



# GENESIS



# GENESIS: Trust and Obey

Welcome to Genesis: Trust and Obey. During these six weeks, our goal is to examine and soak in the reality of God's goodness and His trustworthiness, as revealed in the book of Genesis. We invite you to slow down and spend time meditating and contemplating these truths, asking the Holy Spirit to do a new and deeper work in your life.

This workbook is formatted each week with the following sections:

- Room for sermon notes
- Designated Bible passages, reflection questions, and room for you to respond for 5 of the 7 days between sermons
- A designated Bible passage to study in your life group

The sermons, Bible readings, and life group study passages have been prayerfully selected to work together to guide you toward the overall goal of deepening your relationship with Jesus. Although the sermon, Bible reading/questions, and life group passages unfold in the same weekly pattern, the chapters that you will read and study throughout the six weeks will not always be in chronological order. As Scripture passages reappear in the sermons, readings and studies, ask God to use the repetition of His Word to reveal new things to you each time. Due to the length of the book of Genesis, we have highlighted key passages to study during our six-week campaign. We invite you and your life group to do a more thorough study of the entire book of Genesis together after the campaign is over. The Scriptures included in this workbook are in the New Living Translation.

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## BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### Trusting and Obeying God: Purpose

Day 1: Read Genesis 1:1-13

#### **The Account of Creation**

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

<sup>3</sup> Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

<sup>6</sup> Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.”

<sup>7</sup> And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. <sup>8</sup> God called the space “sky.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

<sup>9</sup> Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. <sup>12</sup> The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>13</sup> And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Before God created the heavens and the earth, what was?

What did God do to create light?

What kind of power must God have to create this way—from nothing to something so magnificent?

Take some time to reflect on and thank God for His majesty and power.

Day 2: Read Genesis 1:14-25

<sup>14</sup>Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. <sup>15</sup>Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. <sup>16</sup>God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>19</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” <sup>21</sup>So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

<sup>23</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. <sup>25</sup>God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What was created on the fourth and fifth days?

Who determined the order in which the earth would receive creation?

How did God allow for growth and new life in His creation?

Do you believe that God has been intentional with the order of things that have happened in your life? Take some time to think about how this ordering impacts your life.

Day 3: Read Genesis 1:26-2:3

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created human beings in his own image.  
In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

<sup>29</sup> Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. <sup>30</sup> And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground —everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

<sup>31</sup> Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. <sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

In whose image were human beings created?

What did God declare the seventh day, and how did He do it?

Ask God to show you how He looks at you—His creation—and calls you “very good.” Listen and write down what comes to mind.

## Day 4: Read Genesis 2:4-14

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

### **The Man and Woman in Eden**

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup> neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. <sup>6</sup> Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. <sup>7</sup> Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

<sup>8</sup> Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. <sup>9</sup> The Lord God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup> A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. <sup>11</sup> The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. <sup>12</sup> The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. <sup>13</sup> The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How was man formed?

Where did God place man to live?

What do you think the garden shows us about God's intended life for us—a life of scarcity and turmoil or of abundance and provision?

Day 5: Read Genesis 2:15-25

<sup>15</sup>The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. <sup>16</sup>But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— <sup>17</sup>except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

<sup>18</sup>Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” <sup>19</sup>So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. <sup>20</sup>He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

<sup>21</sup>So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. <sup>22</sup>Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup>“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,  
and flesh from my flesh!  
She will be called ‘woman,’  
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

<sup>24</sup>This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

<sup>25</sup>Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did God want to give to man?

Who was the helper created by God for man?

In the “life in the garden” that God created us for, what place does shame have?

## LIFE GROUP STUDY PASSAGE

I should trust and obey because I was created for a purpose.

*Please take a few minutes in your life group to discuss your responses to the daily reflection questions and the sermon.*

Allow your group approximately 5 minutes to read the passage below quietly to themselves, providing pens/pencils to circle or underline anything that stands out to them and/or note any questions they might have. When you call the group back together, ask someone to read the passage aloud. Use the discussion questions listed below the passage as a guide, feeling free to omit any that may not follow the direction of your conversation. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in your midst.

Genesis 1:26-2:4

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created human beings in his own image.  
In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

<sup>29</sup> Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. <sup>30</sup> And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground —everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

<sup>31</sup> Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. <sup>2</sup>On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

### **LIFE GROUP PASSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What did God do after He finished His work of creation?
2. What did God declare about the seventh day and why?
3. What does this declaration tell us about how God sees the purpose of rest?
4. Consider intentionally pursuing a day of rest each week as a way of trusting and obeying God and His purpose for rest in our lives. Discuss ways in which you can faithfully choose rest, even if it starts with just a few hours a week.
5. Close your group in prayer, asking God to be at work by His Holy Spirit in each group members' life.



Day 1: Read Genesis 3:1-7

## The Man and Woman Sin

<sup>3</sup> The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

<sup>2</sup> “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. <sup>3</sup> “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup> “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup> The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup> At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did God say about the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden?

Who ate the fruit?

What happened after they ate the fruit?

Think about Adam and Eve's actions. Based on their actions, to whom did they submit?

Day 2: Read Genesis 3:8-19

<sup>8</sup> When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. <sup>9</sup> Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup> He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

<sup>11</sup> “Who told you that you were naked?” the Lord God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

<sup>12</sup> The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?”

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

<sup>14</sup> Then the Lord God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed  
more than all animals, domestic and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,  
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

<sup>15</sup> And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

<sup>16</sup> Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,  
and in pain you will give birth.

And you will desire to control your husband,  
but he will rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup> And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree  
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,  
the ground is cursed because of you.

All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

<sup>18</sup> It will grow thorns and thistles for you,  
though you will eat of its grains.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow  
will you have food to eat  
until you return to the ground  
from which you were made.

For you were made from dust,  
and to dust you will return.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How did Adam and Eve respond after hearing God in the garden?

What reason did Adam and Eve give God for why eating the fruit?

Of the consequences given for having eaten the fruit, what stands out to you?

### Day 3: Read Genesis 3:20-24

<sup>20</sup> Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

<sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” <sup>23</sup> So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. <sup>24</sup> After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Who made clothing to cover Adam and Eve?

From what was God protecting Adam and Eve when He banished them from the garden?

Take some time to think about how God's discipline displayed both His judgment and His mercy. How does this understanding of God's discipline encourage you to live a life submitted to God?

## **Cain and Abel**

4 Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the Lord’s help, I have produced a man!”<sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground.<sup>3</sup> When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift,<sup>5</sup> but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

<sup>6</sup> “Why are you so angry?” the Lord asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected?”<sup>7</sup> You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did Cain and Abel each give to the Lord?

Whose gift did God accept? What about it made it acceptable?

God spoke to Cain about sin. What should our relationship with sin be?

Day 5: Read Genesis 4:8-16

<sup>8</sup> One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

<sup>9</sup> Afterward the Lord asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

<sup>10</sup> But the Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! <sup>11</sup> Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood. <sup>12</sup> No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

<sup>13</sup> Cain replied to the Lord, “My punishment is too great for me to bear! <sup>14</sup> You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!”

<sup>15</sup> The Lord replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the Lord put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. <sup>16</sup> So Cain left the Lord’s presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did Cain do to Abel?

Read verse 12 again. What consequence does Cain receive for killing his brother?

How does God protect Cain even in the midst of His discipline?

Pray and thank God for His justice and His mercy.

## LIFE GROUP STUDY PASSAGE

I should trust and obey even when I think my way is better.

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Genesis 3:1-7

<sup>3</sup> The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

<sup>2</sup> “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. <sup>3</sup> “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup> “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup> The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup> At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

**LIFE GROUP PASSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Based on their actions, to whom did Adam and Eve submit?
2. How did the serpent convince Eve?
3. How have you experienced deception in your life? If you had a subsequent eye-opening experience, what was that like?
4. As we live in the body of Christ together, how can we help each other resist deception and choose to trust and obey God even when we think our ways are better?
5. Close your group in prayer, asking God to be at work by His Holy Spirit in each group member's life.



Day 1: Read Genesis 6:1-10

## A World Gone Wrong

6 Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. <sup>2</sup> The sons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives. <sup>3</sup> Then the Lord said, “My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

<sup>4</sup> In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. <sup>6</sup> So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. <sup>7</sup> And the Lord said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.” <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favor with the Lord.

## The Story of Noah

<sup>9</sup> This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. <sup>10</sup> Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did God observe about human thought?

How did God grieve this reality? To what conclusion did He come?

What made Noah a righteous man?

How would you like to walk in fellowship with God more closely?  
Take some time right now to spend silently with God, asking Him to be with you.

## Day 2: Read Genesis 6:11-7:5

<sup>11</sup> Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup> God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. <sup>13</sup> So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

<sup>14</sup> “Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. <sup>15</sup> Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. <sup>16</sup> Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

<sup>17</sup> “Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. <sup>18</sup> But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>19</sup> Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. <sup>20</sup> Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. <sup>21</sup> And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

<sup>22</sup> So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

## **The Flood Covers the Earth**

<sup>7</sup> When everything was ready, the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. <sup>2</sup> Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. <sup>3</sup> Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. <sup>4</sup> Seven days from now I will make the rains pour

down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

<sup>5</sup> So Noah did everything as the Lord commanded him.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Why did God decide to destroy all living creatures?

In verse 7:3, God gave instructions. What did these instructions ensure?

Read verse 7:5 again. Think about what this obedience may have meant for Noah. How could you apply this to your life today?

### Day 3: Read Genesis 7:6-24

<sup>6</sup> Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. <sup>7</sup> He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. <sup>8</sup> With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. <sup>9</sup> They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup> After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

<sup>11</sup> When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. <sup>12</sup> The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

<sup>13</sup> That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. <sup>14</sup> With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. <sup>15</sup> Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. <sup>16</sup> A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord closed the door behind them.

<sup>17</sup> For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. <sup>18</sup> As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. <sup>19</sup> Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, <sup>20</sup> rising more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks. <sup>21</sup> All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. <sup>22</sup> Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. <sup>23</sup> God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. <sup>24</sup> And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Where did the flood water come from?

What was a result of the entire earth being covered in water?

Who survived the flood? How did they survive? Who did not survive?

Considering our world today, what do you think of God's power over creation as displayed so far in Genesis?

## **The Flood Recedes**

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede.<sup>2</sup> The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped.<sup>3</sup> So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days,<sup>4</sup> exactly five months from the time the flood began, the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.<sup>5</sup> Two and a half months later, as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

<sup>6</sup> After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat<sup>7</sup> and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up.<sup>8</sup> He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground.<sup>9</sup> But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside.<sup>10</sup> After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again.<sup>11</sup> This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone.<sup>12</sup> He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

<sup>13</sup> Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began, the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying.<sup>14</sup> Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry!

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah,<sup>16</sup> “Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives.<sup>17</sup> Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

<sup>18</sup> So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat.

<sup>19</sup> And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. <sup>22</sup> As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Because “God remembered Noah” (verse 8), what did God do to end the flood?

What was God’s response to Noah’s sacrifice?

Do you think God remembers you? Spend some time thinking about this knowledge and how this may change the way you live today.

## God Confirms His Covenant

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth.<sup>2</sup> All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power.<sup>3</sup> I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables.<sup>4</sup> But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

<sup>5</sup> “And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die.<sup>6</sup> If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image.<sup>7</sup> Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

<sup>8</sup> Then God told Noah and his sons,<sup>9</sup> “I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants,<sup>10</sup> and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth.<sup>11</sup> Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

<sup>12</sup> Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come.<sup>13</sup> I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth.<sup>14</sup> When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds,<sup>15</sup> and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life.<sup>16</sup> When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.”<sup>17</sup> Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

## Noah's Sons

<sup>18</sup> The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.)

<sup>19</sup> From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

<sup>20</sup> After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. <sup>22</sup> Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. <sup>23</sup> Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

<sup>24</sup> When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. <sup>25</sup> Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!

May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.”

<sup>26</sup> Then Noah said,

“May the Lord, the God of Shem, be blessed,  
and may Canaan be his servant!

<sup>27</sup> May God expand the territory of Japheth!

May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem,  
and may Canaan be his servant.”

<sup>28</sup> Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. <sup>29</sup> He lived 950 years, and then he died.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Why does God tell Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply?

What covenant did God make with Noah and his family? What symbol did He give?

As we consider God's command to fill the earth and His commitment to never again destroy all life by floodwaters, what can we conclude about God's desire for His creation?

## LIFE GROUP STUDY PASSAGE

I should trust and obey even when others don't.

*Please take a few minutes in your life group to discuss your responses to the daily reflection questions and the sermon.*

Allow your group approximately 5 minutes to read the passage below quietly to themselves, providing pens/pencils to circle or underline anything that stands out to them and/or note any questions they might have. When you call the group back together, ask someone to read the passage aloud. Use the discussion questions listed below the passage as a guide, feeling free to omit any that may not follow the direction of your conversation. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in your midst.

Genesis 8:1-22

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede.<sup>2</sup> The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped.<sup>3</sup> So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days,<sup>4</sup> exactly five months from the time the flood began, the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.<sup>5</sup> Two and a half months later, as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

<sup>6</sup> After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat<sup>7</sup> and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up.<sup>8</sup> He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground.<sup>9</sup> But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside.<sup>10</sup> After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again.<sup>11</sup> This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone.<sup>12</sup> He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

<sup>13</sup> Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began, the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. <sup>14</sup> Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry!

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup> “Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. <sup>17</sup> Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

<sup>18</sup> So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat.

<sup>19</sup> And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. <sup>22</sup> As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

## **LIFE GROUP PASSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you think it was like for Noah to build the ark and live on it for five months, waiting on the Lord? Do you think he ever doubted God?
2. Have you experienced a long season of waiting on the Lord? How does suffering change a season of waiting?
3. As a group, discuss ways that you can choose perseverance, trust and obedience in seasons of suffering and not knowing.
4. Pray for each other, asking God to provide exactly what you need in your current season.



Day 1: Read Genesis 12:1-20

## **The Call of Abram**

12 The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

<sup>4</sup> So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. <sup>5</sup> He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, <sup>6</sup> Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the Lord, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup> After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the Lord, and he worshiped the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

## **Abram and Sarai in Egypt**

<sup>10</sup> At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. <sup>11</sup> As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife,

Sarai, “Look, you are a very beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup> When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife. Let’s kill him; then we can have her!’ <sup>13</sup> So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you.”

<sup>14</sup> And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai’s beauty. <sup>15</sup> When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. <sup>16</sup> Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

<sup>17</sup> But the Lord sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. <sup>18</sup> So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. “What have you done to me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!” <sup>20</sup> Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did God tell Abram regarding blessings and curses when He instructed Abram to leave his native country?

After the Lord appeared to Abram, how did Abram respond?

What did fear motivate Abram to do when he arrived in Egypt?

Take some time to think about ways that fear has motivated you to come up with your own plan. Ask God to help you trust His faithfulness.

## **The Lord's Covenant Promise to Abram**

15 Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”

<sup>2</sup> But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. <sup>3</sup> You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”

<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.”

<sup>5</sup> Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”

<sup>6</sup> And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord told him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”

<sup>8</sup> But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?”

<sup>9</sup> The Lord told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” <sup>10</sup> So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. <sup>11</sup> Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. <sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. <sup>15</sup> (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) <sup>16</sup> After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

<sup>17</sup> After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. <sup>18</sup> So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— <sup>19</sup> the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup> Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, <sup>21</sup> Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

## **The Birth of Ishmael**

16 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. <sup>2</sup> So Sarai said to Abram, “The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal. <sup>3</sup> So Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

<sup>4</sup> So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, “This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she’s pregnant she treats me with contempt. The Lord will show who’s wrong— you or me!”

<sup>6</sup> Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup> The angel said to her, “Hagar, Sarai’s servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress, Sarai,” she replied.

<sup>9</sup> The angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.” <sup>10</sup> Then he added, “I will give you more descendants than you can count.”

<sup>11</sup> And the angel also said, “You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means ‘God hears’), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress. <sup>12</sup> This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives.”

<sup>13</sup> Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, “You are the God who sees me.” She also said, “Have I truly seen the One who sees me?” <sup>14</sup> So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means “well of the Living One who sees me”). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup> So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael.

<sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What concern did Abram bring to God?

Describe Sarai's plan for giving Abram a descendant, and list some of the outcomes.

Think about ways that you have created your own plan when it seemed that no other way was possible. Repent and surrender those plans and any of their outcomes to the Lord in prayer. Ask Him to forgive you and to help you hold onto His promises for your life.

## **Abram Is Named Abraham**

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai— ‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. <sup>2</sup> I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

<sup>3</sup> At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, <sup>4</sup> “This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! <sup>5</sup> What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

<sup>7</sup> “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

## **The Mark of the Covenant**

<sup>9</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. <sup>10</sup> This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. <sup>13</sup> All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting

covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.”

## **Sarai Is Named Sarah**

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. <sup>16</sup> And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

<sup>17</sup> Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” <sup>18</sup> So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

<sup>19</sup> But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. <sup>20</sup> As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” <sup>22</sup> When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

<sup>23</sup> On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. <sup>24</sup> Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, <sup>25</sup> and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. <sup>26</sup> Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, <sup>27</sup> along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did God guarantee to give Abraham?

How long did Abraham wait before obeying God's command (verse 23)?

What did God call himself in verse 1? How does this name impact your perspective of God?

## **The Birth of Isaac**

21 The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised.<sup>2</sup> She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would.<sup>3</sup> And Abraham named their son Isaac.<sup>4</sup> Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded.<sup>5</sup> Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

<sup>6</sup> And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me.<sup>7</sup> Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!”

## **Hagar and Ishmael Are Sent Away**

<sup>8</sup> When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion.<sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac.<sup>10</sup> So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!”

<sup>11</sup> This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son.

<sup>12</sup> But God told Abraham, “Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.<sup>13</sup> But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.”

<sup>14</sup> So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar’s shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

<sup>15</sup> When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush.

<sup>16</sup> Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. “I don’t want to watch the boy die,” she said, as she burst into tears.

<sup>17</sup> But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, “Hagar, what’s wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. <sup>18</sup> Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants.”

<sup>19</sup> Then God opened Hagar’s eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

<sup>20</sup> And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, <sup>21</sup> and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

## **Abraham’s Covenant with Abimelech**

<sup>22</sup> About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. “God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do,” Abimelech said. <sup>23</sup> “Swear to me in God’s name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner.”

<sup>24</sup> Abraham replied, “Yes, I swear to it!” <sup>25</sup> Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech’s servants had taken by force from Abraham’s servants.

<sup>26</sup> “This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Abimelech answered. “I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before.”

<sup>27</sup> Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty. <sup>28</sup> But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves.

<sup>29</sup> Abimelech asked, “Why have you set these seven apart from the others?”

<sup>30</sup> Abraham replied, “Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well.” <sup>31</sup> Then he named the place Beersheba (which means “well of the oath”), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

<sup>32</sup> After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. <sup>33</sup> Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the Lord, the Eternal God.

<sup>34</sup> And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How did the Lord display His faithfulness to Abraham and Sarah?

How did the Lord display His faithfulness to Hagar and Ishmael?

In verse 33, Abraham again worships the Lord after another display of Gods faithfulness. Is worship consistently a part of your response to God's faithfulness in your life? How would you like this to change?

## **Abraham's Faith Tested**

22 Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

<sup>2</sup> "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

<sup>3</sup> The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. <sup>4</sup> On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

<sup>5</sup> "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

<sup>6</sup> So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, <sup>7</sup> Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

<sup>8</sup> "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

<sup>9</sup> When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> And

Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. <sup>11</sup> At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!”

<sup>12</sup> “Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.”

<sup>13</sup> Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. <sup>14</sup> Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the Lord will provide”). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

<sup>15</sup> Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. <sup>16</sup> “This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that <sup>17</sup> I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.”

<sup>19</sup> Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

<sup>20</sup> Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor’s wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. <sup>21</sup> The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans), <sup>22</sup> Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

<sup>23</sup> (Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah, <sup>24</sup> Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How did Abraham respond when God spoke to him and gave him instruction?

What was the outcome of Abrahams' obedience?

Why was it important for Abraham to be in the habit of listening to God's voice? Why is this important for us?

Verse 14 states, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." Is there an area in your life in which you need to obey God completely, even without knowing the outcome?

## LIFE GROUP STUDY PASSAGE

I should trust and obey even when I don't know  
how things are going to work out.

*Please take a few minutes in your life group to discuss your responses to the daily reflection questions and the sermon.*

Allow your group approximately 5 minutes to read the passage below quietly to themselves, providing pens/pencils to circle or underline anything that stands out to them and/or note any questions they might have. When you call the group back together, ask someone to read the passage aloud. Use the discussion questions listed below the passage as a guide, feeling free to omit any that may not follow the direction of your conversation. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in your midst.

Genesis 22:1-18

22 Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

<sup>2</sup> "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

<sup>3</sup> The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. <sup>4</sup> On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

<sup>5</sup> "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

<sup>6</sup> So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, <sup>7</sup> Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“We have the fire and the wood,” the boy said, “but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”

<sup>8</sup> “God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,” Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

<sup>9</sup> When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. <sup>11</sup> At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!”

<sup>12</sup> “Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.”

<sup>13</sup> Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. <sup>14</sup> Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the Lord will provide”). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

<sup>15</sup> Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. <sup>16</sup> “This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that <sup>17</sup> I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.”

**LIFE GROUP PASSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How are Abraham's actions an example of obedience and trust?
2. How does this passage illustrate Abraham's faithfulness?  
God's faithfulness?
3. Have you experienced a time in your life when God asked you to surrender something or someone to Him without knowing the outcome? What was that like? Please share anything you learned about trust, obedience, and faithfulness.
4. Pray for each other to choose faith in God, especially in seasons of not knowing how things are going to work out.



Day 1: Read Genesis 25:1-34

## The Death of Abraham

25 Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah.

<sup>2</sup> She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. <sup>3</sup> Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites.

<sup>4</sup> Midian's sons were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. <sup>6</sup> But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham lived for 175 years, <sup>8</sup> and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. <sup>9</sup> His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. <sup>10</sup> This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. <sup>11</sup> After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

## Ishmael's Descendants

<sup>12</sup> This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. <sup>13</sup> Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, <sup>14</sup> Mishma, Dumah, Massa, <sup>15</sup> Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

<sup>16</sup> These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes named after them, listed according to the places they settled

and camped. <sup>17</sup> Ishmael lived for 137 years. Then he breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. <sup>18</sup> Ishmael's descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives.

## **The Births of Esau and Jacob**

<sup>19</sup> This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham.

<sup>20</sup> When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

<sup>21</sup> Isaac pleaded with the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The Lord answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. <sup>22</sup> But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the Lord about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

<sup>23</sup> And the Lord told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

<sup>24</sup> And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! <sup>25</sup> The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau.

<sup>26</sup> Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

## **Esau Sells His Birthright**

<sup>27</sup> As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. <sup>28</sup> Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

<sup>29</sup> One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. <sup>30</sup> Esau said to Jacob, “I’m starved! Give me some of that red stew!” (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means “red.”)

<sup>31</sup> “All right,” Jacob replied, “but trade me your rights as the firstborn son.”

<sup>32</sup> “Look, I’m dying of starvation!” said Esau. “What good is my birthright to me now?”

<sup>33</sup> But Jacob said, “First you must swear that your birthright is mine.” So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What resulted from Isaac pleading with God?

When Rebekah asked the Lord what was happening within her, how did the Lord respond?

Considering God's attention to both Isaac and Rebekah's requests, how do you think God wants us to feel about asking Him difficult questions and making requests?

## **Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing**

27 One day when Isaac was old and turning blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son."

"Yes, Father?" Esau replied.

<sup>2</sup> "I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I don't know when I may die. <sup>3</sup> Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows, and go out into the open country to hunt some wild game for me. <sup>4</sup> Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

<sup>5</sup> But Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said to his son Esau. So when Esau left to hunt for the wild game, <sup>6</sup> she said to her son Jacob, "Listen. I overheard your father say to Esau, <sup>7</sup> 'Bring me some wild game and prepare me a delicious meal. Then I will bless you in the Lord's presence before I die.' <sup>8</sup> Now, my son, listen to me. Do exactly as I tell you. <sup>9</sup> Go out to the flocks, and bring me two fine young goats. I'll use them to prepare your father's favorite dish. <sup>10</sup> Then take the food to your father so he can eat it and bless you before he dies."

<sup>11</sup> "But look," Jacob replied to Rebekah, "my brother, Esau, is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. <sup>12</sup> What if my father touches me? He'll see that I'm trying to trick him, and then he'll curse me instead of blessing me."

<sup>13</sup> But his mother replied, "Then let the curse fall on me, my son! Just do what I tell you. Go out and get the goats for me!"

<sup>14</sup> So Jacob went out and got the young goats for his mother. Rebekah took them and prepared a delicious meal, just the way Isaac liked it. <sup>15</sup> Then she took Esau's favorite clothes, which were there in the house, and gave them to her younger son, Jacob. <sup>16</sup> She covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of

the young goats. <sup>17</sup> Then she gave Jacob the delicious meal, including freshly baked bread.

<sup>18</sup> So Jacob took the food to his father. “My father?” he said.

“Yes, my son,” Isaac answered. “Who are you—Esau or Jacob?”

<sup>19</sup> Jacob replied, “It’s Esau, your firstborn son. I’ve done as you told me. Here is the wild game. Now sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing.”

<sup>20</sup> Isaac asked, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?”

“The Lord your God put it in my path!” Jacob replied.

<sup>21</sup> Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you really are Esau.” <sup>22</sup> So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. “The voice is Jacob’s, but the hands are Esau’s,” Isaac said. <sup>23</sup> But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob’s hands felt hairy just like Esau’s. So Isaac prepared to bless Jacob. <sup>24</sup> “But are you really my son Esau?” he asked.

“Yes, I am,” Jacob replied.

<sup>25</sup> Then Isaac said, “Now, my son, bring me the wild game. Let me eat it, and then I will give you my blessing.” So Jacob took the food to his father, and Isaac ate it. He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. <sup>26</sup> Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come a little closer and kiss me, my son.”

<sup>27</sup> So Jacob went over and kissed him. And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He said, “Ah! The smell of my son is like the smell of the outdoors, which the Lord has blessed!

<sup>28</sup> “From the dew of heaven  
and the richness of the earth,  
may God always give you abundant harvests of grain

and bountiful new wine.

<sup>29</sup> May many nations become your servants,  
and may they bow down to you.

May you be the master over your brothers,  
and may your mother's sons bow down to you.

All who curse you will be cursed,  
and all who bless you will be blessed.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Why did Isaac call for Esau?

Why did Rebekah make a plan to deceive Isaac?

What did Jacob receive from Isaac?

Day 3: Read Genesis 27:30-28:5

<sup>30</sup> As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunt. <sup>31</sup> Esau prepared a delicious meal and brought it to his father. Then he said, “Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing.”

<sup>32</sup> But Isaac asked him, “Who are you?”

Esau replied, “It’s your son, your firstborn son, Esau.”

<sup>33</sup> Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, “Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand!”

<sup>34</sup> When Esau heard his father’s words, he let out a loud and bitter cry. “Oh my father, what about me? Bless me, too!” he begged.

<sup>35</sup> But Isaac said, “Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing.”

<sup>36</sup> Esau exclaimed, “No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice. First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven’t you saved even one blessing for me?”

<sup>37</sup> Isaac said to Esau, “I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?”

<sup>38</sup> Esau pleaded, “But do you have only one blessing? Oh my father, bless me, too!” Then Esau broke down and wept.

<sup>39</sup> Finally, his father, Isaac, said to him,

“You will live away from the richness of the earth,

and away from the dew of the heaven above.  
<sup>40</sup> You will live by your sword,  
and you will serve your brother.  
But when you decide to break free,  
you will shake his yoke from your neck.”

## **Jacob Flees to Paddan-Aram**

<sup>41</sup> From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: “I will soon be mourning my father’s death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob.”

<sup>42</sup> But Rebekah heard about Esau’s plans. So she sent for Jacob and told him, “Listen, Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you.

<sup>43</sup> So listen carefully, my son. Get ready and flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran. <sup>44</sup> Stay there with him until your brother cools off.

<sup>45</sup> When he calms down and forgets what you have done to him, I will send for you to come back. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

<sup>46</sup> Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m sick and tired of these local Hittite women! I would rather die than see Jacob marry one of them.”

28 So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, “You must not marry any of these Canaanite women. <sup>2</sup> Instead, go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban’s daughters. <sup>3</sup> May God Almighty bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants multiply and become many nations! <sup>4</sup> May God pass on to you and your descendants the blessings he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where you are now living as a foreigner, for God gave this land to Abraham.”

<sup>5</sup> So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother’s brother, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did Esau receive from Isaac?

What plan did Rebekah have to protect Jacob from Esau?

Have you ever had the seeds of hatred planted in your life? Even if it was a long time ago, offer up to God those seeds and any bad fruit that has come from them. Ask Him to heal you and plant something new in your life.

## Day 4: Read Genesis 32:1-32

32 As Jacob started on his way again, angels of God came to meet him. <sup>2</sup> When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, “This is God’s camp!” So he named the place Mahanaim.

### **Jacob Sends Gifts to Esau**

<sup>3</sup> Then Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother, Esau, who was living in the region of Seir in the land of Edom. <sup>4</sup> He told them, “Give this message to my master Esau: ‘Humble greetings from your servant Jacob. Until now I have been living with Uncle Laban, <sup>5</sup> and now I own cattle, donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform my lord of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to me.’”

<sup>6</sup> After delivering the message, the messengers returned to Jacob and reported, “We met your brother, Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you—with an army of 400 men!” <sup>7</sup> Jacob was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two groups. <sup>8</sup> He thought, “If Esau meets one group and attacks it, perhaps the other group can escape.”

<sup>9</sup> Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O Lord, you told me, ‘Return to your own land and to your relatives.’ And you promised me, ‘I will treat you kindly.’ <sup>10</sup> I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps! <sup>11</sup> O Lord, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. <sup>12</sup> But you promised me, ‘I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.’”

<sup>13</sup> Jacob stayed where he was for the night. Then he selected these gifts from his possessions to present to his brother, Esau: <sup>14</sup> 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, <sup>15</sup> 30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. <sup>16</sup> He divided these animals into herds and assigned each to different servants. Then he told his servants, “Go ahead of me with the animals, but keep some distance between the herds.”

<sup>17</sup> He gave these instructions to the men leading the first group: “When my brother, Esau, meets you, he will ask, ‘Whose servants are you? Where are you going? Who owns these animals?’ <sup>18</sup> You must reply, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob, but they are a gift for his master Esau. Look, he is coming right behind us.’”

<sup>19</sup> Jacob gave the same instructions to the second and third herdsmen and to all who followed behind the herds: “You must say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. <sup>20</sup> And be sure to say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.’”

Jacob thought, “I will try to appease him by sending gifts ahead of me. When I see him in person, perhaps he will be friendly to me.”

<sup>21</sup> So the gifts were sent on ahead, while Jacob himself spent that night in the camp.

## **Jacob Wrestles with God**

<sup>22</sup> During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them. <sup>23</sup> After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions.

<sup>24</sup> This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob’s hip and wrenched it out of its socket. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!”

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

<sup>27</sup> “What is your name?” the man asked.

He replied, “Jacob.”

<sup>28</sup> “Your name will no longer be Jacob,” the man told him. “From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won.”

<sup>29</sup> “Please tell me your name,” Jacob said.

“Why do you want to know my name?” the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

<sup>30</sup> Jacob named the place Peniel (which means “face of God”), for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared.” <sup>31</sup> The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of the injury to his hip. <sup>32</sup> (Even today the people of Israel don’t eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the man strained the tendon of Jacob’s hip.)

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How does Jacob address Esau (through his messengers)?

What does Jacob do when he is struck with the fear of Esau's attack?

Jacob's hip was permanently affected by his encounter with God. What areas of your life could be identified as "battle wounds," both scars and blessed reminders of His faithfulness and provision?

## **Jacob and Esau Make Peace**

33 Then Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and his two servant wives. <sup>2</sup> He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.

<sup>3</sup> Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him. <sup>4</sup> Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

<sup>5</sup> Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, “Who are these people with you?”

“These are the children God has graciously given to me, your servant,” Jacob replied. <sup>6</sup> Then the servant wives came forward with their children and bowed before him. <sup>7</sup> Next came Leah with her children, and they bowed before him. Finally, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed before him.

<sup>8</sup> “And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?” Esau asked.

Jacob replied, “They are a gift, my lord, to ensure your friendship.”

<sup>9</sup> “My brother, I have plenty,” Esau answered. “Keep what you have for yourself.”

<sup>10</sup> But Jacob insisted, “No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God! <sup>11</sup> Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been very gracious to me. I have more than enough.” And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift.

<sup>12</sup> “Well,” Esau said, “let’s be going. I will lead the way.”

<sup>13</sup> But Jacob replied, “You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard, even for one day, all the animals could die. <sup>14</sup> Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children. I will meet you at Seir.”

<sup>15</sup> “All right,” Esau said, “but at least let me assign some of my men to guide and protect you.”

Jacob responded, “That’s not necessary. It’s enough that you’ve received me warmly, my lord!”

<sup>16</sup> So Esau turned around and started back to Seir that same day.

<sup>17</sup> Jacob, on the other hand, traveled on to Succoth. There he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Succoth (which means “shelters”).

<sup>18</sup> Later, having traveled all the way from Paddan-aram, Jacob arrived safely at the town of Shechem, in the land of Canaan. There he set up camp outside the town. <sup>19</sup> Jacob bought the plot of land where he camped from the family of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for 100 pieces of silver. <sup>20</sup> And there he built an altar and named it El-Elohe-Israel.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How did Esau greet Jacob?

In what ways does Esau's attitude toward Jacob display God's faithfulness?

Recall a time in your life in which God smoothed the way before you. Thank Him for His provision and ask Him to guide your way, even today.

## LIFE GROUP STUDY PASSAGE

I should trust and obey even when I think I can't wait.

*Please take a few minutes in your life group to discuss your responses to the daily reflection questions and the sermon.*

Allow your group approximately 5 minutes to read the passage below quietly to themselves, providing pens/pencils to circle or underline anything that stands out to them and/or note any questions they might have. When you call the group back together, ask someone to read the passage aloud. Use the discussion questions listed below the passage as a guide, feeling free to omit any that may not follow the direction of your conversation. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in your midst.

Genesis 25:27-34

<sup>27</sup> As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. <sup>28</sup> Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

<sup>29</sup> One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. <sup>30</sup> Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

<sup>31</sup> "All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

<sup>32</sup> "Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

<sup>33</sup> But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

**LIFE GROUP PASSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How is Esau described when he first arrives home?
2. What does Esau's temporary situation cause him to do?
3. Have you ever traded something permanent for something temporary in the pressure of a desperate moment? What kind of fruit came from that decision?
4. As a group, discuss how you can pursue godly contentment as a way of protecting yourselves against future temporary temptations.
5. Pray for each other, that God's peace and wisdom would reign in your lives.



Day 1: Read Genesis 37:1-36

## Joseph's Dreams

37 So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner.

<sup>2</sup> This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. <sup>4</sup> But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

<sup>5</sup> One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. <sup>6</sup> "Listen to this dream," he said. <sup>7</sup> "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"

<sup>8</sup> His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

<sup>9</sup> Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

<sup>10</sup> This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. “What kind of dream is that?” he asked. “Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?” <sup>11</sup> But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

<sup>12</sup> Soon after this, Joseph’s brothers went to pasture their father’s flocks at Shechem. <sup>13</sup> When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them.”

“I’m ready to go,” Joseph replied.

<sup>14</sup> “Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along,” Jacob said. “Then come back and bring me a report.” So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

<sup>15</sup> When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. “What are you looking for?” he asked.

<sup>16</sup> “I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied. “Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?”

<sup>17</sup> “Yes,” the man told him. “They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, ‘Let’s go on to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

## **Joseph Sold into Slavery**

<sup>18</sup> When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him.

<sup>19</sup> “Here comes the dreamer!” they said. <sup>20</sup> “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”

<sup>21</sup> But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said. <sup>22</sup> "Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

<sup>23</sup> So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. <sup>24</sup> Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. <sup>25</sup> Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

<sup>26</sup> Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime. <sup>27</sup> Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. <sup>28</sup> So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

<sup>29</sup> Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. <sup>30</sup> Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What will I do now?"

<sup>31</sup> Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. <sup>32</sup> They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?"

<sup>33</sup> Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!" <sup>34</sup> Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time.

<sup>35</sup> His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “I will go to my grave mourning for my son,” he would say, and then he would weep.

<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How was Joseph regarded by his brothers? By his father?

What plan did the brothers have regarding Joseph?

How did God provide a way of escape for Joseph in the midst of his trial?

Pray for the hurting in our world, including yourself, and ask God to provide for every need.

## **Joseph in Potiphar's House**

39 When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. <sup>3</sup> Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. <sup>4</sup> This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. <sup>5</sup> From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. <sup>6</sup> So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, <sup>7</sup> and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

<sup>8</sup> But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. <sup>9</sup> No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

<sup>10</sup> She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible.

<sup>11</sup> One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. <sup>12</sup> She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house.

<sup>13</sup> When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled,  
<sup>14</sup> she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running.  
“Look!” she said. “My husband has brought this Hebrew slave  
here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I  
screamed. <sup>15</sup> When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got  
away, but he left his cloak behind with me.”

<sup>16</sup> She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home.  
<sup>17</sup> Then she told him her story. “That Hebrew slave you’ve brought  
into our house tried to come in and fool around with me,” she said.  
<sup>18</sup> “But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with  
me!”

## **Joseph Put in Prison**

<sup>19</sup> Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife’s story about how  
Joseph had treated her. <sup>20</sup> So he took Joseph and threw him into the  
prison where the king’s prisoners were held, and there he  
remained. <sup>21</sup> But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and  
showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite  
with the prison warden. <sup>22</sup> Before long, the warden put Joseph in  
charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened  
in the prison. <sup>23</sup> The warden had no more worries, because Joseph  
took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused  
everything he did to succeed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What position was Joseph given in Potiphar's house?

What was the result of Joseph's denial of Potiphar's wife?

Read verse 21 again. Can you recall a time in your life when you knew that God was with you and that He provided despite your circumstances?

## **Joseph Interprets Two Dreams**

40 Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. <sup>2</sup> Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, <sup>3</sup> and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. <sup>4</sup> They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.

<sup>5</sup> While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning.

<sup>6</sup> When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. <sup>7</sup> "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

<sup>8</sup> And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

<sup>9</sup> So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. <sup>10</sup> The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. <sup>11</sup> I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

<sup>12</sup> "This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. <sup>13</sup> Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer.

<sup>14</sup> And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. <sup>15</sup> For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."

<sup>16</sup> When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. <sup>17</sup> The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head.”

<sup>18</sup> “This is what the dream means,” Joseph told him. “The three baskets also represent three days. <sup>19</sup> Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh.”

<sup>20</sup> Pharaoh’s birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. <sup>21</sup> He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. <sup>22</sup> But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. <sup>23</sup> Pharaoh’s chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

According to Joseph, whose business is it to interpret dreams?

What does Joseph ask of the cup-bearer?

What do you think about Joseph's ability to interpret both dreams?  
Why might he have this ability?

## **Pharaoh's Dreams**

41 Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River.<sup>2</sup> In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass.<sup>3</sup> Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank.<sup>4</sup> Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

<sup>5</sup> But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk.<sup>6</sup> Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind.<sup>7</sup> And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

<sup>8</sup> The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

<sup>9</sup> Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh.<sup>10</sup> "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard.<sup>11</sup> One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning.

<sup>12</sup> There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant.<sup>13</sup> And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

<sup>14</sup> Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it.”

<sup>16</sup> “It is beyond my power to do this,” Joseph replied. “But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease.”

<sup>17</sup> So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. “In my dream,” he said, “I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, <sup>18</sup> and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. <sup>19</sup> But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I’ve never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. <sup>21</sup> But afterward you wouldn’t have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

<sup>22</sup> “In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. <sup>23</sup> Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. <sup>24</sup> And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean.”

<sup>25</sup> Joseph responded, “Both of Pharaoh’s dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do.

<sup>26</sup> The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. <sup>27</sup> The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

<sup>28</sup> “This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup> The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. <sup>30</sup> But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. <sup>31</sup> This famine will be so severe that even the

memory of the good years will be erased.<sup>32</sup> As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

<sup>33</sup> “Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt.<sup>34</sup> Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years.<sup>35</sup> Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh’s storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities.<sup>36</sup> That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How long did Joseph wait between his interpretations of the cup-bearer's and baker's dreams and his being called on by Pharaoh?

In verse 16, what is Joseph's response to Pharaoh regarding his ability to interpret dreams?

Spend time considering the things that come naturally to you. Thank God for giving you these abilities. Ask Him to help you recognize the gifts He gives you.

## **Joseph Made Ruler of Egypt**

<sup>37</sup> Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. <sup>38</sup> So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?"

<sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. <sup>40</sup> You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

<sup>41</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. <sup>43</sup> Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. <sup>44</sup> And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval."

<sup>45</sup> Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphara, the priest of On. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. <sup>46</sup> He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

<sup>47</sup> As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops.

<sup>48</sup> During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. <sup>49</sup> He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure.

<sup>50</sup> During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. <sup>51</sup> Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, “God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father’s family.” <sup>52</sup> Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, “God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief.”

<sup>53</sup> At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. <sup>54</sup> Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. <sup>55</sup> Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, “Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you.” <sup>56</sup> So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. <sup>57</sup> And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Who did Pharaoh recognize as the One who revealed the meaning of his dreams?

What did Pharaoh do to Joseph after the dreams were interpreted?

How was Joseph's final position different from his initial position when he first entered Egypt? Who changed Joseph's position?

Spend some time praying and reflecting on ways God has changed your position. Think of El-Shaddai's (Almighty God's) majesty, covering, provision, justice, mercy and direction.

## LIFE GROUP STUDY PASSAGE

I should trust and obey because I know God is with me.

*Please take a few minutes in your life group to discuss your responses to the daily reflection questions and the sermon.*

Allow your group approximately 5 minutes to read the passage below quietly to themselves, providing pens/pencils to circle or underline anything that stands out to them and/or note any questions they might have. When you call the group back together, ask someone to read the passage aloud. Use the discussion questions listed below the passage as a guide, feeling free to omit any that may not follow the direction of your conversation. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in your midst.

Genesis 41:37-57

<sup>37</sup> Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. <sup>38</sup> So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?"

<sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. <sup>40</sup> You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

<sup>41</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. <sup>43</sup> Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. <sup>44</sup> And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval."

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he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

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**LIFE GROUP PASSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How is Joseph honored? How does this compare to his previous status?
2. In verse 52, what does Joseph express?
3. What is the fruit of Joseph's patience?
4. As a group, discuss how Joseph's life can encourage us to trust and obey God over a long journey of suffering.
5. Pray for each other to choose patience and trust in God, even when things don't make sense.

## LEADER NOTES

- ▶ Each week when your life group meets, please provide a time for group members to share any of their answers or reflections from the daily reading and questions in the workbook. No one has to share, but often, since time was invested, there will be some who will want to dialogue with the group about their thoughts.
- ▶ Plan on the possibility of the sermon series, daily readings, and life group passages not always lining up in chronological order. Plan on the fact that many of the sermons and life group passages will cover the same Scripture verses.
- ▶ Printed copies of these workbooks are available for sale for \$5.00 each. The workbook will also be available online at [www.yakimafoursquare.org](http://www.yakimafoursquare.org) to download for free as a pdf for those who prefer a digital format.

## BASICS OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY LEADERSHIP

There are many types of Bible studies: topical, character, book, etc. Inductive Bible study is one of the most effective, although not the only way, to study the Bible. It can be led by anyone with leadership abilities and does not require theological training.

### **Basic Assumptions**

- ▶ Study a limited portion of Scripture (usually one chapter, sometimes less, but seldom more.)
- ▶ Use pre-printed passages with the same translation (found in this workbook) to give everyone a uniform opportunity and the freedom and space to underline and make notes during the study.
- ▶ Study in an informal, discovery style. Let the Word and the Holy Spirit be the real teachers.

## **Four Basic Guidelines**

As you lead, know that these are not rigid rules, but general guidelines to help you navigate a successful inductive Bible study in your group.

1. Answer three questions about the selected passage of Scripture:
  - a. **OBSERVATION:** What does it say? Answer questions such as who, what, when, where, and how.
  - b. **INTERPRETATION:** What does it mean? Is there a lesson, a promise, a command, a warning, or an example—good or bad? What can you learn about God?
  - c. **APPLICATION:** What does it mean to me? What should I do with what I have discovered? Is God inviting me to do something specific through this study?
2. Limit the study to the selected portion of scripture only. Supporting scripture and testimonies are normally not used in order to keep the group focused in one place and to avoid discouraging people from participating due to distraction or difficulty.
3. Welcome everyone to participate, but do not force anyone to participate.
4. Prevent any one person from monopolizing the time or discussion.

## **PREPARING FOR AND LEADING AN INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY**

- ▶ Spend meaningful time in prayer beforehand as you thoughtfully study the passage.
- ▶ The questions are written to encourage people to look closely at the passage, engage with the content, and generate discussion.

Try answering the questions as you prepare to test how well they work.

- ▶ Remember to follow the guidelines of observation, interpretation, and application when formulating your questions.
- ▶ Think about how the passage applies to your life.
- ▶ Provide pens and pencils for everyone to write with.

### **During the Scripture Study:**

- ▶ Give everyone time to read and study the passage individually (5-10 minutes).
- ▶ Encourage members to underline things that stand out and to write notes and questions on their manuscripts.
- ▶ Ask someone to read the section aloud before discussing the passage.
- ▶ Use prepared questions to get the study going. Leave lots of room for other thoughts and questions related to the passage within your group discussion.
- ▶ Keep the pace of the study steady so it doesn't feel too rushed or too slow.
- ▶ Stick to and enforce the Four Basic Guidelines outlined above.
- ▶ Application sometimes erupts in the midst of discussion. Feel free to give space for this, but also call people back into studying.
- ▶ Take time at the end for application. This is a time for discernment. Sometimes, challenge the whole group with an application, but usually offer people a variety of application options.
- ▶ Give people space to share what God has been speaking to them from the passage.