allow group members to form their own groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups)
- Allow groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on how close they live or work with each other.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new group members and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Ask a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
- Be in a smaller group as well. You may even want to host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

THE DECEPTION

Genesis 27:18-29

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will understand God is working His plan in their lives.

Ask a volunteer to study the Introduction to the Book of Genesis and summarize it for the class.

Ask a volunteer to practice signing the story from Genesis 25:19-28 and prepare to share it with the group.

Review Genesis 27:2-17. Be prepared to summarize this story for the group. You will use it to introduce the text for today's study.

Write the outline for the Scripture on the board.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK the volunteer to share information from the Introduction to the Book of Genesis. **ASK** members to share what they remember about the creation story, Adam and Eve, the Flood and Noah, the tower of Babel, and God's call to Abraham. **EXPLAIN** that our study of Genesis begins with Jacob and Esau, about half-way through the Book of Genesis.

SHARE the story from Genesis 27:2-17 to introduce the Scripture for today. **EXPLAIN:** *We tend to focus on Jacob's deception, but notice it was Rebekah's plan. Jacob obeyed his mother to carry out the plan.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. A Deceitful Son (Genesis 27:18-23)

ASK a member to sign verses 18-23. **REVIEW** the notes beside the text to clarify information. **DISCUSS** questions 1 through 6 from Explore the Text.

2. A Deceived Father (Genesis 27:24-27)

INVITE another member to sign verses 24-27. **REVIEW** the notes beside the text. **EXPLAIN:** *It is clear Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob (see Gen. 25:28).* **ASK:** *What problems can favoritism cause in a family? What problems can favoritism cause in a church family? There are people we may have more in common with than others. There are some we may enjoy talking to more than others. Believers still need to be careful to show love to all and take some time to acknowledge all brothers and sisters. People can feel hurt when Christian brothers and sisters ignore them.*

3. A Stolen Blessing (Genesis 27:28-29)

INVITE a third member to sign verses 28-29. **REMINDE** members that while Rebekah was pregnant God told her the older child would serve the younger. It seems she did not tell Isaac about this. She felt the need to trick Isaac for the blessing. In Isaac's blessing he affirmed what God told Rebekah would happen. **ASK:** *Was it right for Rebekah and Jacob to lie for and steal the blessing? Why or why not? How did their actions show they did not trust God to work His plan?*

Isaac's blessing made Jacob above his relatives in power. Isaac also repeated part of God's promise to Abraham. A blessing like this was very important in Bible times. When Isaac gave the blessing, he could not take it back. Even when he later realized Rebekah and Jacob tricked him, Isaac could not change the blessing and give it to Esau. When Esau discovered that Jacob stole his blessing, he was very upset.

LEAD the group to discuss questions 7-10 from In My Context. **DIRECT** members to look up 1 John 1:9. **REMINDE** them God forgives our sin and still works His plan in our lives.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the three main points of the session from In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions as a group.

ENCOURAGE members to read the verses in the Bible Skill and the daily readings for the week. Also **REMINDE** them to connect with someone this week and discuss the questions from Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help the group live honest lives, showing trust in Him to work His plan.

NOT ALONE

Genesis 28:10-22

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will trust God to be with them always.

Recruit a volunteer to study Genesis 27:41-28:4 and be prepared to share the story with the group when they meet.

Find a Bible map to show the group where Jacob traveled.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Briefly review the story from last week's lesson. **ASK** members to share their questions from the daily readings from last week.

ASK the volunteer to share the summary of Genesis 27:41-28:4. **EXPLAIN:** *Several Bible versions say Esau 'hated' Jacob. The NIV says he 'held a grudge' and The Message says Esau was 'seething with anger.' All of these words express a strong emotion that led Esau to want to kill Jacob. Rebekah's idea to send Jacob away served two purposes: to protect him and to make sure he did not marry a Canaanite woman.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Purpose Revealed (Genesis 28:10-15)

SIGN verses 10-15 and use the notes beside the text to clarify concepts.

POINT OUT Beersheba and Haran on the Bible map. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 2-3 from Explore the Text on page 21. **EXPLAIN:** *God clearly communicated to Jacob in the dream. He encouraged Jacob with the promise He made to Abraham. Jesus used this same picture in John 1:51, showing He is our connection to the Father.*

LEAD the group to discuss question 5 from Explore the Text.

REMINd members that believers have the Holy Spirit within them today. God speaks by the Holy Spirit in different ways. Some ways are: through His Word, through prayer, through other believers, and through situations. We must always remember God will not say something to us that conflicts with the Bible. If someone tells you God said something that is opposite of what the Bible says, that person is wrong.

2. Presence Realized (Genesis 28:16-19)

SIGN Genesis 28:16-19. **LEAD** the group to discuss question 4 from Explore the Text. **REMIN**d members how God invites us to have a relationship with Him first. He gives us the opportunity to respond.

LEAD the group to discuss questions 6-7 from Explore the Text. Emphasize the purpose of markers is to remember what God has done for us. They should bring joy and remind us to thank God for His work in our lives. **EXPLAIN** how oil was used to show something was holy.

3. Commitment Made (Genesis 28:20-22)

SIGN Genesis 28:20-22. **REMIN**d members it is important to respond to God when He speaks to us. When we read the Bible, God communicates to us. Sometimes He convicts us of a sin. We should respond with confession and agree to change. Sometimes He teaches us an action to do as a Christian. We should respond by doing that action. Sometimes He teaches us something new about Himself and we respond with praise.

LEAD the group to discuss questions 8-10 from Explore the Text.

If there is enough time, ask different members to sign the verses from the Bible Skill and discuss the promise in each verse.

IN MY CONTEXT

CREATE smaller groups of three or four. **GUIDE** them to: 1) share with each other how they learned about Jesus and when they decided to become a follower and, 2) discuss what kind of memory markers they could make to remember their decisions. After allowing the smaller groups time to share, reassemble the group so a representative from each team can tell the others what memory markers they discussed. The readings for the week will give them examples.

LEAD the group to discuss the questions from In My Context. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help the group be aware of His presence. **REMIN**d the group to complete the daily readings.

IMPERFECTION

Genesis 29:16-30

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will recognize God's work in their lives even though they are not perfect.

Ask a volunteer to sign the story about how Jacob met Rachel from Genesis 29:1-15.

Find a picture of a well as described in the context verses for today (Gen. 29:10).

Practice signing the story from Genesis 29:15-30. Prepare so you will not need to look at the text while signing the story for the group.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *What would it take for you to consider someone perfect?* Of course Jesus is perfect and gave His life as a sacrifice for us so we can have a relationship with the Father. But in our daily lives we still make mistakes. We need to confess sins every day. We may feel worthless in God's kingdom sometimes. But in today's session we will learn God uses people who are not perfect. He even allows us to be a part of His plan.

REMIND the group how God promised to bless Jacob with a big family. Today we will see how his family got started. Show the picture of what the well may have looked like.

ASK the volunteer to sign the story of Jacob's first meeting with Rachel. After they sign the story **SAY:** *In the story for today we will see Jacob's answer to the question.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Jacob's Proposal (Genesis 29:16-20)

SIGN the full story of Genesis 29:16-30. Then go back and sign just the first part again (verses 16-20). **EXPLAIN** the concepts from the notes beside the text. Lead the group to discuss question 2 from Explore the Text. **ASK:** *How can a believer experience joy in their work?*

2. Laban's Deception (Genesis 29:21-24)

SIGN the second part of the story again (verses 21-24). **EXPLAIN** the concepts from the notes beside the text.

EXPLAIN: *If people knew Jacob and how he tricked his father, they might say he 'got what he deserved' from Laban. Another way to say this is, 'you reap what you sow.' The Bible often uses farming examples because they are so clear. Let's say you plant (sow) some pumpkin seeds. You will see pumpkin plants grow, and finally you will reap (or harvest) pumpkins. This same principle works in our lives. When we sow or do good things, we will see God's blessings. When we do mean or bad things, we will see God's judgment. It is interesting to see Jacob so surprised when Laban tricked him, because Jacob tricked his brother and his father. He should have expected someone to trick him.*

LEAD the group to discuss questions 4-6 from Explore the Text.

3. Seven More Years (Genesis 29:25-30)

SIGN the third part of the story again (verses 25-30). **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 7-10 from Explore the Text. **GUIDE** members to look up the verses in the Bible Skill and fill in the blanks with the names of Jacob's children. We can see how God began to fulfill His promise to give Jacob many descendants even though Jacob made mistakes. This can help us trust God to work in our lives even though we make mistakes.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session from In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions. **REMIND** the group to do the daily readings and connect with someone for Connect and Share. Close with a prayer, asking God to help the group stay faithful and trust Him to work in their lives.

PROMISE KEPT

Luke 1:26-38

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will trust God to do what He promises.

Enlist a volunteer to prepare to sign the story of Elizabeth becoming pregnant from Luke 1:5-25.

Recruit five volunteers to each prepare to sign one of the verses from the Bible Skill.

Write the outline for the session on the board.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *Have you ever made a promise to someone and then you were not able to do what you promised? How did you feel about that?*

EXPLAIN: *In today's session we see God has the power to do anything He wants to do. When God makes a promise, He will do it. We can trust Him to do what He says He will do.*

LEAD the group to discuss questions 1-2 from Explore the Text.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Greeting (Luke 1:26-29)

SIGN verses 26-29. Gabriel was one of the heavenly messengers who brought God's special message to an individual. He appeared to Daniel to explain the king's dream and the meaning of the dream and to Zachariah to tell him about his son, John the Baptist. In today's lesson, Gabriel appeared to Mary (verse 26).

LEAD the group to discuss questions 3-4 from Explore the Text in the Personal Study Guide.

2. The Promise (Luke 1:30-33)

SIGN verses 30-33. **LEAD** the group to discuss question 5-6 from Explore the Text. Gabriel was very specific in his description of the baby. From his description, Mary would know this baby was the promised Messiah. There are many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

ASK the five volunteers to take turns signing one of the verses in the Bible Skill. **ALLOW** time to discuss each prophecy and how Jesus fulfilled that prophecy.

3. The Explanation (Luke 1:34-37)

SIGN verses 34-37. We may wonder why Mary questioned what would happen. She was a Jew and likely knew the stories of Noah and Moses and knew of miracles God did in the past. But there had been no new prophecies for over four hundred years. The Jews did not see miracles for a long time. It makes sense that Mary was shocked to see an angel and to hear about God's plan. Mary's question did not mean she didn't believe the angel, she just didn't know how she could be pregnant.

The angel encouraged Mary by telling her about her relative, Elizabeth.

ASK the volunteer to sign the story about Elizabeth's pregnancy. After the story **ASK**: *How do you think this news helped Mary? How can we encourage other believers to believe God's Word?* We can share how His Word has helped us and how God works in us.

4. The Commitment (Luke 1:38)

SIGN verse 38. When we see Mary's response to Gabriel, we can understand why God chose her. She was a willing servant. Wouldn't we like to trust God that much and be willing to do anything God asked of us? **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 7-8 from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points of today's session from In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily readings for the week and get together with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. **ASK** God to help the group trust Him to do what He has promised.

GOING HOME!

Genesis 31:2-16

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will pay attention to God's direction in their lives.

Enlist three volunteers to prepare to sign the three sections of Scripture during the session.

Prepare to share with your group how God has worked in your life. Share how your experience has helped you trust God more. If you have a hard time remembering a specific example, ask God to remind you of a time He directed you.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *After staying on Laban's land and working many years, Jacob was ready to go home. Jacob asked Laban to let him and all his family leave to go back to his homeland. Laban asked Jacob to stay. Laban noticed how God blessed him because Jacob was with him. For his pay, Jacob asked for the spotted sheep and goats. Most sheep and goats were solid in color, so Laban agreed. But after their agreement, the spotted animals began to increase as God blessed Jacob, and Jacob became very wealthy (Gen. 30:25-43).*

ASK: *How do you think Laban and his sons felt about this? What kind of attitude do you think they may have had?*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Obedience Required (Genesis 31:2-3)

INVITE a volunteer to sign Genesis 31:2-3. Jacob had already expressed his desire to go back home. Laban and his family were not friendly as they had been. And now God clearly told Jacob to go home.

DISCUSS questions 1-2 from Explore the Text. Canaan was the land promised to Abraham's descendants. Perhaps that is why God told Jacob to go back. Or maybe it was because Esau was no longer angry, or to protect him from Laban. Whatever the reason, God wanted Jacob to go home.

2. Obedience Declared (Genesis 31:4-13)

ASK another volunteer to sign verses 4-13. **EXPLAIN:** *At one time Jacob used some superstitious tricks to increase the number of his animals (Gen. 30:37-42), but in Genesis 31:4-13 Jacob gave God all the credit. Jacob recognized God took care of him and blessed him.*

DISCUSS questions 3-6 from Explore the Text.

3. Obedience Affirmed (Genesis 31:14-16)

ASK another volunteer to sign verses 14-16. **DISCUSS** questions 7-8 from Explore the Text. **EMPHASIZE** God speaks to us clearly in the Bible. There may be some things that are difficult to understand in the Bible. But as we obey what we understand, God will teach us more.

By looking back on how God took care of us in the past, we can trust God to take care of our future. Rachel and Leah seemed to understand this. They had seen how God blessed Jacob for many years. This gave them confidence He would take care of them in their new home. They were willing to leave their home and go with Jacob.

DIVIDE five teams (an individual can be a team). **DIRECT** each team to look up one of the verses in the Bible Skill and write what they learn from the verse. Bring the group back together, calling for each team to report.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session from In My Context. **DISCUSS** the questions. **SHARE** your experience of God's working in your life.

ENCOURAGE others to share as well. **REMIND** each other of God's faithfulness.

CLOSE with prayer, asking God to help the group become faithful workers for Him. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily readings and get together with someone for Connect and Share.

CHANGED

Genesis 32:24-32

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will allow God to change them and use them in His plan.

Recruit a volunteer to prepare to sign the story from Genesis 32:24-32 for the group during the session.

Prepare to summarize the information from Genesis 32:3-23 for the group. This information will be the introduction for the session.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ALLOW members to share what they remember about the session last week. **EXPLAIN:** *In today's session, Jacob and his family begin the trip home.*

SIGN the story from Genesis 32:3-23 to introduce the session.

CALL FOR the volunteer to sign the story from Genesis 32:24-32. **ALLOW** members to ask questions about the story.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Match (Genesis 32:24-26)

SIGN verses 24-26 and present the notes beside the text. **EXPLAIN:** *Jacob struggled with Esau when he was younger. Next, he struggled with Laban. Now, as Jacob prepared to go back home, God appeared to him in the form of an angel. God had more to do in Jacob's life. He prepared Jacob for his new life in Canaan by wrestling with him. We know God has all power and could easily defeat Jacob in a wrestling match. But He only put Jacob's hip out of joint. Jacob knew it was important to have God's blessing, so he did not give up or let go.*

LEAD the group to discuss questions 1-4 from Explore the Text.

2. The Title (Genesis 32:27-29)

SIGN verses 27-29 and highlight the notes beside the text. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 5-7 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *Being with God can and should change us. Jacob held on to the 'man' until he got the blessing from him. As we spend time with God, we may struggle to understand God's message to us. We may struggle to know what God wants us to do. We need to be like Jacob and hold on to God. As we obey God and learn from Him, He will change us.*

Jacob's life changed. God gave him a new name to show the change. How do we change? How can others see changes in us?

LEAD the group to discuss question 8 from Explore the Text.

3. The Place (Genesis 32:30-32)

SIGN verses 30-32 and point to the notes beside the text. **EMPHASIZE** that again Jacob set up a memorial marker. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 9-10 from Explore the Text. **GUIDE** members to share ways they decided on to remember God's work in their lives.

EXPLAIN: *Jacob's wrestling match with God left him with a limp. This was a physical change in him. He also knew God saved his life. This would cause an inner change in him. His fear of Esau may have gone away. God prepared him to meet his brother with a right attitude.*

IN MY CONTEXT

CALL ATTENTION TO the main points from the session from In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions. Some of the ways we can seek God include praying, meeting with Christian friends and leaders, and reading the Bible. **REMIND** members about sites to watch Bible stories in American Sign Language such as the Deaf Go Bible (www.deafgobible.com).

CLOSE with prayer, asking God to help the group be strong and willing to change for Him. **ENCOURAGE** them to do the daily readings and the Bible Skill, and to meet with someone for Connect and Share.

RECONCILIATION

Genesis 33:1-15

Plan Ahead

Pray for group members. Pray they will forgive others like God forgives them.

Ask a volunteer to prepare to sign the story in Matthew 18:23-35. They will sign the story for the group session.

Be prepared to sign the story from Genesis 33:1-15 for the group session.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Write the word “reconciliation” on the board. **ASK** members to explain what the word means. One definition of the word is: two people coming back together in a friendly relationship. One example is in the story of the prodigal son. The son left home and the relationship between the son and his father was broken. When the son came back home, his father joyfully welcomed him and forgave him. Their relationship was restored. There was reconciliation.

EXPLAIN: *Reconciliation requires forgiveness. Usually a relationship is broken because one person hurt another. To have a friendly relationship again requires the person who was hurt to forgive the one who hurt them. Jesus told a story about forgiveness.* **ASK** the volunteer to sign the story from Matthew 18.

EXPLAIN: *God forgave all of our sins. As Christians, we should be willing to forgive others. We should also be willing to humbly ask for forgiveness from people we have hurt.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Put Aside Your Pride (Genesis 33:1-4)

REMINDE the group what happened in last week's session. Jacob wrestled with God. Now he was prepared to meet his brother Esau. **SIGN** Genesis 33:1-4. **DISCUSS** questions 1-3 from Explore the Text. **NOTE** that Jacob met Esau with a humble attitude. He showed great respect for Esau. Esau probably recognized the change in Jacob.

2. Be Genuine (Genesis 33:5-11)

SIGN verses 5-11. **DISCUSS** question 4 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *Jacob's humble attitude and his offer of a gift showed he wanted to reconcile with Esau. If Esau refused the gift, it may appear he didn't forgive Jacob. But accepting the gift showed his desire for reconciliation too. Reconciliation requires that both people desire it.*

3. Agree on Limits (Genesis 33:12-15)

SIGN verses 12-15. **DISCUSS** questions 5-7 from Explore the Text. Sometimes reconciliation does not mean two people will continue to be close to each other. Even though Jacob and Esau reconciled, it was wise for them to go separate ways.

DISCUSS questions 8 and 9 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *The most important relationship we can have is a relationship with God. He provided a way for us to be reconciled to Him. He sent Jesus, His Son, to die in our place. Jesus took the punishment for our sin. We can put our faith and trust in Jesus and have a relationship with God.* **OFFER** to talk with anyone who wants information about how to start a relationship with God.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session from In My Context and discuss the questions as a group. **GUIDE** members to pray quietly. **CHALLENGE** them to ask God to show them if there is someone they hurt and need to ask for forgiveness. **ASK** that God show them if there is someone they need to forgive. God is faithful to show us what we need to do.

ENCOURAGE members to do the daily readings and contact someone for Connect and Share.

PROTECT AND SERVE

Genesis 1:27;9:1-7; Matthew 5:21-22

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will gain a deeper respect for human life.

Recruit three volunteers to sign one of the three sections of Scripture for the session.

Identify Christian organizations in your city and state that help pregnant women and children.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *Each January thousands of people participate in pro-life rallies across the country. In addition, many Christians honor Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on the third Sunday in January. These events help us remember that God values all human life, from beginning to end. It is also a time for us to share this news with others.*

There are many actions that show disrespect for human life. Examples include: murder of any kind, abortion, euthanasia (killing someone who is suffering or dying), helping someone kill himself, selling people to become slaves, and bullying. Today we will learn more about what God thinks of human life.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. In His Image (Genesis 1:27)

CALL FOR the first volunteer to sign Genesis 1:27. **ASK:** *What does it mean to be made in God's image? Allow for discussion.* **EXPLAIN:** *There are different ideas of what it means to be made in God's image. It may mean we share some of His characteristics. Humans have a mind and are able to think. We have a will and can make decisions. We have emotions. When we become believers we become*

more like God as we grow in holiness (Eph. 4:24) and in knowledge (Col. 3:10). Most importantly, because we are made in God's image, we are created to have a personal relationship with God.

LEAD the group to discuss questions 1-2 from Explore the Text.

2. To Be Protected (Genesis 9:1-7)

EXPLAIN: After the flood, God told Noah what to do. He included the punishment for an animal or person who kills another person. **ASK** the second volunteer to sign Genesis 9:1-7, directing the group to watch for God's directives.

POINT OUT the notes beside the text.

DISCUSS questions 3-5 from Explore the Text. **EMPHASIZE** again the reason human life is so important is because we are made in God's image. Proverbs 14:31 says, "Whoever mistreats the poor insults their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God." The way we treat others shows how we feel about our Creator.

Many states in the United States have laws permitting capital punishment. This means the government can kill a person who murders another. Some Christians disagree about capital punishment. Some feel it is right because of the biblical law. Some feel the grace taught in the New Testament has more authority. However, the point is this—God values human life and expects us to do the same.

3. In Action and Attitude (Matthew 5:21-22)

EXPLAIN: When Jesus came, He took the idea of respecting human life even further. Our actions should show respect for life. Jesus added the requirement that our thoughts and attitudes should also show respect for life.

ASK the third volunteer to sign Matthew 5:21-22. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 6-8 from Explore the Text. We may all be able to say we never killed anyone, but most of us are guilty of having mean thoughts about someone. We have all shown disrespect in our attitudes. We all need God's forgiveness.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context and lead the group to discuss the questions. Pray together, asking God to help the group show respect for His creation.

ENCOURAGE members to do the Bible Skill and the daily readings this week. Also **REMIND** them to find someone to meet with for Connect and Share.

ASSURANCE

Genesis 35:1-15

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will feel assurance of God's love for them and of His plan for their lives.

Pre-enlist a volunteer to prepare to lead the group in signing the song, *Blessed Assurance*, for the session.

Write the outline for the session on the board.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *What does the word assurance mean?* **EXPLAIN:** *One way to explain it is—to say something positive to give another person confidence. It is like a promise. Sometimes we have doubts. A wife might wonder if her husband still loves her. A child might wonder if his mother is proud of him. A Christian might wonder if God wants a relationship with her. At times we need assurance. God knows this. He gives us assurance through the Holy Spirit and His Word.*

In Genesis 34 some terrible things happened in Jacob's family. A man named Shechem raped Jacob's daughter, Dinah. Jacob's sons were very upset about this. They tricked the men in Shechem's hometown and killed all of them. Then Jacob was angry with his sons for causing so much trouble. After all this happened, God graciously gave Jacob assurance that He would still work His plan in Jacob's life.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Purify Yourself (Genesis 35:1-4)

SIGN Genesis 35:1-4. **EXPLAIN:** *Note in verse 3 Jacob recognized God's presence through his life. Sometimes in our lives we forget how God protects us and is with us. It is good to look back and recognize His work in our past.*

DISCUSS questions 1-4 from Explore the Text. **NOTE** our idols are different from the idols in the Old Testament. Anything we focus on more than God is like an idol. We need to always keep God first in our lives.

2. Obey God's Orders (Genesis 35:5-8)

SIGN verses 5-8. **POINT OUT** the notes beside the text. Jacob took the steps to prepare for the trip and then led his family to obey everything God told him to do. **EMPHASIZE** God's protection for Jacob and his family (verse 5). This was especially important because of what happened in chapter 34.

Christians today should take action like Jacob did. We need to clean ourselves by getting rid of our idols. We should confess our sin and ask for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Then we can know what God wants us to do and we can obey.

3. Remember God's Promises (Genesis 35:9-13)

SIGN verses 9-13. God gave Jacob a new name in Genesis 32:28. In this passage God affirms this name for him. It is possible Jacob did not feel worthy to have a new name from God. God gave him assurance of the name. God also reminded Jacob about the promise He made to Abraham. Jacob would see God carry out His promise in Jacob's life. **LEAD** the group to discuss question 6 from Explore the Text.

4. Treasure God's Promises (Genesis 35:14-15)

SIGN verses 14-15. Jacob set up a marker to remember this event. Christians today need to remember God's work in our lives. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 7 and 8 from Explore the Text.

DIVIDE the group into smaller groups of three or four. **INSTRUCT** them to read through the Bible verses in the Bible Skill together and share how the verses give them assurance.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the session points from In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions.

ASK the volunteer to lead the group in singing *Blessed Assurance*. **CLOSE** with prayer, thanking God for His assurance. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily readings and connect with someone for Connect and Share.

ACCEPT IT

Genesis 37:5-11, 19-27

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will understand that God can bring good out of any situation.

Recruit a volunteer to practice signing the story from Genesis 37:5-11. They will sign the story for the group session.

Practice signing the story from Genesis 37:19-27. You will sign the story for the group session.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

DIRECT members to locate Romans 8:28 in their Bibles. **INVITE** a member to sign the verse for the class. **ASK:** *Do you believe God can work everything for our good?* **GUIDE** members to share their experiences of seeing good come from a bad situation.

EXPLAIN: *In today's Bible passage we will learn about a sad story. In the next couple of weeks we will see how God worked through the sad events. You may remember Jacob had a favorite wife, Rachel. She gave birth to two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph became Jacob's favorite. Our story today is about him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Rule Over Us? (Genesis 37:5-11)

CALL ON the volunteer to sign the story of Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37:5-11. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 1-2 from Explore the Text. **ASK:** *What kind of attitude do you think Joseph had when telling his dreams?* Perhaps he seemed to be bragging. His brothers already hated him and his dreams made them hate him even more. He was younger than they were so it made no sense for him to ever be in authority over them. Even Jacob rebuked him.

ASK: *What can we learn from this story about sharing important truths with others?* Answers could include: we should be careful when sharing truth with others; we should be wise and speak the truth with love (Eph. 4:15) and with a humble attitude; we must understand some people may not accept what we say.

2. What Happens to Your Dreams Now? (Genesis 37:19-24)

EXPLAIN: *Later, Joseph's brothers were taking care of the flocks. Jacob told Joseph to go find them and see how they were doing. Then he was supposed to come back home. SIGN the story from Genesis 37:19-27.*

LEAD the group to discuss questions 3-4 from Explore the Text.

3. What Do We Gain? (37:25-27)

SIGN the last part of the story again. **LEAD** the group to discuss question 5 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *Jealousy is a dangerous emotion. Joseph's brothers were so jealous that they were willing to hurt or even kill him. Their jealousy hurt Joseph and it also hurt Jacob. When Jacob thought Joseph was dead he grieved so much that no one could comfort him.*

LEAD the group to discuss question 6 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *One of the reasons we experience jealousy is that we don't choose to love. First Corinthians 13 teaches what love should look like. Love is not jealous. When we love someone, we will be happy when good things happen to them. We will rejoice when God uses that person for His glory.*

LEAD the group to discuss questions 7-10 from Explore the Text. **DIRECT** members to look up the verses in the Bible Skill and discuss what they learn from them. These verses help us to understand we will experience pain and suffering, but God is always with us. He is still working in our lives.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from the session from In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions. **CLOSE** with prayer, thanking God for His love, and ask Him to help the group choose to love others the way He loves us. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily readings and get with someone for Connect and Share.

TEMPTED

Genesis 39:3-12,19-21

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will trust God when faced with temptation.

Enlist a volunteer to practice signing the story from Matthew 4:1-11. They will sign the story for the group session.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *Last week we saw how Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery. Then they dipped Joseph's coat in goat's blood. When they got home they showed the coat to Jacob. Jacob recognized it and grieved because he knew Joseph must be dead. The Ishmaelites, who bought Joseph, sold him in Egypt to Potiphar. Potiphar worked for the king (Pharaoh) and was captain of the guard.*

ASK: *How do you think Joseph felt? What might he feel for his family? How do you think he felt about God? Today's session will show us how Joseph continued to honor God during this difficult time.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Successful (Genesis 39:3-6a) (...food he ate.)

SIGN Genesis 39:3-6a. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 1-3 from Explore the Text. **NOTE** that God did not leave Joseph. Sometimes when bad things happen, people feel like God is gone. But God never leaves us, especially in difficult times. It was clear to Potiphar that God was with Joseph. Because of Joseph, God blessed Potiphar and his home. This is similar to when Jacob lived with Laban. God blessed Laban because of Jacob. **ASK:** *Do you see God blessing others because of God's presence with Christians? Does God bless others because of you? How can we show others that God is with us?*

2. Tempted (Genesis 39:6b-12) (Now Joseph was...)

SIGN Genesis 39:6b-12. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 4-7 from Explore the Text. **ASK:** *How did Joseph avoid sinning?* He ran away. Sometimes this is the best way to defeat temptation. If we stay around and think about it, we may fall into sin. Martin Luther said, “You cannot keep birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.” It is the same with temptation. Temptation will come to us, but we do not need to think about it long. First Corinthians 10:13 says, “But when you are tempted, He will also give you a way to escape so that you will be able to stand it.”

Jesus gave us an example of how to stand against temptation. **CALL FOR** the volunteer to sign the story from Matthew 4:1-11, encouraging members to watch and find how Jesus resisted temptation. Jesus used the Bible to fight temptation. The more we know about God’s Word, the better we will be able to fight temptation. We will understand what God wants so we can obey Him.

3. Favored (Genesis 39:19-21)

SIGN Genesis 39:19-21. Also sign verses 22-23. **NOTE** that even in prison, God was with Joseph. Again, the person in authority, the warden, trusted Joseph to take care of things, just as Potiphar did. It seems God was preparing Joseph for something important. He gained much experience in managing things for others. Those in authority knew they could trust him. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 8-10 from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

INVITE different members to sign a verse from the Bible Skill. **LEAD** the group to discuss what the verse teaches about temptation.

REVIEW the main points from the session from In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions. **CLOSE** with prayer, thanking God for being with His people. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily reading and get with someone for Connect and Share.

OPPORTUNITY GIVEN

Genesis 41:15-21,33-40

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will recognize God's work in their lives and in others' lives.

Enlist a volunteer to share the information from the introduction to the session in the Personal Study Guide.

Recruit a volunteer to sign the story from Acts 12:21-23 about King Herod.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

DIRECT the volunteer to share the introduction to the session from the Personal Study Guide. **ASK:** *Have you ever felt you were just waiting for something good to happen? Did you wonder what God was doing in your life? Perhaps Joseph wondered about this too. When Joseph's brothers sold him he was seventeen years old. At the end of today's passage, Joseph was thirty. That means Joseph spent thirteen years as a slave or in prison. Maybe he wondered when he would have authority as his dreams showed would happen. Or perhaps he trusted God to prepare him to do God's plan. Let us try to be patient to let God prepare us to do His work.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. A Problem (Genesis 41:15-21)

SIGN Genesis 41:15-21. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 1-3 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *The king asked Joseph to interpret his dream. Joseph did not say, "Sure! I am really good at interpreting dreams and I'm always right!" No, Joseph quickly said God could interpret dreams.* **ASK:** *Why is it so important to give God the credit or glory for His work?*

In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas healed a man who had never walked. Some

of the people saw this and shouted that Paul and Barnabas were gods in human form. When Paul and Barnabas heard this, they tore their clothes and told the people they were humans. They pointed to God and told the people about Him. This gave God honor.

INVITE the volunteer to sign the story of King Herod. Herod tried to take glory away from God. It is very important for us to give God all the glory.

2. A Plan (Genesis 41:33-36)

EXPLAIN: *After the king told Joseph the first dream, he told him the second dream. Joseph explained both dreams had the same meaning. There would be seven years of good crops and plenty of food in Egypt. Then there would be seven years of famine. Famine means people would starve. Joseph said God would make this happen soon.*

CALL FOR a volunteer to sign Genesis 41:33-36. **LEAD** the group to discuss question 4 from Explore the Text. **ASK:** *Where do you think Joseph got the idea for the plan?* God gave Joseph His wisdom. We too can have God's wisdom, we just need to ask (James 1:5).

ASK: *Can you think of other people God used in His plan to do something to help others?* Answers could include: Moses leading the people out of Egypt and Queen Esther saving the Jews. Answers could also include members of your group that have represented God in a way that helps others or points others to God.

3. A Place (Genesis 41:37-40)

SIGN Genesis 41:37-40. **EXPLAIN:** *Imagine! Joseph walked out of prison and became second in command for Egypt.* **ASK:** *Could something like this happen without God?*

LEAD the group to discuss questions 5-9 from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the points from the session from In My Context. **CHALLENGE** members to think about how God can use them to share His wisdom in situations at work, home, and at church. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions.

CLOSE with prayer, thanking God for using His people to make a difference in the world. **ENCOURAGE** members to keep up with the daily readings and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

REUNITED

Genesis 45:1-15

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will choose to forgive others.

Ask a volunteer to share the information from the introduction in the Personal Study Guide. The volunteer may want to add more details from Genesis 42 and 43.

Practice signing the story from Genesis 45:1-15. Prepare to sign the story for the group without looking at the text.

Write the outline for the session on the board.

Be prepared to answer questions members may have from the readings for last week.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *When today's story happens, seven years have passed since Joseph took his position. Egypt had seven years of good crops and plenty of food. Joseph saved much of the grain. After this time, no food grew in Egypt. People came to Joseph for food.* **ASK** the volunteer to share the information from the introduction. Members may remember parts of this story to share also.

EXPLAIN: *Today we will see how Joseph planned a family reunion. It is a story of forgiveness and reconciliation.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Revealed (Genesis 45:1-4)

SIGN the full story from Genesis 45:1-15. Go back through the story and discuss the notes beside the text. Then sign verses 1-4 again. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 1 -5 from Explore the Text.

ASK: *Why do you think Joseph cried so much when he met with his brothers?*

DISCUSS. Joseph's brothers had hated him so much they were willing to let him become a slave. Now he chose to forgive them and show God's

love to them. This can cause great emotion. He may have also been full of joy to see all of them together.

2. Survivors (Genesis 45:5-8)

SIGN this part of the story again. **LEAD** the group to discuss question 6 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *Joseph made it clear to his brothers that God worked a plan to save them. God used their mean act of selling Joseph. He prepared Joseph to take over an important position and save the lives of many people, including Jacob's family. God chose Abraham and his descendants as His people. He would not let them die. He would make a way to be sure they survived the famine.*

3. Reunion (Genesis 45:9-13)

SIGN this part of the story again. **LEAD** the group to discuss question 7 from Explore the Text. **NOTE** Joseph wanted to see his father so much. He also wanted his brothers to tell Jacob what God did to save his family.

4. Restored (Genesis 45:14-15)

SIGN verses 14-15 again. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 8-9 from Explore the Text. Be sure members understand some situations will not resolve completely. In some situations it is best that two people stay apart. However, believers must still forgive those who hurt them. When we refuse to forgive, we become bitter and angry people. Forgiveness gives us freedom inside.

CREATE smaller groups of two or three. **DIRECT** the groups to look up the verses in the Bible Skill and talk about what the verses tell believers to do.

IN MY CONTEXT

SHARE: *A few weeks ago we discussed reconciliation between Jacob and Esau. In that session members were encouraged to pray and ask God to show them if they needed to ask for forgiveness or to forgive someone.* **INVITE** members to share their experiences with reconciliation and forgiveness. **EXPLAIN** that sharing may encourage others to trust God to help them reconcile with others.

REVIEW the main points from the session in In My Context. **LEAD** the group to discuss the questions. Close in prayer, asking God to help group members with others. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily readings and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

NAME CHANGES IN THE BIBLE

By Ken Cox

» In ancient cultures, possession or knowledge of a person's name provided power over that individual. Today, power resides not in our names but in our numbers. Most of us resist being numbered and insist on being known by our names. We are warned to guard our official numbers because someone with our social security number is empowered to access our credit lines in our name.

In the Bible, people's names indicated the character, personality, or destiny of an individual or were related to details of his or her birth. Parents and potentates assigned and changed names for a variety of reasons. Name changes God initiated reveal a turning point in personal destiny and a promise of divine power for service and calling. A survey reveals about thirty name changes in Scripture.

Foreign kings expressed their power and control by changing the names of Israel's nobles. When Joseph became prime minister in Egypt, the pharaoh changed his name (Gen. 41:45). Deported to Babylon, the young nobles Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were renamed Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 1:3-4,6-7).

God changed the names of Abram

("father is exalted") and Sarai when He made a covenant with Abram (Gen. 17:5,15). God promised Abram and Sarai would be blessed with numerous offspring. Thereafter, their names would be Abraham ("father of a multitude") and Sarah ("princess"), signifying her role as a mother of kings (v. 16). This name change and promise occurred at a point of human weakness for Abram and Sarai. Abram, aged ninety-nine and Sarai, ninety (vv. 17,24), were hopelessly childless when the Lord confirmed His promise of descendants through them. Whereas Israel would still be referred to as Jacob after his name change, Abraham and Sarah were never referred to by their prior names. Their new names reflected a powerful permanent position by the will and promise of God. Their old lives and weaknesses were abolished by God's action of grace.

Jacob's name reflects his "grasping" his brother's heel during childbirth (25:26). The "grasping," "supplanting," and "deceiving" nature of Isaac and Rebekah's second son was typified by Jacob's cheating his elder brother out of his birthright and deceiving his father to receive Esau's paternal blessing (27:36).

God changed Jacob's name to "Israel" during a time of personal

crisis. The occasion was Jacob's return to Canaan and a showdown with his estranged brother, Esau. After about 21 years in Paddan Aram, Jacob's family and herds had multiplied. Jacob separated his huge family and herds into two companies. Jacob hoped that if Esau, bent on revenge for Jacob's earlier deceptions, attacked, that at least one of the groups would survive (32:7-8). Also, Jacob sent a generous gift to placate Esau in advance of his dual family retinues (vv. 13-16). On the eve of meeting Esau, Jacob wrestled with "a man" during the night, sustained a hip injury, and limped to meet his brother (vv. 22-31). As Jacob limped to meet his brother, he did so with the new name "Israel" or "he strives against God" (v. 28).

A second reference to Jacob's name change bears the promise of numerous descendants and kings living in the promised land (35:10-12). Future references to him interchangeably used "Jacob" and "Israel." The name *Jacob* referred to the physical lineage of Abraham and Isaac while *Israel* referred to the spiritual promise of God's covenant that was the product of faith and obedience. Jacob's descendants were called "Israel" because of their spiritual promise to be God's people, but they were also known as "Jacob" as they wrestled with their natural inclinations and sin.

In the New Testament, Jesus

gave nicknames to James and John, the sons of Zebedee. He called them "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). Jesus changed Simon's name at their introduction (John 1:42). In this name change, Jesus accepted Simon as he was but promised to transform his reckless and violent nature into a rock of stability for the church. Thus, he was called "Cephas," or "Peter," or the "Rock" (Matt. 16:18). Simon's growth into the leader, Peter, in the Gospels and Acts, revealed God's faithfulness in fulfilling this special purpose.

No verse specifies Saul's name change to Paul, only that he was also called Paul (Acts 13:19). Usually, "Paul" is accepted as the Roman form of the apostle's Hebrew name of Saul. Some interpreters assert that his former name was changed upon his conversion to a name symbolizing "smallness" or "humility" and reliance upon God's power.

The Bible promises believers a new name in heaven. In Revelation 2:17, a promise to the church at Pergamum is for all with saving faith in Christ. Believers have power because of their reliance upon the name of Jesus, and their receipt of "a new name" reflects the transformation from sinner to saint for all eternity because of God's grace and forgiveness.

This article is condensed from an article that originally appeared in the Fall 2015 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Ken Cox is a speaker and freelance writer living in New Boston, Texas.

World of the Patriarchs



Genesis 25–50

This study of Genesis 25–50 explores the roots of the gospel. Earlier in Genesis, God made a covenant with Abraham. Now, the story of Abraham’s descendants unfold.

Isaac, Jacob, and their children become the focal points. Sin and brokenness are present in abundance, making the necessity for transformation clear.

In the midst of all this brokenness, God used imperfect people to advance His perfect plans. God transformed Jacob so completely

he received a new name. Following Jacob's story provides an opportunity to consider your own life story. How have you experienced God's transforming work in your life? Is

there need for even further transformation? Christ

came into the world to make transformation
and redemption available to all who repent

and believe. As you study Genesis

25–50, may God teach you why the

gospel is such good news!



Let the Word dwell in you.

The Promise of a

6:17 Only after He commanded God tell him why it is a flood—a term used on all—destroying flood in No earth shall die. The bible in Genesis 6-8 most notably covered the entire globe, this (2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6). That dominant Christian view remains so today. Often explain the flood simply also tackle questions required to flood the entire pre-flood geography, scientists have needed four times the flood to cover the hills. In the light some defended that pre-flood geography. Specifically, the was flatter in the pre-flood world and that the violent geographical and geological approach, suggesting that is largely the same, greater quantity of water that by an unknown mechanism greatly diminished