



**A Bible Reading Plan
for the Book of Genesis (Chapters 26-50)**

September 26 - October 30, 2016

Mountain Brook Baptist Church
www.mbbc.org



Genesis

ABOUT PROJECT 119

Project 119 is a Bible reading initiative of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Our hope is that every member of our church body would be encouraged in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ through the regular reading of God's Word.

This reading plan will guide you through the book of Genesis. This plan will be released in two installments. The plan provides you a devotional thought and suggested Scripture reading for each day of the week. On the weekends, we suggest that you re-read the Scripture passages that you have been working through during the past week.

To receive email updates when devotionals are added to the blog, go to www.mbbc.org/blog, click on "Subscribe to Mountain Brook Blog by Email" and follow the instructions. To learn more about Project 119 and to access previous plans, visit www.mbbc.org/project119.

INTRODUCTION

Genesis means "origin" - very simply put, the book of Genesis traces for us the origins of creation, humanity, sin, and God's chosen people, Israel. However, as you read through the book of Genesis, you'll discover that the book is anything but simple! There are lengthy genealogies to weave through, shocking acts of sin, and powerful moments where we see the complexity of God's character - how He is a God who is merciful and gracious but also perfectly just.

The traditional view is that Genesis was written by Moses. His work gives us a picture of the biblical cycle of creation, Fall, and redemption. We see God's goodness and creativity at the forefront of Genesis 1-2 before the Fall of mankind, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's commandments and believe the lies of the serpent rather than the truthful promises of their Creator. The rest of Genesis - and the rest of the Bible - tells us the story of what God is doing to restore sinful humanity to Himself. The lineage of Adam is at the forefront of the Old Testament; the story of the Bible, in fact, is about how God continues to keep these promises He has made in Genesis to Adam's descendants. These promises are ultimately fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Genesis is full of rich theology and beautiful narratives which paint a picture of God's faithfulness to His people even in the face of their own faithlessness. These stories serve as an encouragement to us that the God we serve is a God who keeps His promises and who has a bigger plan for the redemption of the world than we could ever imagine. These promises point us forward to the new heaven and the new earth, where we will worship together again - not in a garden but in a city, where God will dwell with His people once again.



Genesis

WEEK ONE: GENESIS 26-30
SEPTEMBER 26 - OCTOBER 2

Monday, September 26 | Genesis 26 | Wayne Splawn

Fear is a powerful emotion that often tests the genuineness of our faith.

In Genesis 26:2-3, the Lord tells Isaac that He will be with him and will establish the oath He swore to his father Abraham. Isaac's faith in God's ability to make good on His promises is tested when Isaac encounters men in Gerar who ask him about the identity of his wife, Rebekah (Genesis 26:6-7). Isaac is fearful that the men of the land will harm him in order to take Rebekah, so he lies about Rebekah's identity by telling them that she is his sister. Even though God had promised to fulfill His good purposes in his life, Isaac's belief in God's promises is tested by the fear he feels. Rather than trusting in God's ability to protect him, Isaac takes matters into his own hands.

Each of us will eventually encounter a situation in life that will fill us with fear and make us question our belief in God's ability to provide. Later in Genesis 26:23, the Lord tells Isaac to fear not. Why? Because the Lord will always be with him. You and I can be confident that God will never withdraw His presence from us and because of that truth we can walk in faith rather than fear (Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5).

Tuesday, September 27 | Genesis 27 | Wayne Splawn

In many ways, this is a difficult chapter to understand. After all, fathers no longer pass on divine blessings by the laying on of hands in the manner we see Isaac pass on the Abrahamic blessing to Jacob. Rebekah's sinfulness is on display as she hatches a plot to ensure that Jacob will receive the blessing that Isaac desires to give to Esau. Jacob willingly goes along with his mother's plan while taking advantage of his father's weakness and poor health. And Esau is filled with hate for Jacob because of what he has done.

As I read this chapter, I am initially outraged by the behavior of Rebekah and Jacob. I wonder how they could take advantage of Isaac and have no regard for Esau. I am perplexed by the Lord allowing Jacob to receive his father's blessing through such sinful means. I want Jacob brought to justice. I feel as if he should be disqualified from bearing the blessing that had long ago been promised to Abraham.

However, upon further reflection on this sordid story, I am reminded that, in many ways, Jacob's story is my story. Like Jacob, I do not deserve to be a part of God's plan of redemption. I have done nothing that would qualify me to partake of the blessing God long ago promised to Abraham and his descendants. If you were to read parts of my life story, you may conclude that I deserve punishment rather than a place among God's people. However, the same God who used a scoundrel like Jacob to fulfill His plan of salvation to bless all the peoples of the earth is the same God who graciously saved
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me through faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of my sins and failures, God graciously brought me to Himself through faith and granted me a place among His people.

Wednesday, September 28 | Genesis 28 | Wayne Splawn

Here in Genesis 28, Jacob has a dream through which God reveals Himself to Jacob. In the dream, Jacob sees angels ascending and descending a ladder that stands between heaven and earth. Additionally, Jacob sees the Lord standing above the ladder and in the vision the Lord affirms that He will indeed keep the Abrahamic covenant with Jacob and be with him wherever he goes.

In Genesis 26, the assurance of the Lord's presence served as a source of encouragement for Isaac, but here in Genesis 28, the Lord's presence awakens a holy fear and sense of reverence in Jacob. This revelation of the Lord moves Jacob to worship.

As we gain a clearer understanding of our own sinfulness and the Lord's holiness, we, like Jacob, ought to be filled with reverence and awe when we contemplate the truth that the Lord invites us to be in His presence. May the Lord continue to reveal Himself to each of us so that we might offer every area of our lives to Him in worship.

Thursday, September 29 | Genesis 29 | Wayne Splawn

Jacob may have felt as if he had gotten away scot-free after deceiving his father and stealing his brother's birthright. He makes his way to the house of Laban and agrees to marry Laban's daughter, Rachel. Jacob thinks that Rachel is so beautiful that he agrees to work seven years for Laban in return for Rachel's hand in marriage. Laban, however, has a different plan in mind. Rather than giving Jacob his daughter Rachel, Laban deceives Jacob and gives him his daughter Leah instead. It is nearly impossible to miss the irony in this passage. Jacob, the deceiver, is himself deceived.

Dr. Allen Ross of Beeson Divinity School notes that Laban's deception served as a powerful reminder of the way in which Jacob was wrong when he deceived his father Isaac and betrayed his brother Esau. Ross writes, "The dialogue provides us with the point of the story: it was not right to marry the younger before the firstborn. How these words must have brought back Jacob's own deception! If social convention was to be set aside, it should be not by deception but by God. Laban's stinging words are left without any editorial comment - the event itself was God's rebuke and discipline of Jacob" (Dr. Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing*).

This story reminds us of both the grace of God and the truth that our sinful decisions often have
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serious consequences for us and for others. May God continue to amaze us by the grace He extends to us when we repent of our sins and remind us of the importance of living our lives in accordance with His will.

Friday, September 30 | Genesis 30 | Wayne Splawn

God is faithful to keep His covenant promises. I believe that is the primary lesson we learn from Genesis 26-30. Here in Genesis 30, we find many of the same themes we have seen throughout Genesis 26-29. There are examples of people who try to take matters into their own hands to produce the outcomes they desire rather than trusting in God to provide. The two deceivers, Laban and Jacob, get in a contest to see who can outwit one another. And, in spite of all of the dishonorable actions of those involved, God remains faithful to the promise He made to Jacob.

There are times in which we can become burdened by the sins of others and the poor decisions they make. And we certainly should feel sorrow anytime we see others making choices we know are not honoring to the Lord. However, we can always be people who are filled with hope because of our belief in the truth that God will remain faithful to us even when we walk through seasons in which we fail to be faithful to Him.

Saturday, October 1-Sunday, October 2 | Genesis 26-30

Reread Genesis 26-30 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.



Genesis

WEEK TWO: GENESIS 31-35 OCTOBER 3-9

Monday, October 3 | Genesis 31 | Amy Jackson

This past fall, I went to my high school reunion. One of the things that struck me is that people really do change - even in just ten years. Now of course, some of my classmates looked physically different - but I also realized that some of them had changed in other ways. As a teenager, it's hard to think about your friends being adults and productive members of society - especially the ones who were the class clowns or the constant jokers - and yet there were physical testimonies standing before me serving as a reminder that people really can change.

Genesis 31 is such a reminder for us as we see the character of Jacob and how much he has changed since his first appearance in Genesis. Jacob, formerly a trickster and prankster himself, hears the voice of the Lord calling him to "return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred," promising that He will be with him (Genesis 31:3). Now, this might seem like a simple command, but Jacob's life and livelihood are pretty interwoven with Laban, his father-in-law, at this point. Jacob and Laban have always had a tense relationship; recall that Laban is the one who tricked the trickster himself into marrying Leah back in Genesis 29.

This is a long passage - there's no way we could cover everything! But as you read, notice how Jacob's integrity and honesty are contrasted with Laban's dishonesty and scheming (Genesis 31:6-13, 36-42). The Lord has worked in Jacob's heart to change him. We also see that God's plan always prevails - despite the tricksters met along the way. God protects Jacob even when Jacob is unaware of Rachel stealing her father's household gods (Genesis 31:34).

The moral of the story - or at least, one moral of the story, I think - is that people can change. But maybe a better way to put it is that God changes people. This is good news for us today as believers - we praise God because He has changed our hearts and brought us from death to life (Ephesians 2:1-5) and continues to work in our hearts and make us more like Jesus. It's also good news because God is still in the business of changing lives. As you pray for those around you who do not know Christ, be encouraged today that He still works - He is still changing hearts and giving life to the dead.

Tuesday, October 4 | Genesis 32 | Amy Jackson

I think this is one of the most famous Jacob passages; there's so much to address in these verses. Yet I was really struck by something new as I read and prepared to write on this passage. Have you ever noticed Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:9-12? I think it's one of the most overlooked prayers in Scripture because it's overshadowed by Jacob wrestling with God at the end of the chapter. Yet there's so much we can learn about prayer and about our relationship with God through this particular exchange.
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Here's the context: Jacob has left the household of Laban and is on his way back to the land of his fathers, Canaan. On this journey back, he also prepares to meet his brother Esau again. Now, it might sound fun to see your long-lost brother, but when you're the one who stole your brother's birthright and blessing, I can imagine that you might be a little hesitant to reconnect. Has Esau been waiting to enact revenge? And, things intensify when Jacob's messengers return from Esau's camp to warn Jacob that he has four hundred men with him. Jacob, rather than trusting in God's protection and provision, divides his property into two camps, thinking that if one is harmed, at least the other will be protected.

And then, we get to this prayer in the middle of Genesis 32. Jacob begins by addressing God as the God of his ancestors - of Abraham and Isaac. He recognizes who this God is, connecting Him with the same God who made covenant promises to Abraham in Genesis 12. And then, notice Genesis 32:10: Jacob confesses that he doesn't deserve to receive this covenant love. And this is the story for all of God's people. God loves us, despite our unworthiness. God loves Jacob, even though he is a trickster who still doesn't completely trust him (Genesis 32:6-8). Have you ever pondered this idea? That there's nothing we can do to deserve God's love - in fact, if it was based on merit, God could never love us! We are unlovely and unloveable on our own, but He makes us lovely because of His love for us.

I also love how Jacob finishes his prayer. Jacob admits that he fears Esau and that there's a great possibility of an attack if he chooses to pursue reunion. But Jacob also recalls the Lord's blessing in Genesis 32:12 - "I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered or multiplied." Sometimes in the Old Testament, the saints appeal to God and ask Him to "remember" His promises - to act on His covenant love and faithfulness. Now, it's not as if God can forget anything! Rather, what they are doing is asking God to act as He has promised He would act, according to His covenant.

I think there's something else going on here too - I think Jacob is also reminding himself of what God has promised in the face of his fear. Sometimes we need to rehearse the promises of God back to ourselves - we need to remind ourselves of what God has promised and how we have seen Him be faithful. Today, pray that the Lord would continue to work in your heart, reminding you of the love He has for you despite your sinfulness. Preach the gospel back to yourself, that God promises to remain faithful even when His people are faithless.

Wednesday, October 5 | Genesis 33 | Amy Jackson

As a kid, I remember being told to apologize "like you mean it" and "make up" with my brothers. If you have siblings, you've probably experienced this - everything from the insincere mumble of "I'm
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sorry" to giving the hug you don't really mean. As we get older, the stakes become a lot higher than childhood fights. I would venture to say that we all have people in our lives who we have wronged - and people in our lives who have wronged us. So, we have a lot in common with Jacob and Esau here!

Imagine the tension Jacob feels as he approaches Esau. In fact, you don't have to imagine it - you can read all about it (see Genesis 33:1-3)! He sees his brother approaching - the brother he wronged so deeply - and his heart begins to race. We hold our breath, but we get to verse 3, something amazing happenings. Jacob bows before Esau - and Esau, rather than returning the bow with a head nod of acknowledgement, runs to meet his brother, embracing him, kissing him, and weeping. Isn't it such a beautiful picture? Jacob has been expecting the worst, but God has worked forgiveness in Esau's heart, and Esau has only grace and mercy to show his brother.

This passage is such a beautiful demonstration of what true reconciliation is. First of all, it reminds us that reconciliation comes from the Father. It is a gift of grace from God. Jacob brought all of these things to try to "make it right," but nothing he could do would ever pay Esau back. And yet God had moved Esau's heart to forgive his brother after all of these years. We see God answer Jacob's prayer to deliver him from Esau (Genesis 32:11) in such an unexpected way. As I read about their embrace, it made me think of the parable in Luke 15 regarding the prodigal son. The prodigal son too returned home, ready to be a slave and submit to his father. But when his father sees him coming, he runs at a distance to embrace his son and welcome him home.

These pictures of human reconciliation also point us back to our own reconciliation with God. We are reminded that yes, we have sinned against our brother, but that first and foremost we have sinned against our Father (Psalm 51:4). And yet God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ's work on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). Through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, God runs to His children, embracing us in the same way that Esau embraced Jacob - without abandon, ready to extend His grace and show mercy.

Thursday, October 6 | Genesis 34 | Amy Jackson

If you ever needed a passage to remind you that biblical characters are real, broken people - this is it. This isn't one of those chapters in the Bible that you finish reading and have warm fuzzy feelings. Instead, if you're like me, you feel a little sick to your stomach at the depravity of people. The first two verses are even hard to read. The prince of the land, Shechem, sees Dinah, seizes her, and takes her for himself - the language is forceful, and the act is violent. Now, after humiliating her, he decides he desires her for marriage (Genesis 34:3-4) and the author says he "loved the young woman and spoke (continued on next page)



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tenderly to her” - but these actions don’t erase the violence of his prior engagement with her. In fact, we go on to read and see that Shechem’s intentions were never pure - he raped Dinah out of lust and then desired marriage with her so that he could seize her family’s property (Genesis 34:23).

There’s also brokenness in how Dinah’s family responds to the situation. We expect Jacob to be enraged, but he’s painted as apathetic and unmoved (Genesis 34:5-7). My heart hurts seeing Jacob’s lack of response. God’s people should be moved and filled with righteous anger when they see others being subjugated to violence, oppression, and humiliation. These are not things God desires for his people and God’s heart breaks over all violence.

Dinah’s brothers, however, have plenty of rage. They come up with a plan to get back by convincing Shechem that he can marry Dinah if his people undergo circumcision (Genesis 34:13-17). They agree, but as Shechem and his men recover from circumcision, the brothers respond with shocking premeditated attack, approaching the men in their weakness - they murder the men, capture their children and wives, and plunder the city. Jacob may have been a trickster, but here his sons engage in deeper deception than he ever considered.

On the one hand, Dinah’s brothers have a right to be greatly moved and to respond in righteous anger - but rather than responding in outright justice, they deceptively use circumcision, a sign of the covenant and a sign of life, to enact death. We are reminded yet again that the curse of Genesis 3 has taken hold over everything - sometimes even in the way that we respond to injustice. We find ourselves yet again the children of the garden, in desperate need of a Savior and Redeemer to enter into the brokenness of our world, to restore our innocence, and to make what is wrong right again.

Friday, October 7 | Genesis 35 | Amy Jackson

I can imagine that most parents (and children’s ministry and youth ministry chaperones) hate hearing the question, “Are we there yet?” on a long trip. Sometimes it feels like you’re barely out of the city limits and that question begins to erupt from the backseat. In many ways, we’ve been asking that question as we watch the journey of Jacob. God calls him to return home in Genesis 31, and finally in Genesis 35, we see him go back to Bethel and make an altar where God had appeared to him in Genesis 28. In fact, go back and read Genesis 28:18-22! This passage in Genesis 35 is the fulfillment of what Jacob promises in Genesis 28. We’ve been on a long road, but we’re finally close to home.

Before they leave Shechem, Jacob commands his household to put off their foreign gods. Polytheism even existed in the household of Israel’s namesake, but Jacob recognizes that the Lord demands
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exclusive worship. Jacob tells his household that this is the God “who answers me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone” (Genesis 35:3). If we trace the story of Jacob, we can see time and time again God’s protection and the provision of His presence - even when Jacob is so undeserving of this graciousness. The only response to such faithfulness is exclusive worship of this God and this God alone.

God appears to Jacob again (Genesis 35:9-12) and reaffirms what has been promised before, reiterating that He will continue to be faithful to His promise to bless the seed of Abraham, and that He’s going to do so through blessing Jacob. Jacob may have seized the blessing from His brother, but we are reminded again that scoundrels like us are a part of God’s plan - it is all grace. The rest of the chapter reminds us that even death does not stop God’s plan - He continues to show Himself faithful to His people. And the scene at the end of the chapter, where Esau and Jacob are together to bury their father Isaac, points again to God’s graciousness. Who could have ever imagined these brothers standing side by side peaceably again? Yet here we have this moving picture of Isaac as he dies, with his sons - sinful, desperate, and yet redeemed by grace and reconciled - standing before him.

Jacob is back home. The story continues, and God continues to show His faithfulness to Jacob’s family. This same God is the God who also answers our distress and who continues to be with us, who never leaves or abandons His children, even when we are undeserving of His faithfulness. Spend some time reflecting today on how you have seen God’s gracious provision in your own life in this way.

Saturday, October 8-Sunday, October 9 | Genesis 31-35

Reread Genesis 31-35 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.



Genesis

WEEK THREE: GENESIS 36-40
OCTOBER 10-16

Monday, October 10 | Genesis 36 | Courtney Trotter

While most of us probably spend time investigating our own family tree, if you are like me you probably don't devote that kind of time to the genealogies that are in the Bible. They are long and contain a lot of weird names. But if we look hard, we see that each one reveals something about God and His grand plan of salvation. The extended genealogy of Esau in Genesis 36 sets the stage for the final section of Genesis. Moses typically inserts the family history of the minor characters just before he begins to relate in detail the history of the heirs of Abraham's covenant (see Genesis 25:12-18). Genesis 36 tells us about Esau's offspring, and Genesis 37-50 contain the history of Jacob's sons, especially Joseph.

In verse 6, we are told that Esau moves on to the east because Canaan was not able to support the livestock and families of both Esau and Jacob. This reminds us of the similar situation between Abraham and Lot (Genesis 13:6). Upon moving into the land which would become Edom, Esau and his family were able to quickly rise to power. Not only did his sons become chiefs, but the clans of the land were subjugated to him (Genesis 36:20-29). Esau's wealth and power in Edom show us that God's blessings upon him are coming to pass (Genesis 25:23 and 27:39-40).

This genealogy seems to be making one point clear: there were kings in Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites (Genesis 36:31). All the while, Jacob was still dwelling in Canaan, the land of his father (Genesis 37:1). He had no kings, no tribes, and no lands to oversee. He was still a sojourner. Can you imagine how hard it must have been for Jacob to see his brother amassing wealth and power when he knew he was the chosen one? He surely must have doubted whether God truly meant for him to be the heir. As one commentator states aptly, we see here that "secular greatness grows up far more rapidly than spiritual greatness." It can be hard to have faith and patience when we see the unrighteous have success over us. Though they may prosper now, we await the immeasurable riches of Christ (Ephesians 2:7). Also, as we are faced with the injustice of this world we must be comforted by the fact that God kept His promises to the faithless Esau. Therefore, we can be sure He will keep all of the promises He has given to us as His people. Our God is faithful. Even though we may be sojourners in this world, we can wait patiently with hope for the fulfillment of His promises in the world to come.

Tuesday, October 11 | Genesis 37 | Taylor Geurin

In C.S. Lewis's *The Horse and His Boy*, we get a picture of the great Christ figure, Aslan, that is different from that of other entries in the series. We see that the great lion lies behind the scenes of the story. He works within the silence and the shadows to ensure that the main characters of the story arrive at their final destination safely and in time to save Narnia and the north. At the end of this tale, the main character finally sees that, even though he didn't realize it, Aslan had been directing his paths (continued on next page)



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all along.

There are certainly times in Scripture where we wonder if God is at work. While Joseph may not have put himself in the best position to get his brothers to accept him, he certainly doesn't deserve the fate that comes to him via these siblings. As he is sold into slavery we begin to wonder what will become of Joseph. Is this the end of the road for him?

The beauty of our God is that He is always orchestrating our paths even when we cannot see it. I love where verse 36 leaves us. Many who know where this story is heading will realize the significance of this verse. It is clearly no accident that he is sold in Egypt to an officer of Pharaoh. God is working behind the scenes to ensure that what seems like a desperate situation can be redeemed for Joseph's good and God's glory.

I wonder what desperate situations you have in your own life right now? I wonder if there are areas of our lives where we think, "Nothing good can come from this!"? I am thankful that we serve a God who works behind the scenes to use evil for good. The God who brought life out of a tomb is still about the business of using what seems hopeless for our good and His glory.

Wednesday, October 12 | Genesis 38 | Courtney Trotter

In the ancient world, it was custom to practice levirate marriage to ensure that men who died childless would have sons to carry on their name and support their widows. At first Judah obeyed his duty, giving Tamar to his second son Onan. But Onan was also struck down by God because he was all of the fleshly gratification of their relationship without the responsibility. This is a stern warning to us who give preference to the desires of the flesh over our obedience to the Lord.

Meanwhile, Judah failed to connect their sin to their deaths. Believing Tamar was bad luck, he delayed giving his last son to her (Genesis 38:11) and actually never intended to provide for his daughter-in-law (Genesis 38:14b). He was unconcerned to provide for this vulnerable widow or to have grandsons to carry on his name. This would have horrified faithful Israelites (Exodus 22:22; Psalm 128). He only briefly mourned the death of his wife before joining his shepherds for sheep-shearing season – a time of celebration and drinking. On the other hand, Tamar is still in her widow's garments, showing that she has been mourning the deaths of Er and Onan a long time.

While Tamar's next move is shocking for modern readers, we must take note of the fact that the entire chapter commends her righteousness while also condemning Judah's unfaithfulness (Genesis 38:26). She had no legal rights, for she could not remarry without Judah's approval. And without a husband or sons, she
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was left with no means to provide for herself. She was in a truly desperate situation. When the chosen family would not obey the Lord and raise up children for His patriarchs (Genesis 35:9–11), Tamar, a Gentile takes desperate measures to give Er, and his father Judah, an heir. She is so highly regarded for this act of faith that she is included in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:3). It was her scheme that would produce the heir through whom the Messiah would eventually come!

Great lessons can be taken from both Judah and Tamar in this passage. Judah is one of many figures in history who shows us that there are no sinners too wicked for God to redeem. There is always room for repentance and confession before God (1 John 1:9). Also, our role in redemptive history does not hinge on us acting boldly to raise up physical offspring for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, this has not eliminated His call for us to take daring moves of faith. Like Tamar (Genesis 38:24), we may be forced to put our lives, livelihood, or reputation on the line in order to do what is right or to stand up for Christ.

Thursday, October 13 | Genesis 39 | Taylor Geurin

We see clearly throughout this text that the Lord is with Joseph. Consider where we last saw him. In Genesis 37 he was sold into slavery by his brothers. In Genesis 39 he now is head of the household of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. When we consider how God can bring good out of evil we can certainly consider this episode as a prime example!

However, as Joseph quickly learns, there are times when honoring God and fleeing from sin will not go hand-in-hand with earthly success. As Potiphar's wife comes to Joseph in order to entice him into sin, Joseph is forced into a difficult situation. He isn't willing to dishonor God, but as we will soon see, his fleeing from sin actually ends up landing him in prison. Potiphar's wife accuses him falsely of that from which he adamantly abstained. Joseph ends up in prison because of this.

This is an important thing for believers to remember. Sometimes honoring God and fleeing from sin will not line up perfectly with worldly comfort or success. It would have been easy to follow Potiphar's wife into secret sin and keep his standing as head of household. Instead Joseph made the costly choice of honoring God.

For many of our students this may look like risking their standing in a "popular" circle because of an unwillingness to partake in the sin necessary to get into this inner circle. For many of our men and women it may mean seeking to stay above reproach even when our current social standing and business ventures are on the line.

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What I love about this text is the fact that we see in verse 2 that “The Lord was with Joseph.” And again, after Joseph finds himself in a prison cell in verse 21, “But the Lord was with Joseph.” The Lord will be with us all the way through as we make the hard choices to follow Him even when it is costly.

Friday, October 14 | Genesis 40 | Taylor Geurin

Living in the “in-between” is a difficult place to be. There are times in our lives where we know that we are where God has called us to be - however, if we were honest with ourselves, we aren’t sure where God is taking us.

Joseph’s obedience to God by his fleeing from sin has actually landed him in prison. We saw in Genesis 39:21 that even when Joseph was in prison the Lord was with him. In Joseph’s more honest moments it is safe to assume that he may have wondered how this could be. Joseph is in the “in-between.” He is between one grand movement of God and another. He is in the valley that lies between two instances, on either side, where God takes him from enslavement to leadership in Egypt.

Have you ever been in this valley? Maybe you look back on your life and see moments where God has moved in major ways. Look back at these moments and consider the in-between times of these major movements of God. I believe that often it’s how we honor God in the valleys that determines what mountains He will lead us to.

In his valley, Joseph honors God in patience and obedience. He is faithful to honor God as the only one who holds the interpretation of dreams and is willing to jump at a chance to allow God to work. Joseph is even patient when the cupbearer forgets about Joseph for two years!

I wonder how long can you wait in the valley? How long can you be faithful and patient when God’s next move seems unsure to you? Trust me, it is not unsure to God! As one preacher asks, “Can we trust Him when we can’t trace Him?” Can we be patient in the valley even when we don’t see the mountain in the distance? We serve a God who is able to work all things out for our good and His glory. Maybe the “in-betweens” of life is where God likes to grow us the most.

Saturday, October 15-Sunday, October 16 | Genesis 36-40

Reread Genesis 36-40 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.

Note: Taylor Geurin and Courtney Trotter serve as interns in our Student Ministry.



Genesis

WEEK FOUR: GENESIS 41-45 OCTOBER 17-23

Monday, October 17 | Genesis 41 | Mary Splawn

For those who are weary and tired of waiting on the Lord to redeem a situation or season in their lives, the first line of Genesis 41 is hard to read: "When two FULL years had passed."

Honestly, the whole Joseph story up until this point is very frustrating. All in all, it has been 13 years that Joseph had been in the land of affliction, because he was sold into slavery at 17 and he's 30 when he enters into Pharaoh's service (see Genesis 37:2 and 41:46).

In Genesis 40, Joseph (then 28 years old) was hopeful that his encounter with the cupbearer would prove beneficial to his release from prison. He had asked the cupbearer to mention him to Pharaoh and get him out of jail. But for two years, he didn't hear a peep...not a word...seemingly forgotten.

Have you been waiting for God to work in something or someone for a long time, perhaps with no guarantee of a good outcome? This passage reminds us that even for the faithful people of God, waiting is often a part of the journey of life.

Abraham waited for a promised child. Moses waited for the land promised to his descendants. The psalmists harken back to the theme of waiting on the Lord often (Psalm 27:14, Psalm 130:5-6). The prophets wait, longing for the Messiah to come. Christians waited for the Holy Spirit to come after Jesus ascends. And, we're all waiting on the Lord to come back again.

As we wait for the Lord to come again and as we wait on Him to work in specific situations, let us find comfort knowing that the Maker of time is also the Redeemer of time. Notice how Joseph still seeks the Lord even in the midst of his suffering (Genesis 41:16). His Spirit testifies to the work of the Lord in him (Genesis 41:38). Ask the Lord to help you see your time of waiting with His perspective. Ask Him to give you the fruit of His Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). Ask Him to prepare you to be a witness and strong testimony to Him if and when the time you await comes to pass.

Tuesday, October 18 | Genesis 42 | Mary Splawn

The most interesting thing about Genesis 42 seems to be the hesitation which Joseph's brothers feel about going to Egypt to buy food. If you read too quickly, you'll miss it. Check out verse 1 again. Jacob wants his sons to go to Egypt when he learned there was grain for sale there. Notice what he says to them, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" It seems as though the brothers want to avoid Egypt at all cost. Perhaps they wonder about the possibility of encountering Joseph there. Maybe Joseph's dreams about them bowing down to him still lingers in their minds. It seems that for (continued on next page)



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some reason, they harbor fears of their sins being found out.

Yet, in a very ironic scene, when they do finally go to buy food, they meet Joseph but do not recognize him. After Joseph demands that they bring their younger brother to Egypt, they discuss the fact that they are being punished for their past sins against their brother.

The guilt they feel for their past sins is palpable. How many times had they replayed the scene of their betrayal and lies in the mind? How must they have felt when their father mourned the “death” of their brother?

Ever been there...feeling stuck in the feelings of guilt and shame related to a sin that you have committed? Perhaps you don't know of any recourse now? Maybe you feel trapped.

As we'll see with Joseph's story in the coming chapters, getting found out is the most freeing thing that can happen for his brothers. Satan loves to keep us bound by shame, but the Lord offers forgiveness to us sinners.

Could you confess whatever sin haunts you today and turn from it? Could you call out to the Lord as David did using the words of Psalm 51: “Have mercy on me, O God according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions...”? Perhaps your confession will require that you take courage and ask forgiveness from someone. Ask the Lord for help and heed His Word in Proverbs 28:13: “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

Wednesday, October 19 | Genesis 43 | Mary Splawn

In this chapter, Jacob cries out to God Almighty. In Hebrew the name is El Shaddai. This name for God was used by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Exodus 6:2-3). I grew up singing this name for God because of the popular worship song by Amy Grant but I didn't understand the depth of its meaning.

The specific meaning of God Almighty is debated but it relates to God's power and sufficiency. In the context of Genesis 43, Jacob wants God to make a way, by His might, for his son Benjamin to return safely.

While studying the meaning of El Shaddai, I discovered that this name of God is written on the mezuzah, a parchment that is rolled up, inserted in a decorative case, and affixed to doorposts of
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many Jewish and Messianic Jewish peoples' homes. It is customary for those who enter the house to touch the mezuzah and acknowledge their duty of loving and serving El Shaddai with all of their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. This is a visual reminder of their allegiance to the All-Sufficient one.

Today, as we enter through doorposts in our homes, may we remember God's might and sufficiency. Let us take a moment to stop and pray for God's power to be revealed in our midst. As we seek God's power to transform situations, let us also seek to be transformed into people who loves God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength; people whose allegiances lie with our God who, in Christ, has shown His power to overcome sin and death.

Thursday, October 20 | Genesis 44 | Mary Splawn

Sometimes our sin lands us between a rock and a hard place. This is where the brothers of Joseph are in this dramatic story of Scripture. Benjamin has been found to have "stolen" the silver cup from Joseph and he alone is commanded stay and pay the price. Yet, the brothers recognize that they can not leave without him. They have vowed to bring him home to their father Jacob.

The brothers' sin against Joseph which occurred many years prior still affects the entire family and now the guilt that accompanied their secret sin must have been almost unbearable. Sin always causes unintended consequences. As Eve ate the apple in the garden, she had no idea it would have effects on you and me. And when I sin, I seldom think about what effects my sin has on others either. When Judah and the other brothers sold Joseph into slavery, they didn't think about the sorrow their dad would have or the implications for their life of deceit.

As they stood before Joseph, they recognized that they were totally in need of his mercy. The same is true for us in our relationship with the Lord. Our sins before God are many and they have caused undesired consequences. We stand in need of God's mercy.

Wesley Hill asks a poignant question about this story in Genesis, "Are we drawn to the Joseph story in Genesis in part because it's one of the clearest stories of persecutors being saved along with the persecuted?" I think YES! We know that if we were one of the characters in this Genesis account, we would be among the brothers.

Praise God for the mercy that He offers to all people - that we who are among the persecutors have freedom from our sin. As we move forward in that freedom, may the Lord continue to reveal to us His holy way and give us the courage to confess our sin to Him and perhaps even to those whom we have sinned against.



Genesis

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Friday, October 21 | Genesis 45 | Haley Fenn

The Bible reveals to us many amazing stories, especially in Genesis. For me in particular, Genesis 45 portrays the beauty of forgiveness. We've read that Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob, was given a colorful robe, made his other brothers jealous, and therefore was sold into slavery.

Years later, Joseph is able to use his gift of interpreting dreams to help Egypt survive during a brutal seven-year famine. As we read in Genesis 42, Joseph's brothers end up coming to Egypt where they hope to buy grain. After all that his brothers have done to him, we would expect Joseph to confront them in rage. However it is miraculous how God works, because what follows couldn't be more opposite.

During Joseph's second visit from his brothers, Joseph stands in front of them and exclaims: "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" but the brothers are too stunned to respond. We see back in Genesis 42:1 that Joseph's brothers seemed apprehensive about entering Egypt the first time. Perhaps they contemplated the chance that Joseph would be there.

However in Genesis 45, Joseph is adamant about reassuring his brothers that he has forgiven them: "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth...so it was not you who sent me here, but God" (Genesis 45:7-8). Joseph's words of forgiveness foreshadow Jesus' words of forgiveness on the cross (Luke 23:34). While his brothers stand in fear of the past, Joseph is trying to reassure them they are forgiven, just as God forgives us. I love how Angie Smith describes this in her Bible study: "[Joseph] simply says that God's purpose prevailed over their evil intentions."

Joseph has finally reunited with his brothers. He gives them new clothes and sends them back with grain, bread, and provision for his father Jacob.

Genesis 45 is both surprising and inspiring to me at the same time. We see how gentle Joseph is in this story, so much so that he is brought to tears. My hope is that as we continue in our lives, we will acknowledge the fact that we are sinners, but remember that God ultimately offers the gift of forgiveness in Christ (Colossians 3:13).

Saturday, October 22-Sunday, October 23 | Genesis 41-45

Reread Genesis 41-45 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.

Note: Haley Fenn served as our Women's Ministry Intern this summer.



Genesis

WEEK FIVE: GENESIS 46-50 OCTOBER 24-30

Monday, October 24 | Genesis 46 | Haley Fenn

As we read the end of Genesis 45 yesterday, we see that Jacob is in awe when he hears that his son Joseph is still alive. We read that Jacob (Israel) wants to go see his son before he dies. While reading Genesis 46 we see what looks to be a giant family trip, or as I read elsewhere, "a family reunion in Egypt."

Verses 1-7 describe Jacob and his family's journey from Canaan to Egypt. It is significant to realize that Jacob takes everything he owns and his entire family with him. In verses 8-27 we read the list of people who join Jacob on this journey. It is easy to see a lengthy list of names like this and skim over it, but I think there is significance to this. When God calls us on faith journey, we are to commit ourselves to being "all in."

In verse 28, Jacob and Joseph finally reunite. After seeing his beloved son after so many years, Jacob says, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive" (Genesis 46:30). This scene is depicting Jacob's peace now that he has held his son Joseph once again. In the final verses of Genesis 46, Joseph is preparing his father and some of his brothers to meet Pharaoh. Joseph hopes that Pharaoh will see the needs of his family and allow them to reside in the land of Goshen, which we will read more about in Genesis 47.

Overall, Genesis 46 depicts a sweet reunion, like what we will one day have in heaven with our brothers and sisters in Christ. From reconciling with his brothers, to finally seeing his father again, Joseph has welcomed much of his family into Egypt. In this chapter we see the fruit of faithfulness and how God will always provide.

Tuesday, October 25 | Genesis 47 | Haley Fenn

Today as we read Genesis 47 together we see Jacob's family meeting Pharaoh and settling in Egypt. In the opening verses of the chapter, Joseph goes to Pharaoh and tells him that his father and brothers have arrived from the land of Canaan.

Pharaoh welcomes Joseph's family and agrees to have them reside in Goshen, "the best of the land" signifying reward and provision for Jacob (Genesis 47:6).

By verse 13, we see that the famine is so severe even the Egyptians have run out of money for grain. At this point, they come to Joseph for help. Initially, Joseph is able to buy livestock from the Egyptians that will provide a temporary solution. When the money eventually runs out, the Egyptians become indebted to Pharaoh.

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We too are famished, but in need of a spiritual savior: Jesus Christ.

In verse 23, Joseph provides seeds for the Egyptians to “sow the land.” They establish an understanding where the Egyptians keep four-fifths of the harvest, and give one-fifth to Pharaoh.

Verses 27-28 embody the abundant prosperity: “Israel settled in the land of Egypt...were fruitful and multiplied greatly.”

In the final verses of Genesis 47, Jacob (Israel) knows it is getting to be time for him to leave earth; he calls upon his son Joseph. He explains, “Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me die with my fathers” (Genesis 47:29-30). We realize that Egypt is not Jacob’s homeland, but rather Canaan. Joseph follows this request and allows his father to be buried with the rest of his relatives.

Genesis 47 is an extension of the faith journey we see in Genesis 46. Through trials and tribulations we stay faithful to the Lord. Christ is continually providing us with a harvest. We must follow Jesus’ command: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Wednesday, October 26 | Genesis 48 | Kely Hatley

Adoption: this concept of adoption is very present in today’s chapter in Genesis. Joseph has just learned that his father, Jacob, is ill. Determined to see him, Joseph takes his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to go with him to visit their grandfather. Jacob was strengthened enough by news of Joseph’s visit to sit up in the bed even though he was ill.

Upon Joseph’s arrival, Jacob tells him that God’s vision to him at Luz was that Jacob was to be blessed by God and made into a great nation. Jacob tells Joseph that his two sons will be a part of his own blessing because he plans to make them his own. Jacob lets Joseph know that Manasseh and Ephraim will inherit part of his own blessing as he makes them his own. While the sons were still technically considered to be Joseph’s own, Jacob “reckons” them as his own.

Have you ever experienced such love and “adoption” on this earth? It’s hard to comprehend for us that we could just absorb another’s children into our own, but that’s just what Jacob did. It’s also what God our heavenly Father does for each person. God’s word tells us in Romans 8:14-16 (NIV):

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“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

God adopts us through His Son, Jesus, and makes us His children just as Jacob adopted Manasseh and Ephraim through his son, Joseph. Also, God lays His blessing upon us and we are His heirs just as Manasseh and Ephraim became heirs to their grandfather’s blessing. How comforting to know that through this example of Jacob’s life that we can see how God favors the weak and lowly. Ephraim was not Joseph’s firstborn. Rather, Jacob blessed him instead of his older brother, Manasseh. God doesn’t favor one person over another. Instead, God give to all freely the gift of His Son’s redemption for our sins. Thank God for His holy adoption of us through Jesus Christ and live in that freedom today!

Thursday, October 27 | Genesis 49 | Kely Hatley

It seems that the gathering of Jacob’s sons occurs following Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph’s sons in the previous chapter. Jacob calls his sons together so he can tell them what is to become of them after he is gone. My NIV Bible puts the header “Jacob blesses his sons” just before the chapter begins. Yet, blessings are normally speaking well of someone, and there is little of that going on regarding Jacob’s sons. The reality is that Jacob is not really blessing his sons, rather, he is telling them about what will happen to them and their descendants in the days ahead. Genesis 49 is a prophetic speaking from a father to his sons.

Out of the twelve sons of Jacob, he had to deliver less than glowing words regarding their futures to seven of them. Of the first seven sons, only Judah and Zebulun had good words said about them. In verse 18, Jacob pauses to ask for God’s help after speaking about the first seven sons. My guess is that what he had to say to them took a sorrowing toll on his soul which made him feel the need to pause and acknowledge that he was looking to God for deliverance. Deliverance from what we do not know, however, I would venture a guess that the deliverance that he desired was from speaking such somber news to the sons he loved so well.

In verse 28, Moses, the generally accepted author of Genesis, tells us that each son received the “blessing” that was appropriate for him. This leads us to believe occasionally that blessings can be bad news. As a parent, I want to always speak well of my children and give them good things. Yet, at times, the actions of my children produce consequences that are less than desirable for them. Such is the case with each of us. Our heavenly Father desires to give good things (blessings) to His children.

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Perhaps His greatest blessing to all of us is choice and free will. Ironically, that blessing sometimes allows us to make poor choices. That was exactly what happened to Jacob's sons. Some made good choices and were rewarded in the end after Jacob's death, and others made poor choices which in the end robbed them and their descendants of the good that Jacob so desired to give them. Today we can learn from this chapter how to strive to make good choices in our own lives which will please our heavenly Father so as not to rob ourselves of the good blessings He so desires to lavish upon us. Pray today for the strength to follow the Lord's ways and not your own and enjoy the blessings God has in store for you.

Friday, October 28 | Genesis 50 | Kely Hatley

Forgiveness and restoration...who doesn't love these two things? Genesis 50 is a reassurance of forgiveness and restoration between Joseph and his brothers. While verses 1-14 deal with the procession and burial of Jacob in Canaan, we will focus on verses 15-21. This section of the chapter deals with Joseph's brothers and their guilt regarding how they treated Joseph and their fear of his retaliation against them following their father's death. Even though many years had passed since Joseph's had reunited with his brothers (and those years were filled with his gracious kindness toward them) they still feared Joseph thinking that he was only kind to them because of their father.

The brothers sent Joseph a message saying that their father had asked Joseph to forgive them of the wrong they had done to him so long ago. The brothers came to Joseph and bowed down to him just as Joseph had dreamed they would in Genesis 37. How did Joseph respond? He did not respond with anger or even frustration that they still thought he would retaliate despite his years of kindness to them. No, instead Joseph reminded them that he was not trying to judge them because he was not God. Rather, he told them that their harmful intentions were turned around for good in his life by God. He told them not to fear him but to know that they would be taken care of along with their families. The Bible says in verse 21 that Joseph "reassured" his brothers and "spoke kindly to them."

Do you relate to the feelings the brothers held? I know I do. Time and again Satan throws up in my face the things I have done in the past to shake my faith that God has already forgiven me of those things because I have confessed them to Him. Yet, doubt and fear are powerful tools that Satan uses against us. The example of Joseph's forgiveness, love, and kindness to his brothers gives me hope and strengthens my faith. If Joseph, a mere human, can grant forgiveness and restoration to those who betrayed him how much more will our heavenly Father do so for us? I confess that I often have to ask the Lord to speak kindly with me and to reassure me of His love for me through His Son, Jesus. The good news is that He always does. Through God's Word I am reassured that God loves me, and He will
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always grant forgiveness to me when I humble myself and ask. What a great God we serve! Take heart today and live in the joy and freedom you receive through the forgiveness God gives to us and the restoration to Himself that we share because of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Saturday, October 29-Sunday, October 30 | Genesis 46-50

Reread Genesis 46-50 over the weekend. Reflect on all that God has been saying to you through His word this week.